A Note From The Dublisher

Several years ago a contest was held in Las Vegas to determine the best "Impromptu Magician" in the world. Competition was stiff. With the likes of Carl Cloutier, Daryl and Michael Weber, the "lesser-known" perfomers didn't seem to have much of a chance. To top it off, there was no "panel of judges" to determine the winner - no sir, the audience was going to decide the outcome of this battle. And so, the competition began.

For those of you who were there, you will remember that Daryl was his usual incredible, effervescent self; Michael Weber, thumbing his nose at the powers-that-be performed way past the time alotted him; and Carl Cloutier did what he always does - absolutely kill the audience with enough mind-blowing magic to capture First Place. When the dust settled, it was Cloutier, Daryl and Weber, respectively for First, Second and Third.

What I remember though is how I cast my vote for someone I had never heard of before; the only guy who fooled me the entire day - Jim Pace. You see, I have this curse: It's REAL tough to fool me; and believe me, I like to be fooled. So when Jim came out and did not one, but *several* items that fooled me, I knew he was someone special. I honestly feel that if the "Magic Contest" wasn't a "Popularity Contest," Jim Pace would have placed.

So I guess it was no accident that Karma placed a phone call to me a few years later from a man named Jim Pace, wondering if I would like to publish a book he had written. He didn't need to say another word.

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Foreword

Our family has managed Portland's oldest restaurant, Huber's, for eighty-one years. Over the last twenty years, we have become known for our flaming Spanish coffees. The wait for scating sometimes is an hour and thirty minutes. We wanted to somehow keep those customers waiting in line entertained. To do that we decided to hire a magician.

Jim Pace has been entertaining our customers for the last three years. During that time, Jim has thrilled countless guests with his magic. His magic complements our concept so perfectly. The guests come to Huber's and get a spectacular, flaming Spanish coffee done table-side and are then dazzled by Jim's sleight-of-hand. They end up having such a good time, the next day they are telling their friends what a great time they had at Huber's, thus creating more word-of-mouth advertising and more customers for Huber's. Jim has certainly made a real contribution to Huber's.

James K. Louie President Huber's

Acknowledgements and thank you's

This book is dedicated to Conrad Weber, owner of Callin's House of Magic. His friendship, generosity, and willingness to order all the stuff we wanted has meant a lot over the years. Working behind the scenes, he has helped the authors and dozens of others in the magic fraternity. You have our respect, Conrad.

In addition, we would like to thank John Greene for his marketing insights, and his keen eye for editing; and Mr. Steve Pennington for the terrific book cover... man, you are good! Also, thanks go to Adam Slye for the final edit.



Callin's House of Magic in downtown Portland, Oregon

Table of Contents

Section One: Paradigms and Prespects How to think about Restaurant Magic, & how to find work 1 Chapter 1 - How to Become a Successful Enterlainer... Chapter 4 - Proscocling Restaurants: Which to Approach, Which to Section Two: Preparations and Planning Chapter 16 - Recommendations for Restaurant Magicians80

Section Three:
berformance and Practicality
What to do and how to do it
Chapter 17 — Roulining and Personalizing Your Magic
21 1 19 Oceans
Chapter 19 — Strong Middle Routines
71 1 20 Classes
Chapter 21 — Special Deople124
Section Four:
Propositions and Preferences
Propositions and Preferences How to make a living at Restaurant Magic
Chapter 22 — Secrets for Increasing Year Income
C1 1 23 Toron lips
C1 1 24 Walton will the Stall
Ct. 1 26 Demotion for the Restaurant Magician
Chapter 26 — Leaving the Restaurant
Chapter 27 — Contracts
Chapter 28 — Finis
L besoles 10 = 1005 contests to the contest to the

Section One:
Paradigms and Prospects
How to think about Reslaurant Magic
&
How to find work.

How to Become a Successful Entertainer... (without doing balloon animals!)

I was watching a magic video recently that focused on performing in restaurants. After revealing a few excellent tricks, the host interviewed the performer to ask a few pertinent questions, like: How do you find work? How do you prepare? And what do you charge?

The star of the video, a fine entertainer, offered a few suggestions that I thought were not on par with his magical performance. Then he admitted on tape, "Well, I've never really had to look for work. I'm hired by a huge resort and casino, so I've got all the time I need to prepare, and I can pretty much do anything I want." He did offer a few ideas on getting jobs, but he admitted they were merely ideas, and that he had never actually tried them in the real world. That was my cue to start speeding through the tape, since I'm still stuck working in that "real world."

Not long after that, I purchased an audio tape that claimed to offer ideas for making \$75 an hour performing table magic in restaurants. The tape contained a lot of very basic information, then the host, who is normally an excellent teacher, admitted that it had been several years since he worked restaurant magic, and that he was not using many of his ideas in the real world. Once again, I was stuck with my "real world" problems. I perform on a regular basis, and have had to learn the hard way what works and what doesn't. Restaurant magic is a unique venue, different from performing in a stage show or at a sit-down convention competition. Hearing someone who doesn't work table-to-table talking about my particular brand of magic made me remember that there is a dearth of good resources to which the restaurant magician can turn. So as I pondered those two tapes, it occurred to me that there are a number of part-time professionals who could use a handbook on restaurant magic.

There are plenty of excellent books on tricks. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether to be thrilled or despondent at the number of magic books and tapes being released. It used to be that there were a few excellent resources coming out every year, and we would all wait to snatch up a copy as soon as it was in print. With the advent of desktop publishing there has been a boom in nearly every publication market. It seems as though a significant magic book is being published every other week, and it's impossible to stay on top of them all. However, there is a need for an up-to-date book that explains in simple terms how to make a living performing in restaurants. Not a book of tricks, though I think you'll find the few tricks we have included are absolute winners, but an instructional book that can help you move from part-time performing to full-time pay.

We have tried to cover all the topics we think you'll need to know about, and we've boiled down the text so you won't have to mine the dross to find the gold. Our goal has been to create a true handbook, rather than a lengthy philosophical tome. The chapters in this book are short, but that's because we've tried to cut out all the unnecessary stuff you so often find in magic books. Each chapter contains all the practical information you need to know to be successful. And we've tried to say it plainly, since one of our pet peeves is the condescending attitude toward part-timers that you find in so many magic books. Both of us were part-time performers at one point, but we wanted to be full-time. We know the frustration of hearing someone say "part-timer" and "amateur" as though they were dirty words. Yet both the authors are full-time performers and creators. One of us has gone back to parttime performing because he has small children at home and doesn't want to travel quite as much, but both of us spend our days entertaining people, and we want to help you do the same.

It seems like most people think of restaurant magicians as kiddie performers, making balloon animals in pizza parlors for shrieking kids. That's not the case, although both the authors of this book have worked pizza parlors, made plenty of balloon animals, and endured our share of charming and not-so-charming children. There's nothing wrong with working those places, though it's a tough way to make a full-time salary. It's possible to go beyond that venue, move into better restaurants, and begin making contacts with people who can offer you other performing opportunities. So if you enjoy working kid shows and kid restaurants, more power to you. Certainly there are plenty of fellows who have combined that with birthday parties and school assemblies to make a good living at magic.

But if you are interested in working more for adults, increasing your number of private parties, and getting involved in trade shows, then you'll like this little text. As people have looked at drafts of this book, they've said things like, "You're really giving away your secrets, aren't you?" The answer, of course, is "Yes." Why keep it a secret? There is plenty of restaurant work out there. Our society hasn't reached any sort of magic saturation point. As a matter of fact, with our culture's increasing need for entertainment, I believe there will be more of a call for good magicians than we have seen in the past thirty years. So this book is designed to help you become a successful entertainer in restaurants. Now let us tell you a little about the authors.

Jim Pace began working restaurant magic in 1982 and never found a good enough reason to stop. He has had several locations, all of which have lasted two years or more, and he currently can be seen at Huber's in downtown Portland two nights per week. He also performs at trade shows and private parties, most of which come to him through his restaurant contacts, and he demonstrates magic several days each week at Callin's House of Magic, the big magic store in the Portland area. Jim is one of those fellows you don't hear about often enough - a fulltime magician who does a number of things to keep himself working. He's not a star on the Tonight Show (yet), but he is an excellent performer whom audiences love. Like most professionals, he has learned the secrets of succeeding as an entertainer. Magic is not just a hobby for him; he makes a pretty good living at his craft. Jim knows how to succeed in restaurant magic, and he is willing to share his secrets with you.

Jerry MacGregor is a full-time writer and performer. He has a degree in acting and a Ph.D. in Organizational Development (whatever that is). Chip, as his friends call him, began working restaurants in 1978, has toured the country as an actor and stand-up comic, and has appeared on several comedy specials. The author of more than twenty

books, and the editor of scores more, he wants you to know that all the stylistic flair in this book is his, and all the good ideas belong to Jim.

One of the difficulties in co-authoring a book is in keeping track of who is talking, Jim or Jerry. You will notice that we sometimes switch from the first-person "I" to the third-person, either "Jim" or "Jerry." We ask your indulgence in this. When reading the first-person you can consider the "I" to be a composite of the authors, or as one of them suggested, a genie who is talking.



Jim Pace and Jerry MacGregor... You figure out which is which.

What is your concept of magic? I believe most magicians never think through their paradigm; never give serious consideration to the principles and philosophy of their art. This isn't a book on the philosophy of magic, but it is important to at least have in mind the ideas that support the magic. Every working performer needs to have a paradigm concerning his art. That paradigm will then influence all his routines. For example, my philosophy of magic influences every trick I perform, every routine I develop, and every line I use. It allows me to purchase an effect and make it my own, rather than simply copying what someone else has done.

You can always spot a magician who hasn't thought through his philosophy of magic. He presents a series of unrelated tricks with explanatory phrases, usually substituting risqué patter for well thought-out stories. As an audience member, you're not sure you like this person. There is a bit of ego in every magician — there has to be, since you intend to go out and amaze people each time you perform — but this guy seems all ego and no personality. He is always changing his act, too, because he keeps finding new tricks to buy, and new tricks hold more appeal to him than perfecting the old ones.

Due to his ego, this sort of magician enjoys showing off his technique. There are plenty of flourishes, and perhaps a "flash" or two of the work, just to let everyone know he is technically brilliant. But people soon find him annoying. They notice his handling more than they do the effect. Some people might love a trick he does, but nobody loves him. And that means he will never become a well-known magician, because another performer whom everyone likes will eventually see those good tricks and make them his own.

Think through your paradigm of magic. What do you believe to be true? What do you believe to be important? I have five principles that I hold to in magic, and I filter every trick, every routine, and every line through these five truths.

First, I believe the audience has to like me. If the audience doesn't like me, they aren't going to pay any attention to the magic. If the audience doesn't like me, I'm going to be out of work soon. Think about it: How many good performers come across like a horse's behind? Not many. There aren't many Don Rickle's or Andrew Dice Clay's out there who are successful. Magicians who are successful are nearly always liked by their audiences.

This principle shapes the way I do my magic. My routines have to reveal me in some likable way. It might be conspiratorial, where the audience thinks they are "in" on the secret, or it might be humor, where the audience is laughing along with me at something I've said or done, but any routine I develop is based upon the premise that it must help the audience to like me. You see, if they like me, I can do almost anything and they'll be entertained. For example, have you ever done a show for friends, and found them laughing at every line? Once they like you, the hard work is done.

That's why I rarely do silent stage shows. I admire the artistry that a Shimada can bring to the stage, but it doesn't

work for me. It doesn't allow people to hear me or connect with me emotionally, which are my greatest strengths. Maybe I don't see myself as being suave or classy enough to make it work, but a big silent act with me at the center just wouldn't be strong enough to hold people. I can live with that (though, like all magicians, I secretly long to be the next Cardini). The longer I work in front of crowds, the more I find myself simply being me. I used to think I had to create some special character. Now I find that I just need to be me, and that works best. I'm naturally funny, I care about people, and I'm passionate about my art. That's enough for me. Most of the magicians who put on a character are lousy actors, anyway. You've seen them - the cowboy magician, the crazy inventor, the fake Chinese master. Ninety percent of them are searching for a vehicle because they don't think their own personality is interesting enough to hold a crowd. Don't misunderstand me, there are some character magicians who are great, and I respect their ability to make it work. But it's not for me. It's not part of my paradigm.

A second principle I hold dearly is that any magic I do must use ordinary props. That means I use no brightly painted boxes, no silver tubes and no brass fingers on pyramids. I have no problem with magicians who want to use those sorts of props, they just don't fit my own philosophy. Everything I pull out of my pockets is familiar, which means that sometimes I have to work for days to make a magical prop take on the appearance of being "normal." I believe that audiences watch special magic props and think, "The magic box is doing it. Maybe if I had a magic box like that, I could be a magician, too." (And they may be right!) But if I do magic with common things — finger rings, wallets, dollar bills, napkins, coins, dice, salt shakers, hangers, and glasses — the easy explanation is taken

away. And, as I'll explain later, I want to show them magic which offers no explanation. If you can do magic with everyday items, then in the mind of the audience you must be a "real magician."

A third part of my magical paradigm which shapes my performing is that I almost always work standing up, so I select tricks and design routines that I can do standing, usually in the center of a room filled with people. This eliminates a ton of possibilities, but it helps me to focus on the best stuff for me. Again, there are plenty of people who do great work seated at tables, and I have a few choice routines for those situations, but I'm at my best when I'm standing, so I select and develop material with that in mind. Since I am usually standing, that also means that nearly all my magic happens in my hands or in the hands of the spectator. I don't put much on the table or move many things around, because it slows down the act and invades the diner's space. It also means I rarely carry a case around with me. That gives the audience the message that I can make miracles happen without any fancy set-up. I want to be able to do my magic under almost any conditions, and simply pull things out of my pockets and amaze, rather than set up, amaze, then tear down.

A fourth principle that I use in creating or evaluating my magic is that I must find it emotionally appealing or I don't do it. There are a ton of great card tricks that I will never do because they don't emotionally appeal to me. On the other hand, there are some card tricks that to others seem boring, but I can turn into miracles simply by adding my story to it. I like my magic to be humorous, so I entertain with words. People enjoy stories. We live in a culture dominated by drama — at any moment you can turn on the television and find a story being played out in a movie or series. For centuries people gathered together to hear

one or two wise men share the stories and entertain the people. In those days you could probably get away with simply explaining what you were doing in a trick. These days people are used to drama, so they need to hear me tell a story. I never simply explain my physical actions ("I am holding an ordinary deck of cards. Now I am dealing out five cards"). For crying out loud, these people can see what I'm doing. Narration is usually boring. I use stories, or "patter," to entertain people, to emphasize certain things so they will be remembered later, and to misdirect attention. If my words don't emotionally connect with the audience, usually by making them laugh, then my magic won't be as strong.

Finally, an important part of my magic paradigm is that the magic must be strong. I don't want people watching to have an explanation for what I did; I want them fooled in an entertaining fashion. I've axed a lot of ideas over the years just because the magical effect wasn't strong enough. An audience member should be able to think back through the routine and discard all explanations for how the trick was performed. Some performers can get away with doing cute effects that aren't terribly mystifying, but that doesn't fit my paradigm. I want to fool the heck out of those watching me perform.

There, you have my magical paradigm. My reason for sharing it is to help you begin thinking about this thing called restaurant magic. Not all magical effects fit a restaurant. Not all performers are cut out for the closeness of a restaurant. So think about your paradigm. What principles shape your thinking on magic? What rules must you follow to allow you to be your best at magic? You need to think those through, write them down, and apply them to a restaurant setting before you decide to make your living performing at dining tables.

Jim performing at a table in Huber's Restaurant.

—3— Why Reslaurant Magic is, Right For You

If you have thought through your philosophy of magic, and you believe restaurant magic would be a good fit, I think you'll find several benefits. Restaurant magic is a good venue for many because it offers such a unique environment for performing. You have to do your stuff, you have to do it in front of a variety of audiences, and you have to do it again and again. It's rare to find places that will allow you to perform the same routine time after time, so restaurants are a nice place to hone your skills.

Of course, that doesn't mean the restaurant in which you are working is merely a place to practice. You have to offer a good show with solid effects, but my point is that you get to offer it several times in the course of one night, so you find yourself getting better and better. You get the chance to actually perform what you've been practicing, and there are very few venues for that any more. It used to be that magic clubs, like IBM Rings or SAM Assemblies, gave a performer the opportunity to rehearse new material. No doubt some still do, but too many magic clubs have become competitive circles dominated by a few egomaniacal hacks. When was the last time your club, as a method for improving your show, invited you to perform the same routine you did last month, offering helpful advice and a healthy dose of encouragement?

Two hours performing in a restaurant offers you an opportunity to repeatedly perform your routines so that they improve, you discover what works and what doesn't, and you see how different people will respond to you. The variety of responses is one of the biggest benefits you'll receive from restaurant magic. You'll learn how to deal with over-eager magic enthusiasts, rude drunks, shy children, and protective dates. You'll learn how to draw people out, when to cut short a routine, and who to focus on during your act. This information will prove remarkably important as you slide into other performing venues.

Another benefit of restaurant magic is that it offers you good exposure. If you are working at an upscale place, every night you will meet people who (a) have some disposable income, and (b) enjoy going out. Those same people are the ones most likely to need a magician for their own party one day. If they have enjoyed your show and received your card, you'll find them calling you for work someday. I have averaged about one show every two weeks coming directly from restaurant patrons. Last year I counted thirty shows that came my way from people who first saw me in the restaurant, then called me and asked if I could perform at their function. At \$150 to \$225 per show, I figure I made an extra five thousand dollars last year directly related to my restaurant magic.

Magicians are always looking for exposure. I know of several really good entertainers who don't work much because no one knows about them. A restaurant gets you out working in front of paying customers, and can breed plenty of extra business.

One of the benefits I like most about my restaurant work is that it allows me to try new things on a regular basis. Rather than showing the effect to a bunch of jaded magician friends, or forcing my family and friends to watch their millionth card miracle, I can rehearse an effect and try it on a few customers. If they like it, I can begin to hone it, work out the story line, and move toward making it my own. If their reaction is one of confusion or boredom, I can set it on the ash heap of history. It's funny, but there's nothing like trying a trick for paying customers. I know what magic I like, but after so many years you begin to wonder if you're still thinking like a layman. You can't always trust the reaction of other magicians either, since they are often most interested in the technical side of the trick (or they are thinking about how they can steal it for their own act!). A yawn from a paying customer may be damaging to your ego, but it does wonders for helping you make decisions on your act.

There is one last benefit that I think you should consider. Our culture is entertainment driven. People can't get enough entertainment, which is why we've created 150 cable channels that display images 24 hours a day. So when people go out for dinner, they want entertainment. Sure, they also want good food, a staff who pampers them, and an atmosphere that suits their taste (loud and hip for young people, quiet and classy for those past forty). But that's all part of what I call "the dinner package." You have no doubt had lunch at a place with great food, but you'd never take your wife there because it doesn't have the ambiance she desires. Or maybe you've been to a place that looks beautiful, has great service, but offers really pedestrian food. When you go out, you want the whole package. That need creates an opening for magicians. A busy place can use a magician to entertain the long lines of people waiting. A classy place can use a magician to add to its ambiance. A loud place can use a magician to keep the people charmed. Since the death of

the night club, there are very few places which offer a dining and entertainment package. Restaurant magic can create one of those few.



Jim interacting with the spectator.

Prospecting Restaurants: Which to Approach, Which to Avoid

Overview: Keys to linding a place to work

- Know about the restaurant.
- Look for apscale, busy places.
- Evaluate the restaurant's clientele, are they the type that will like magic?
- Individually-owned restaurants are easier to get jobs with.

Too many magicians seeking work in restaurants make the mistake of starting cold. They walk in and offer their services to the manager before they really know anything about the place. When you are looking for a restaurant magic position, you are a salesman, and your product is yourself. Any successful salesman will tell you that the more you know about your customer, the better chance you have to make a sale. So do a little prospecting.

When I am looking for work, I always start by thumbing through the latest edition of the Yellow Pages. Look for advertisements that suggest a quality family restaurant, or a successful yuppie restaurant. You won't find work in fast-food places, nor will there be much interest in fancy French restaurants. An inexpensive place won't be able to afford you, so steer clear of anything that smacks of "Denny's." Start reading the restaurant ads in your newspaper, and if you're in a large city, read the reviews of established places. I say "established" because many papers will only review new eateries. Owners of new restaurants have generally sunk every penny into the place, so it's rare that a brand new business will have the foresight to hire a house magician. There is a type of place you are seeking, and it's a successful, busy restaurant that wants to remain that way.

Once you have selected a few places, go visit them. Walk in during what should be their busy time — between 5 and 7 p.m. Give the place a quick look. Is it nice? If it looks run down, turn around and move to the next place on your list. A place that has stopped investing in carpets and cleaning is already cutting costs, so they aren't going to invest in a magician.

By the way, I've found that some people just cannot leave a restaurant. Their parents would never think of walking into a place and then walking out, so they can't either. Rather than suffer the embarrassment of leaving a restaurant, they'll suffer a case of ptomaine poisoning and cheerfully pay the tab. If you're one of these shy types, don't get roped into a situation where you are buying a dinner you don't want. Instead, have an "out" ready to use. Ask to use the restroom. Ask directions to the nearest movie theater. Ask if they do banquets. Get a quick piece of information, then get out of there and visit the next place on your list.

When you get to a place that looks upscale, take a few minutes to evaluate the clientele. If it's all businessmen, ask the hostess if your broker left a message for you, then get out of there. If the average age is 65, tell the gal you've got to help grandpa get out of his car, then head out. You want to find a place that caters to families or couples, that is interested in keeping up its image, and that is busy at meal times. When you find that sort of place, eat dinner.

That may seem like an obvious piece of advice, but you'd be surprised how many people don't do the obvious. Sitting down at a table allows you an hour to watch the clientele, chat with the waitress about the management, find out what's good on the menu, and evaluate the prices. That is all information you can use when you eventually talk to the manager about performing there.

Individually-owned restaurants are the easiest to deal with. Most corporately owned places will take forever to make a decision on hiring a magician. It's tough to work out an agreement with a corporation, because it is so big no one wants to be responsible for actually making the decision. Consequently you'll often find their answer will be "no," even though everybody thought it was a great idea! I once spent months working with the "TGIFridays" corporation. The manager loved the idea, the general manager loved the idea, the regional manager loved the idea, and all the corporate sycophants loved the idea. But nobody seemed to have the authority to say "yes," and eventually I received a letter that said, "Great idea...but everything is going quite well for us already, so unless we get a green light from the Almighty, we better not."

I spent a year trying to get a decision from the Stuart Anderson chain of restaurants. Somebody finally said yes, and I worked there successfully for two years. Corporations exist to protect individuals, and one of those protections is to protect them from having to make decisions. One exception seems to be the Red Lion Inns, where a number of magicians have worked successfully across the country. Many resorts also hire magicians, since they have

pose of your letter is not to get work, but to get a chance to talk. So make it short, to the point, and personal.

Now comes a very tough decision for us. We have advertised this as a handbook, with all the real information you need to begin working restaurant magic. With that in mind, it only seems fair that we include a sample letter to a restaurant manager. However, it is with great reluctance we do that, because we fear too many magicians will simply copy the letter word for word. That won't work! Visit the restaurant, then shape your letter according to the site. Don't be satisfied simply mimicking what others have done, either in magic or in letters. Instead, use this as an introduction to what could be said in a letter to a restaurant manager.

This is an actual letter that I successfully used to garner an interview with the manager of a seafood restaurant in Portland. (The names have been changed to protect the innocent.) Dear Mr. Smith,

I had the pleasure of dining at Oyster Bay last evening, and enjoyed myself immensely. Your establishment was pristine, your wait staff exceptionally helpful, and your sea bass delicious. Thanks!

While I was dining, I wondered if you have ever considered adding some table-to-table entertainment for the customer's enjoyment while they wait for their food? I am a professional magician who has worked in some of the finer restaurants up and down the west coast over the last fifteen years, and I'd like a chance to talk with you about spending an hour or two keeping your guests happy. I would be happy to volunteer one evening to offer my services for free, just to see your customer's response.

I will call you next week to discuss the idea and, if it is convenient for you, we can work out a time to meet so that you can actually see me perform. Again, thanks for a wonderful evening.

Warmest Regards,

I sent that letter on my own stationery, with a handwritten address so that he would know it wasn't one of a billion spit out of a computer somewhere. I let him know that I was familiar with his restaurant, made a low-key suggestion to add a magician, and made the point that I have experience in this line of work. I also made him a free offer for a night of magic and asked no favors of him, since I will be the one doing the calling. If he says "no thanks," it's no problem. I've got other restaurants that I'm prospecting, and somebody will be smart enough to see the benefit of my working for him. A strong person learns to take the "no's" with the "yes'es."

By the way, notice in that letter the number of times I used the word "you." A "you-focused" letter is much stronger than a letter which only uses the pronoun "I." Think about how often advertising is you-focused: You deserve a break today. We do it all for you. It costs a bit more, but you're worth it. People love the sound of that word, because it suggests you are thinking about them, rather than yourself. When you write your letter, try to focus on "you" rather than "I." And again, don't expect to get a job from your letter. Don't say too much in your letter. The purpose of that letter is to get you a face-to-face interview; to turn you from a piece of paper into a flesh-and-blood person in the eyes of the manager.

-6-Calling (and Calling Back)

Give your letter a week to find its way to the manager's desk and into his wastebasket. Then call the restaurant either in the morning (before the lunch crowd) or in the early afternoon (after the lunch crowd). Just as your letter had one purpose, so your phone call has one purpose — to get a face-to-face interview with the manager. You see, if you are a good magician, you can simply sit him down and do your best act, just like you would for his diners. Then he'll have the best evidence of whether your magic will fit his establishment. The conversation should go something like this:

"Hi, this is Gern Blanston, I had dinner in your restaurant the other night and really enjoyed myself. You received a letter from me about adding some table-to-table entertainment to your establishment. Did you get a chance to read the letter?"

If he says, "No:"

"Well, my wife and I had a great time at your restaurant. The sea bass was especially good. [Note: You may want to change that line, particularly if this is a steak house.] While we were dining, I wondered if you have ever considered adding some table-to-table entertainment for the customer's enjoyment while they wait for their food?

I am a professional magician who has worked in some of the finer restaurants up and down the west coast over the last fifteen years, and I just wanted a chance to talk with you about spending an hour or two keeping your guests happy. I would even be willing to volunteer one evening of my services at no charge, just to see your customer's response."

If he says, "Yes:"

"Great! Could I take fifteen minutes of your time one morning to show you what I would do at the customer's table?" Then stop talking. The person who talks next, loses. You don't want to make it easy for him to say, "No, thanks, I don't want to meet you."

Even though we live in a violent culture, most people still want to be polite and make it easy for others to make their living. So simply ask for a short meeting, then be quiet.

If he hems and haws around, make it easy for him. Say, "Well, look, I know you're a busy man. Why don't you give me ten minutes next week, and then you'll know if this is a good fit for your restaurant. If it's not, fine. If it is, I'll donate one evening to try performing table-to-table for your customers."

All you need is one little "yes." As soon as you get it, offer him two days on which you can meet. For example, you can say, "How about next Tuesday at 3 p.m., or would Thursday at 3 be better?" This way he doesn't have the option of saying, "Well, no, I don't really want to do this." He might tell you that mornings are better than afternoons, but the expectation is that he will meet with you. Have

your calendar ready to pencil in the appointment, because there's nothing worse than working hard to get a meeting, then having to cancel it because that's the day of your daughter's kindergarten graduation.

Of course, the possibility exists that he will say, "No, I'm not interested." If you're really a salesman, try saying, "What if I give you one free night to try it on your customers? No cost, no obligation. We'll just see if they like it." If he still says no, graciously thank him for listening to you, remind him that if he ever does need a magician, he has your card, and say goodbye. Don't whine, and don't make him feel guilty about saying no. Most of us hate saying no anyway, so it's probably tough enough on the guy. A manager who tells you no is not saying you are a bad performer or a bad person. He's saying, in his opinion, magic doesn't fit his restaurant. Let him be wrong.

There are three common obstacles you'll hear on the phone. One is, "We can't afford magic" or the question, "How much is this going to cost me?" The way to answer that is to say, "Hey, there's no cost. I'm offering you a free night. Try it out and see if your customers like it. Obviously you aren't going to hire somebody if it doesn't make financial sense for your business. I'll even come in tomorrow afternoon and show you what I'll be doing for your customers." Stay away from a discussion of money on the phone. Save that for your face-to-face interview. If he absolutely insists, you'll turn him off by skirting the issue. Ask him, "Do you have an entertainment budget?" And begin talking about what he thinks he needs. Be warned though: once you give him a figure, he more than likely is going to say no.

A second obstacle is the, "I don't know...let me think about it" attitude. He's playing for time. I always say, "Sure, go ahead and think about it. Would you like me to drop by tomorrow afternoon and just show you what I'd do at a table if I did work for you?"

The third common obstacle is the person who says, "I wouldn't make that decision." Politely ask who would be the person responsible, and ask how you can get through to them. In my view, though, if you can convince the manager, you're ninety percent there.

You'll hear many other excuses: "We've never done anything like that." "I knew somebody who tried that and it didn't work." "Doesn't that get in the way of the staff?" Figure out what your goal is on this phone call (Hint: It's to get a face-to-face interview) and keep pushing toward that one goal. Again, any salesman will tell you that nothing succeeds better than a one-on-one meeting.

Finally, if you get put off with, "He's still not here...try back next March," you have to make a decision. Either you throw the number away and move to another restaurant, or you drop by the place in the afternoon. I suggest dropping by. It is my experience that people who are hard to get to are that way because they know they are easy to sell. Often, if you can get to them, you can convince them.

-7-How to Get the Job

Overview: Keys to getting hired

- Be likable.
- Do good magic.
- Offer a free evening.
- Convince the management that you are worth the expense.

There are really only four keys to getting hired as a restaurant magician. First, the person with hiring authority has to like you. That may sound too obvious, but think about it for a minute. If you have ever been in a position to hire someone, I'll bet you hired someone you liked, rather than someone you didn't. You've got to get him or her to like you. If you've done your research on the restaurant, you can talk knowledgeably about their establishment. That will get them to like you. If you are dressed appropriately, are neat and clean, and treat everyone politely, they are more apt to like you.

We've got an entire chapter later in this book on appearance, so I won't dwell on that topic, except to say that I've seen people lose work because of their appearance. We all generally skip over the parts in the magic books that tell us to brush our teeth and try not to scratch ourselves in front of the boss, but I know of a restaurant that turned down a really good magician because he looked like a slob. Mother was right — appearances matter.

There is an attitude in many young magicians today that they need to be racy and clever whenever they are talking with clients. Unfortunately, most of them come across like smart-ass little twits. Where did we ever get the notion that magic is tied into being smarmy? Years ago I heard George Carolly, a successful cruise ship magician say, "As the entertainer, whenever I'm on that boat, I'm on the bottom rung. I've got a bunch of bosses. The ship's crew, who are the only ones who really know what they're doing, are my bosses. The wait staff, who take care of the customers, are my bosses. The audience, whom I am paid to entertain, are my bosses. Everyone is my boss on that ship, and I'm paid extremely well to assist them." Excellent advice for restaurant magicians. You aren't the boss, so don't act like one. You are there to serve. So be polite, particularly when making that first impression. Tell them about yourself, reveal your knowledge of restaurant customers, give them a brochure with some nice quotes from others, and make an impression of someone who they'd like to work with, not as some prima donna they'll have to endure.

If they like you, you are much more likely to get the job. Do your most likeable routine; the one that gets people on your side. Let them see how you are willing to bend over backward to help them. For example, tell the boss you watch for people who have waited a long time. A two-minute visit from the magician while the server gets the order straightened out makes the wait much more endurable, even enjoyable. An hour wait in the lobby goes much quicker when there is an entertainer keeping your attention. Also let them know that once you see a bill placed on a table, you stay away. Tables need to be turned for the restaurant to make a profit, and you're aware of that fact. Tell them that you never get in the way of the

servers, but see yourself as someone assisting the staff in making customers happy. All of those things will make the manager warm up to you.

Finally, make your offer to perform magic absolutely free for one evening. Give them a two-hour slot (usually 5 to 7 or 6 to 8), and offer to perform at tables so the management can gauge customer response. I've used that on numerous occasions, and it almost always works. It makes them like you, because it shows that you are willing to take a bit of a risk for their benefit.

A second key to getting the job is to do good magic. Have a knockout set to do for the manager. Let him see how you interact with people, how it fits the restaurant, and how entertaining you can be with people who are waiting for their food. Ten minutes should do it. That allows you to say, "What you've experienced is exactly what I'll do for a table tonight." If the manager likes you, and likes your magic, you're most of the way there.

We'll deal with routining a bit later in the book, but make sure that you do a routine for the manager, not just a couple isolated tricks. Let him get a feel for your performing style and your personality. Show him your best stuff, but if you've got two dynamite tricks that don't go together, you are better off doing a routine that flows smoothly. Then if he asks for another trick you can do your other haymaker.

A third key to getting the job is to make that offer of a free evening working the restaurant. It costs them nothing, and allows them to gauge the impact it will have on both the staff and the clientele. My experience shows that if I can get this far, the rest will usually take care of itself. Make the offer, then show up ready to perform. Do your best stuff — you really only need one set at this audition.

Perform for the customers and let them get the job for you. Say something at the end of your set like, "Thanks for letting me steal a little of your time. If you liked it, say something to the management on the way out." Most restaurant managers hear from very few people, and the ones that do talk to them are often complaining about something they didn't like. So having one or two people mention the magician is one of the most influential things you can do. It will only take a few people raving to the management for them to realize what a good idea this is.

While you're there, look for ways to make yourself indispensable. If there is a huge line, simply say to the manager, "Hey, let me help with these folks." Any time you can put an idea into the manager's mind, particularly so that he believes he thought of it, you'll prove yourself a valuable asset.

The last key to getting the job is the hardest. After they've met you and seen you perform, you must somehow convince them that you are worth the expense of hiring a magician. Think about the restaurant manager's conundrum: If they are really packing in the people, they are already successful. Why spend an extra five thousand a year on a magician? On the other hand, if their customer base is slipping, why put money into a magician when they could use it to buy an ad on the radio? You must somehow convince the management that you are a benefit to the establishment, and that the benefit will translate into more people and more money.

A restaurant doesn't exist as a public service, but as a money-making venture. If a magician will end up costing more than he's worth, they're going to say, "No, thanks." You might be the greatest magician since Siegfried and Roy, a restaurant version of David Copperfield, but if it doesn't translate into money on their bottom line, they'll turn you down. How do you convince them you are worth the overhead? You must reveal to them how your presence will translate into more people, more repeat people, more satisfied people, and people who spend more money.

Here's how I do it. A restaurant is built on word of mouth more than anything else. Big chains may get a reputation based on heavy advertising, but most smaller restaurants live and die on word-of-mouth. When someone comes into my place of employment, I'm part of the atmosphere. They remember me, and tell their friends about the place. It's one of the unique things — "They've got a magician, and he comes right to your table!" Plus, I'm out there every day performing, or working in the magic store. I tell ten to fifteen people each day about the restaurant, and many of them come to visit. My restaurant spends four or five hundred dollars a month on their Yellow Pages ad, and I'll bet I produce more customers for them, month in and month out, and I cost less. So I tell the management that very fact.

A magician can bring in more people. Not just those who enjoy magic, but those who are looking for a dining package, with food and entertainment. Customers find more satisfaction in a nice meal supported by nice entertainment. The restaurant ends up with more people and more satisfied people, and they'll hear those very words from the people for whom you perform. A magician can also invite those folks back, so that they return to see more magic. Every magician eventually develops a relationship with repeat customers, which makes management happy and forces the performer to have fresh material. There is one more advantage: People who really enjoy their dinner and entertainment are likely to spend more money. They'll buy drinks, leave a larger tip, and make you more important than ever to the restaurant's success.

The fact is, restaurants, like any other business, are competitive. They are looking for something that will bring in people, give the establishment a good name, and build a repeat clientele. They like things that are different, and magic is different. Convince them that it's a winner, and you'll have a job.

It all comes down to those four things. Make them like you, perform some excellent magic, let them appreciate your free performance, and help them do a quick costbenefit analysis of your services. If you do those things well, you'll soon be making magic at tables.

—8— Why I Hale Audilions

There's no getting around it. Auditions are a pain in the fanny. On several occasions I have had to do live comedy auditions for one person, in a room built for five hundred. Not only is it oppressive, but the individual is sitting there evaluating my future, and isn't prone to start laughing out loud. So if the restaurant says they would like me to audition, I always suggest to them, "Sure, why don't I come in and perform for a couple tables?" Otherwise, they are going to stand me in front of the servers, who have very little interest in spending their afternoon watching some guy trying to impress them.

So, if I can arrange it, I will get the manager and another person sitting at a table with a soda or coffee cup, and I'll do my best routine. There won't be as much noise or bustle, so it won't have the same energy of a real table performance, but I try to give them my best. The funny thing is, I know that the manager doesn't care one bit about my tricks. As long as I don't say anything offensive, he normally wouldn't care if I did "The Ambitious Card" or "The Levitating Chicken." He wants to know what it's going to cost him, and if the whole thing is worth it. Still, you don't get to choose your audience. So do it just like you would for a paying dinner customer. Make it visual, direct, easy to follow, and utterly amazing. I've found that a mind-reading card trick, a card to wallet, and any kind of production are generally winners with restaurant managers. Have a good routine, go for about ten to twelve minutes, then pretend to move to the next table.

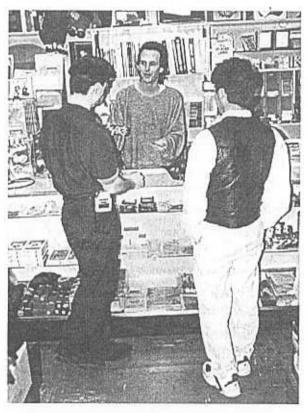
After your audition you can try to make your points, if there is anyone willing to listen. (Did I mention that I hate auditions?)

If the whole staff gathers, I'll do more of a stand-up show geared for a group — which may be artificial, but you've got to succeed at entertaining the group you are given. I figure if I can impress the larger crowd, surely they'll know I can do the same thing with a couple of people. As a matter of fact, I will often do a short routine for the larger group, then do my final effect using just the two people at the table. That way they know I can entertain people, and they have a feeling for my style at a table.

It's my experience that a donated evening gives me much more of a benefit than a formal audition, so I'll often suggest it as an alternative to the audition. Still, there's no way around it. If you hope to perform for a living, you've got to learn how to make auditions work. The best way to do that is to make a big impression.

Years ago I heard Karrell Fox tell an audition story that he swears is true. He was given eight minutes to audition for a member of the Ford family — back in the days when the Fords were still the first family of automobiles in America. So he goes in with his agent, fans a deck of cards, and asks the boss to pick one. The card goes back in the deck...and Karrell can't find it! The agent is sweating bullets. His client finally gets an opportunity to get into the big time, and he blows a simple card trick. So Karrell, thinking quickly, asks about the gardens, which were the love of Mr. Ford's life. As they go to the terrace to look down upon the flowers, Karrell asks what the selected card was. "Three of diamonds," comes the reply. Karrell points upward, and there, painted in the heavens by a skywriter, are three diamonds! The Foxy one made a

big impression, and he got the job. (Even so, I'll bet Karrell Fox hates auditions, too.)



Jim working the counter at Callin's. Another way to pratice!

– 9 – Pricing Your Magic

As I write this, it is 1996, and I make \$25 per hour performing restaurant magic. I work two hours per night, and I average an additional \$25 per hour in tips. So in two hours of performing I make about \$100. I've talked with restaurant magicians all over the country, and they all make between \$20 and \$75 per hour, so if you begin performing in a restaurant you can expect to make money in that ballpark.

What do you think you are worth? And what is it worth to you to have a regular venue for performing? I think my performing is worth a bit more, but I like the steady work, the opportunity to perform as much as I do, and the chance to routinely try out new material. It's worth it to me to work for \$25 an hour.

I also do a number of private parties and I make \$300 for two hours of walk-around magic, or \$225 for a formal parlor show. (Everybody seems to act like the money they make is a state secret, but in my experience most of us are in that same ballpark.) Many of these shows are a direct result of my restaurant performing, so I have to include this as part of my restaurant income.

The manager at the restaurant where you want to work will want to know your salary demands. If he has any experience dealing with professional entertainers, he'll realize you're offering him a bargain at \$25 an hour. If he has no experience with entertainers, he'll start sorting

through numbers. You may want to barter. For example, he may be willing to pay you \$15 an hour, plus allow you to eat dinner every night, or have you and your wife eat dinner once a week on a non-working night. If you aren't comfortable with that type of arrangement, try to come up with some other form of bartering. Even if you do it for a short while, it will allow you to get your foot in the door.

If you think you are worth \$50 an hour, think carefully before agreeing to \$20 an hour. The fact is, you won't be happy, and you may find another restaurant willing to pay your fee. However, before you set your fee, think about the menu. If the average person ordering dinner is only paying \$5.95, management isn't going to be paying entertainers \$50 an hour. You can only do six to twelve tables an hour, plus a couple quick tricks for people waiting or in the bar, so your impact will be on a few diners. Match your fee to the expense of the meals.

By the way, the staff does not know what I make. They are all struggling along at \$5 an hour plus tips, so if they heard the magician was being paid \$25 an hour, they'd hit the roof. Part of my success depends upon having a good relationship with those people, and that kind of information could kill a friendship. So I keep it a secret, and I ask the manager to do the same. Of course, money is all how you perceive it. I only work two hours, and they work eight. \$25 an hour is pretty low for my type of work, but they don't know that. It's taken me years to master many of the things I do, and there's not that many people who could take my place. But rather than explaining all that to the servers, it's easier to simply keep it confidential. I am paid by check each week, and my check is always in an envelope that is stapled shut.

Now, if \$25 an hour seems too low to you, consider the fact that I make at least that much an hour in tips. I also

match everything I make at the restaurant with shows that come through diners — shows that I would never have received if I wasn't performing restaurant magic. I get to perform every week, and I'm always putting new effects into my repertoire, so I'm ahead of many guys who never get a chance to perform for a living. I also take home about \$100 every night. I've got no complaints.

My co-author never negotiates by the hour. He doesn't want to be lumped in with the serving staff, so he charges a performance fee. That is, he'll agree to work tables for two hours if he is paid a performance fee of \$60. He treats restaurant work the same way he does any other performance. Rather than having an hourly wage, he prefers to negotiate from a standard entertainer's contract.

One more note on pricing: You really need to make clear to the management that you make your living doing shows. That way the two of you can agree that if you get an offer for a high paying show which is at the same time you are normally at the restaurant, you are free to go ahead and take the show. There's nothing worse than having somebody offer you \$500 for a big show, only to have your restaurant boss talk to you about the importance of earning your \$50 that same night.

The way to take care of that potential conflict is to help the manager understand that you make your living doing shows, and to come to an agreement before you start working that your restaurant nights are your priority over everything except individual magic shows. That means you don't cancel because you've got a hot date, or to watch a playoff game, but that you can cancel in advance so as to perform someplace else for more money. Since most of us make only a portion of our living doing restaurants, I've never had a manager give me a hard time about this. If the restaurant insists on having a magician, have a substitute you can count on.



Left to right - "Chip" MacGregor, Bob Wallace (who subs for Jim at Huber's, Rachel Phillips and Jim Pace, all exhibiting their skill at fanning eards (or in Chip's case - card boxes),

Section Two: Preparations and Planning Principles for Creating Restaurant Magic.

— 10 — The Secret of Keeping Your Job

Overview:

- Sell the restourant
- Make the customer's whole dining experience enjoyable
- Help the staff
- Sell yourself

Once you've nailed down that restaurant job, you can't just show up and do tricks. Each hour you are costing them five times what they're paying anyone else, so if it isn't working out, they can quickly pull the plug. Therefore, it's important to keep in mind that you are there to help the restaurant earn money and become successful. Put the restaurant ahead of your tricks. If your boss asks you for a favor, do your best to accommodate him. I was once asked to spend my entire two hours in a banquet room. I thought it was a strange request, since the group was only about forty people, but I did what the manager asked, because I knew it had to be important.

As you begin your preparations for working as a restaurant magician, always try to maintain a sales perception. Everything you do is geared toward making the customer happy. Help the staff. Be cheerful. Do whatever you can to meet the needs of the customers. I've talked with restaurant magicians who seem to think the restaurant exists simply to give them a place to rehearse. Hey, the restaurant exists to make money, and that will only happen if people like their experience there. So you need to do everything you can to help people have a good time.

Get the rest of the staff on your team by helping them whenever possible. If a waitress tells you somebody's food is going to be late, go over and perform for her table. Help the staff understand what your role is, and try to assist them in theirs. If somebody's food is late, you're helping the restaurant by keeping those folks entertained. If a server is having trouble, you're helping the customers have a good experience by stepping in to keep them entertained for a few minutes. Everything you do is geared toward making their dining experience a positive one. Make sure restaurant management knows that is your perspective.

Never make fun of anybody on the staff unless you have talked with them ahead of time and arranged for it to be part of the act. If the new bus boy interrupts your act to fill water glasses, pause for him to finish. Don't use that rapier wit to put him in his place. Be pleasant and helpful. If you have weak interpersonal skills, then by all means take steps to improve. Enroll in a Dale Carnegie course. Read some books on communication and have a trusted friend evaluate you. At any other position, you would take the steps necessary to improve. Approach restaurant magic the same way.

Remember, performing magic in a restaurant is a job. It may be an exciting and rather unique job, but it's still a job. Treat it the same way you treat any other job. Show up for work on time, be courteous with everyone, and don't make waves. Do a great job by performing superb magic that is well-rehearsed, appropriate, and mind-blowing.

Sometimes that will mean making a point to not do magic. If there are a couple businessmen talking a deal, they don't want to be interrupted by somebody doing card tricks. Leave them alone to do their business. If a table acts cold toward you, maybe the people need some space to talk. Cut the performance short, and leave pleasantly. Don't force magic on every table. Strange as it may seem to you, some people don't like magic. By staying away from them, you are helping the restaurant.

When I perform, I always try to help the customer remember the restaurant, not just the magic. Use the name of the restaurant several times in your performance, and make sure to say that it's the restaurant that provided your services. You didn't do it on your own; the management was thinking about providing the best possible dining experience. That's why they hired you.

You've got to think about "selling" the restaurant as often as possible. Tell everybody how good it is. Make sure everyone who comes has a good time. The fact is, if you aren't proud to be there, you're probably working in the wrong place. Take some pride in the establishment. Sell the idea of eating there to your friends and family. Sell it to the people you meet. I'm always telling people, "I work at Huber's in downtown Portland. Stop in, have dinner, and I'll show you a little magic." Your motivation is to help the restaurant, not just to make a name for yourself. But by helping the place, you will also make a name for yourself. Like the old saying puts it: You'll be amazed at how much you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit.

There is one more little secret to keeping your job, and it's probably the most important of all: Remember that people keep your job for you. The manager may quit, and take all of the restaurant's commitment to magic with him. The economy may go sour, thinning the ranks of those looking for a dining package. Or the restaurant may simply think that it's time to make a change, since they don't see you bringing many people through the doors. So let me tell you how to take care of the problem. Every month I set aside one week when I'll say to the guests, "If you enjoyed the magic, make sure to mention it to the staff on your way out." Or maybe I'll ask them to mention it on the comment card. "Let the manager know on your way out," I'll say with a smile, "And I just might keep this job."

It's really amazing what a half-dozen positive comments can do. Suddenly that management, which was wondering about your value to the restaurant, can't dream of giving you up because you are so much a part of the atmosphere. Any restaurant that hears three positive, sincere comments from diners in one week will keep you on staff. It's the best way I know of to keep your job. (Now you know the secret of restaurant magic!)

— 11 — Selecting Material

Overview:

Six calegories of Magic

- Production
- Vanishes
- Transformations
- Transpositions
- Science Defied
- Mental Phenomena

Seven criteria for selecting effects

- Must be visible
- Effects are direct
- Props appear normal
- Audience parlicipation
- Simple to carry, perform, and reset
- Something I am confident in performing
- Suitable for the audience

As you begin planning your act, you have to consider not only what your philosophy of magic is, but what effects will work in a restaurant setting.

In 1932, S.H. Sharpe produced a wonderful way to categorize magic tricks. Sharpe, writing in his book Neo Magic, stated that there are six basic effects in magic:

Productions (from not being to being), Vanishes (from being to not being), Transformations (from being this way to being that way), Transpositions (from being here to being there), Science Defied (anything that seemed in opposition to natural science, which would include floating, penetrating, animating, and restoring) and Mental Phenomena (predictions, telepathy, calculations, etc.). Those six categories are still the best summary of magic effects I've ever seen. Any magical effect you've seen can be classified into one of those six, and most good acts incorporate as many as possible. For example, consider successful stage acts. Harry Blackstone produces flowers, vanishes a bird cage, transforms one flower into a bouquet, moves a girl from the stage to a box overhead, floats a lightbulb, and does quick calculations. Any of the popular acts today - Salvano, Richard Ross, Ger Copper, The Great Thompsoni, Shimada, Hans Moretti -- combine all of these effects into one strong stage act.

Recently I got to observe a young magician's contest. Everybody did productions — lots and lots of productions. Production is still a great effect in magic, but if that's all you do, the act very quickly becomes tiresome. Suddenly one boy came on stage who began with a vanish, followed that with a nice floating effect, offered a wonderful sympathetic silk routine, then finally came around to a standard production. However, since his production was so nicely routined into other effects, the audience cheered. A few moments earlier we had all been tired of productions, but worked in with other effects, it once again became fresh.

I tell that story not because I expect all restaurant performers to become stage magicians, but to get you to think about your selection of effects. If everything you do is a card revelation, it can become rather mundane very quickly.

Even a great effect can seem routine if it appears to be just another version of the last trick. True, there are some like Ricky Jay or Larry Jennings who can do nothing but card revelations and hold an audience for two hours, but I respectfully suggest those people are awfully few and far between. Most magicians who make their living solely with a deck of cards - like Bill Malone, Simon Lovell, or Darwin Ortiz - mix up their acts so that the audience sees something more than another "pick a card" trick. They tell stories with cards, they float or rise cards, they make them change places, cause them to grow or shrink, and produce handfuls from their mouths. Card magic has been the staple of close-up magicians for decades, but don't fall into the trap of thinking that everybody wants to see just another series of card revelations. When you begin to do your selection of effects, take into consideration the idea of variety.

Keep in mind MacGregor's Theory: The worst method is the one you use all the time. In other words, if you always reveal a card by a double-lift and a deal down, it will become boring. The audience will start looking for it. It will soon seem less magical. By the way, the same holds true for your technique. The worst method is the one you use all the time. If you always top palm a card, no matter how well you do it your audience will soon notice the repetition of certain movements. Change your method the second time and you'll take away their path to figuring out the trick.

As you begin selecting material to perform, keep in mind those six categories. To make it even easier, I highly recommend reading Dariel Fitzkee's remarkable book, The Trick Brain. Don't let the fact that it was printed in the forties fool you. It's still one of the best books for getting your magical mind working overtime. Fitzkee suggests that, while Sharpe's six categories are helpful, the practical performer needs to select his material from the following ten effects: production (make something appear out of thin air), vanish (make something disappear right under their noses), transposition (change the places of two things, perhaps two sponge balls or two coins), transformation (change the shape or size of a card, a coin, or a sponge), penetration (stick a straw through a card, or a cigarette through a coin), restoration (cut and restore a rope, or tear and restore a card), animation (make the card rise or the pen jump), anti-gravity (float a dollar bill), sympathetic reaction (when one card turns red, they all turn red) and identification (read their thoughts, make a prediction, or display your extra-sensory perception).

Of course, you won't have time to do all ten effects in one set at a table. And it may take you awhile to find the perfect routine for, say, a penetration effect. But making a conscious effort to think through Fitzkee's list will keep you from doing just card revelations.

Keep in mind that a trick you love might not be loved by others. The technical aspects of it may thrill you, but may bore the audience. I suppose we all start doing new tricks because we like them, but you should only keep them in the act if the audience likes them. I always say that the only thing that matters is the effect, so it makes no difference to me if I perform MacDonald's Four Ace Trick with gaffed cards or by sleight-of-hand, so long as the audience gasps in amazement. Think about selecting tricks that fit your magical paradigm, fit your personality and fit your performing conditions.

There are seven criteria I use when selecting magic for my restaurant performances. The first is visibility. Everything I do must be visible. It must catch the eye of the

diner and hold his or her attention. Jim's style is to walk up to a table, take out what looks like a cigarette paper (actually flash paper) light it on fire, and produce a coin or sponge ball from out of the flame. Jerry's style is to walk up and start telling jokes. Both of them are visible, and both work well in their chosen situations. (Though both can fail in some situations, too. Jerry wouldn't be heard in Jim's restaurant; Jim might bring a call from the fire department in Jerry's establishment.) Many establishments turn down the lights, which can make it awfully hard to see black sponge balls on a mahogany table. The bigger the prop, and the more clearly seen, the better. Any trick with fire, candles or matches are a natural, and most tricks that rely on sound (like coins clinking) work well. If they can't see what you're doing, or if they've been drinking and you're asking them to follow intricate movements, the act will fail. I always consider visibility when selecting tricks. This will, of course, preclude you from doing some great effects. I can do a great version of the eternal string, but nobody can see it in my dark restaurant, so I don't use that trick in that venue. Think about your effects - are they completely visible and eye-catching to your audience?

A second consideration is that the magic must be direct. Often that means "short," but always it means "to the point." Select effects that move in a straight line to the climax. None of my effects are complex or hard to follow. The easier it is to follow, the more effective it will be. Complex dealing of cards is out, as is any trick that requires instructions to the audience of more than six words. If you have instructions to give to someone at a table, make it brief: "Please touch a card;" "Say stop;" "Hold out your hand;" "Keep your finger on this card." I've seen routines that would be great in a cabaret setting

absolutely flop in a restaurant, because the intimate yet busy atmosphere made them too hard to follow.

Please don't misunderstand me. I don't think a oneshot trick is necessarily the best, for those have a tendency to turn your act into a series of unrelated effects. It's much better to have a series of smaller climaxes that lead your audience to a smash ending. But pick effects that are direct, so that everyone can clearly understand what magic occurred.

Another part of being direct is that the pace should be brisk. This is a short show, often with many other activities competing for the audience's attention, so keep it moving. During the slower parts, like shuffling cards or transitioning from one effect to another, develop lines or bits of business to keep the act from having any dead spots. Above all, for magic to be direct it must be clear. Any effect that has to be explained to be understood is a loser in restaurant magic.

My third criteria in selecting material is to make sure everything is normal. That is, I don't want people thinking I used a trick table or a gaffed salt shaker (although I do). For my magic, everything needs to have the appearance of being perfectly ordinary. I use an ordinary men's handkerchief, a wine glass that you could pick up anywhere, and what looks like a normal deck of cards. I don't refer to them as "sponge balls" or "silks" either, but as Nerf balls and handkerchiefs. As a matter of fact, on the occasion when Jerry does an effect that requires a special prop, like a special packet of cards, he takes care to point out that these are not ordinary. They are special cards, for a special purpose, and they come in their own special folder. Calling attention to their specialness makes people watch more closely and heightens the drama.

Jim uses a few more magic props, like the miniature linking rings and the color changing knives. But he gets away with it by making them fit his style, going into what is basically a miniature silent stage act, done for an intimate audience of two. It should also be noted that Jim always performs in a vest, rather than a coat, because too many people thought his coat was some sort of "magic coat" that somehow allowed him to produce coins and cards. By ditching the coat, he took away one of the things hindering his style. Our point is that the tricks you do and the props you use must feel normal for you. If you feel uncomfortable with a prop, either change your way of thinking or get rid of it, because your discomfort will be noticed by your audience and it will hurt your performance.

The fourth consideration in selecting magic to perform in restaurants is that it be participatory. This may not be one of your criteria, but I work best when I'm performing effects that involve the audience in some sort of activity. A man who signs a card that later appears in my wallet is considerably more impressed than a guy who simply thinks you keep a duplicate card in your wallet. His involvement in the tricks draws him into the act. A woman who finds my sponge ball in her hand is not only amazed, she is involved. I don't just want people to watch, I want them to become part of the routine. That's when people really want to believe in magic.

My fifth criteria is that the magic be simple. I don't mean simplistic, as though I were performing for small children, but simple to do, simple to set up, and simple to carry. I want everything I do to fit into my pockets easily, without having to fumble for props. That means I have to spend time thinking carefully about where things go and how I'll use my various pockets. I also want tricks that are simple to reset, so although I enjoy some stacked deck

routines, I rarely perform one in a restaurant. The management isn't paying me to stand in the kitchen and reset my deck; they're paying me to perform, and I try never to piddle around with resetting props during performance time. Besides, an audience who sees the magician disappear into the back room after every table quickly figures out he is setting up his tricks, and that takes all the spontaneity out of the performance.

Another part of being simple is that all the props I use are relatively inexpensive. Coins don't often wear out, so they're a good value. Cards do, but they can be replaced inexpensively. Sponges get lost in dark restaurants, and props get wet when set on the table, so I'm not interested in using any collector's items at work. I make a good living performing, but I don't want to have to spend it all on keeping my act together. I also make sure I keep duplicates of the things I use most often in a case in the back room, so that if something happens I can quickly remedy the situation. I don't, however, bring along a bunch of magic that I know I'll never use. Leave the new stuff at home until you're ready to put it into the act. There's nothing worse than having a case jammed with so many cute props that you can't find the one thing you really need.

My sixth criteria in selecting magic is to make sure every effect is workable. By that I mean I am comfortable performing the effect, I know what I'm going to say and I'm confident it can be performed at the restaurant. This is another reason for checking out the establishment. I've worked some places that had huge tables where I could have done "sawing a woman in half" if I'd wanted to, and others where the tables were so small I didn't see how they were going to get two dinner plates on it at the same time. I want my magic to work at my restaurant, so I select tricks that are generally angle-proof and that require no

close-up pad. Again, that's a personal preference, and there are good arguments why you should use a close-up pad, but I hate carrying it around or rearranging the table, so a workable trick for me is one that can be done in either my hands or the spectator's. A trick that requires me to sit down isn't a workable trick for me, which cuts out a number of excellent effects, but those are the limitations I have put on myself. I don't carry a case with me, so for a trick to be workable I have to be able to carry it on my person — and you'll be amazed at what you can carry if you put your mind to it!

The seventh and last criteria I consider when selecting tricks is suitability. Some humor is appropriate for restaurant performances, and some is not. Certainly if you are working in a family restaurant, with children as a regular part of your audience, any sort of blue or suggestive material is off limits. I've also found that I am much safer if I don't make jokes about politics, race, religion or anatomy. And any comments about women that could be misconstrued are not only offensive, you can find yourself with a black eye from her date (this actually happened to a friend of mine). You can be funny, but why be offensive and ruin somebody's evening? Your focus should be on helping them have a good time at the restaurant, not letting them know what a clever rake you are.

Some tricks are offensive when you're having a meal. Stay away from finger choppers, tricks with food, and tying people up. On stage you might be able to put something in your mouth and expect an audience member to be willing to touch it, but never at a restaurant. Think about the appropriateness of every selection for your particular venue, and you'll select tricks that are strong, entertaining, and just right for your audience.

-12 -Living on the Edge

We wanted to take just a page or two to further discuss the use of blue material in magic. Some magicians feel a need to live on the edge, always making witty remarks that have a sexual connotation. Many stage magicians have abandoned all sense of modesty to mask the fact that their magic isn't all that great. Sex sells, and it certainly has shown itself to be a selling point in magic. If it works on a Vegas stage, fine. However, consider the situation in a restaurant.

Let's say a guy has been panting after the girl of his dreams for months, and he finally gets her to go to dinner with him. As they wait for their food, a young magician comes over and, in the course of a rope trick, makes several suggestive remarks about her tying up her boyfriend. He might laugh because the lines are funny, but does he need any sexual tension added to his evening?

Or consider a guy who's been married fifteen years. He finally gets a night out with his wife, away from the kids, and as he is eating his dessert, the magician makes a couple of sexually suggestive remarks during a sponge ball routine. This guy might love magic, but he really doesn't appreciate the jokes being made to his bride.

Or imagine a couple taking the family to a nice restaurant, so that they can show their kids how to behave in public. The children love the appearing sponge bunnies, but they don't understand all the double entendres being tossed out by the magician.

I've seen this stuff happen again and again. Younger magicians especially seem to think that adding sexually suggestive lines will make their act better or more sophisticated, but all it does is make them seem crass and juvenile. Think about it. Have you ever seen Harry Blackstone make a coarse joke to a man in the theater?

Sure, restaurants are a unique venue. People come and drink alcohol, and they often expect to see entertainment, but they also bring with them morals and values about life. With so many non-offensive topics, why take the risk of offending people? I've known guys who have lost a lot of work due to their lack of sensitivity.

Network television used to be the most watched entertainment vehicle in the country. Have you noticed the ratings lately? They're down significantly, and poll after poll suggests that people have turned them off because they are tired of the violence and moral rot portrayed in their shows. Now, I'm not making the case that a magician should never offer a funny remark. Michael Close (who I think is a magic routining genius) often starts a set by asking a woman to hold up a finger, then when she lifts her index finger he says, "Thanks for using that one, I know it wasn't your first choice." Very few people would be offended at that remark. He isn't suggesting that flipping people the bird is a good thing, he is simply making a cute comment on those who do.

Bill Malone is a total professional who works tables at a resort in Florida. There are some pretty racy things happening at resorts that offer gambling, booze and stage shows, and Bill keeps up a running commentary on all of those. He winks at the ladies, tells funny stories about people, and I've even seen him ask one audience member to marry him! But I've never seen Bill offend anybody.

My co-author has worked plenty of comedy clubs, and some of the performers can get pretty raw — but where do those guys expect to take their acts? Jay Leno isn't inviting some joker on his show to tell anatomy jokes! If you're working in a place where that sort of humor is expected, then that's your choice. But don't think everybody in the country is going to appreciate suggestive remarks or bathroom humor. Use some good judgment and think about what will move you ahead in magic.

-13-How To Prepare

Overview:

- Select your effects and master them through practice.
- Prepare your effects write them down, list the props, note the length of the routine.
- Reliearse the effects as you will be performing them - standing up.
- Add your patter create stories to make the effects entertaining.
- Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse some more.

You've thought through your philosophy of magic, approached a restaurant, and selected some tricks that you think would be a good match. Now it's time to begin rehearsing in earnest.

Michael Ammar, in his book The Magic of Michael Ammar, makes a good case that there is a difference between "training" and "practicing." To train is to learn the necessary moves. To practice is to try out the complete routine, often for no one other than a mirror or video camera. I use a similar distinction. "Preparation" is getting everything together so that you can perform. When you prepare, you make a list of all the necessary props. You write out the moves and the patter. You walk through them

all so that you know what happens when. To practice is to work your way through your routine. It's funny, but with all the books written on magic, I find there is very little written on how to practice magic. Thus I will offer my own method of preparation and practice.

First, select the tricks. I not only keep a written list of the effects, but I write out exactly how each trick is done so that I can make improvements to them. I go through each sleight time after time, so that I can perform them without thinking. For example, palming a card is probably the most useful sleight a restaurant magician can learn. Nearly every full-time professional uses palming regularly; it's a sleight they can't do without. But palming cards seems to send chills up the spine of non-professionals and part-timers. So when I decided to work in restaurants, I knew I was going to have to learn to palm cards smoothly, naturally, and right under the noses of my audience. I worked on it. I read about it, practiced it in front of a mirror, and video taped myself stealing cards from the top, bottom, and middle of the deck. I also went everywhere with cards palmed, so that I'd get the feel of having them in my hands, and to see if anyone noticed. Then I went to a magician friend whom I respect and had him observe me, to see if he noticed when I was palming cards. Eventually it became second nature. Now I feel confident palming cards at a restaurant table.

Where does confidence come from? Preparation and practice. If a student is going to give a speech in class, he must first sit down and read about his topic. If he doesn't prepare himself, the speech will be bad. Then, once he has prepared, he must practice it out loud, because the words never seem to flow from our mouths the way they sounded in our head. After he had adequately prepared, then practiced the speech so he knows how it sounds and

how long it lasts, he develops a confidence that he can do it well for his class.

A pianist goes through the same experience. He prepares by training on his scales and arpeggios, and working through the most difficult parts of his piece. Then he practices the entire number over and over again, so that it is smooth, has the right rhythm and rises and falls in all the correct places.

A magician must go through the same process. The first thing to do is select the magic you will perform, and prepare yourself to work through the entire piece. The second step is to walk through the sections of a trick until it is technically smooth. Most tricks have several sections, and you must get a feel for the rising and falling action in the effect.

Once you can do the tricks smoothly, your next step is to do them standing up. This is an important step that many magicians miss. Doing a card routine seated is very different from doing it while standing. I go through it again and again, looking at myself in the mirror to catch angles and see how I look. I've found that many magicians hate to practice in front of a mirror, but I believe that's only because they worry their technique isn't very strong. Watching yourself, or video taping yourself, will reveal all your flaws. I hate it! I doubt anyone enjoys seeing themselves struggle through a piece of magic, but it will help you improve, and that's the point of rehearsal.

The fourth step is to add in my patter. This is the part that always takes me the longest. I hate saying the obvious to my audience, so I create little stories about each effect. In the few moments I have to perform I figure there aren't many seconds to waste, so I want every line to count. My words will sometimes be instructive, or will emphasize a

certain point (for example, "You've both signed separate cards"), but more often my patter exists to create misdirection. I want people to look me in the eye, or to look at their neighbor, or to examine the deck while I'm doing the dirty work, and I've found that words are my best diversion. Of course, more than anything I want my words to entertain my audience, and I try to create stories that are engaging and humorous.

Some people are great at coming up with original lines. Most others seem to be great at stealing lines. Sure, I've "borrowed" good lines from magicians (a favorite: Close's "Try to remember your card, otherwise we'll both be embarrassed...especially you."), but I make sure my act isn't made up of somebody else's material. Take the time to work out exactly what you'll say, and how long it will take to say it. Then you'll be able to count on your effect and your patter in a performance situation. Of course, you'll also find yourself adding lines as you perform, and sometimes the spectator will offer you a wonderful gag line that you can use.

The next step is where you move from preparation to practice. You know the technical side of the trick, you've trained yourself to do it smoothly and you know your lines. Now you've got to do it again and again, so that you get a feel for the entire piece. This is one part many magicians don't want to do. They get bored with doing the same old thing again and again. But that's exactly how you refine the act and make it strong. Practice it exactly how you will perform it. That means wearing the same outfit (or a similar outfit) you'll use in performance. It means standing at a dining table, so you get used to working the right height. It means once again video taping yourself working. And it probably means forcing your spouse and kids into watching you do that same effect dozens of times!

Some people hate to rehearse, but I think that rehearsal is what adds polish to my magic. I enjoy my magic, so really don't mind rehearsing my stuff. I'd rather be performing than selling cars or working on some industrial line, so I figure my rehearsal is part of the package. I once heard a man say, "Life is made up of hundreds of average days, and a handful of great days. It's how you live the average days that determine how your great days will turn out." On an average day I'm practicing magic; trying to improve what I do. That has allowed me to have a number of great days, where I'm performing before people who really enjoy what I do. If you want to have some great days in magic, spend some ordinary days on preparation and practice.

— 14 — Keys to Working Tables

Overview:

- Keep the magic visual.
- Establish yourself as a magician right away.
- Choose "winner" effects.
- Make your effects your own, don't copy other's style.
- Involve the audience in the magic.
- Be aware of who is around you, especially reslaurant staff.
- End your roulines before the food arrives.
- Let your audience know when you are done with your magic.

There are a number of practical things to keep in mind when you're performing restaurant magic. Perhaps the most important is that you are not doing a series of tricks; you're doing an act. That means you need to have a definite opening and a clear closing. It means that your effects need to blend smoothly, moving from one to another in an order that makes sense. And it means there should be some "build" to your act, so that you end the show with a haymaker.

Many restaurants are noisy, so remember to keep the magic visual. The three best effects for visual magic are productions, vanishes, and levitation, so make sure to have routines for those effects ready to go. If people cannot hear what you say, they can always see you produce coins, cards, sponges, or even drinks. They might not be able to hear all your funny lines, but they can see you vanish a wine glass or a salt shaker. It might be too noisy to listen to your funny patter, but they can certainly watch as you float a cocktail napkin. If you stick with visual effects in a noisy establishment, you'll be all right.

Having said that, you also want to make sure that when you perform they see you and not just your tricks. Your personality should shine through. Your particular style should be evident in every effect you perform, so that the customers go away remembering you, not just your tricks.

When you first approach the table, establish yourself right away. I nearly always begin with fire and a production. No words, just magic. That immediately grabs their attention, lets them know I'm a magician, and prepares them for some entertainment. It also helps me gauge their interest. I try to judge the table before I approach it, so as not to interrupt an argument or a business deal, but occasionally a table can be giving off all the right signs, then totally reject a magic performance. Maybe I read them wrong. Maybe they just don't like magic. Whatever the reason, I politely clear out as fast as possible. The first 45 seconds will usually tell me if they are interested in the rest of my routine. We'll have an entire chapter on good openers, but whatever you choose as your table approach, make sure it establishes you as a magician. A vanish at the start of your act creates mystery. A cute effect creates curiosity. A production creates astonishment. I've been using my flash paper opener for years now, because it

does two things. First, it stops conversation ("Whoa! Look at that!"). Second, it establishes my credentials ("He's a pro!"). I don't want to get confused with the captain or wine steward. I'm the entertainment, and I've only got a few minutes, so I want to establish myself right away.

Another key to working tables is to choose winners. That is, choose effects that fit your style, are appropriate for the venue, and blow away the audience. Sponge ball routines are great magic that many restaurant magicians have used successfully. The sponge bunny routines are good, but make sure the establishment is bright enough to see them. Coin routines are also good, but make sure they are direct and very visible. At many places copper/silver tricks won't work, because the dim light doesn't allow the audience to differentiate the coins. Jumbo coins can make for great table magic — consider learning a good routine. Cigarette-through-quarter and coin-in-bottle tricks are nice effects, but they need good routines around them or they come across simply as puzzles.

Many performers make a living doing good rope routines. Cut-and-restored, sliding knot, and even the old professor's nightmare effects can all be used effectively. So can tricks with table napkins and beer mats, though I find few performers who use them any more. Rubber band magic has become much in vogue in the last three years, and there are a few excellent tricks you can perform with them. However, make sure your audience can clearly see the effect, and don't do six different rubber band tricks back to back, as I saw one performer do.

Any effects with borrowed dollar bills are good. Thread reels can allow you to create a nice floating bill routine, and there are several bill penetration effects that work great in a restaurant setting. These tricks also get the spectators involved, and you can be sure they'll be watching closely to see what happens to their money.

Obviously there are a bazillion card tricks that you can do, and magic stores have their shelves filled with books of good card effects. Try to establish yourself as somebody who does more than Great Uncle Harold's "pick a card, any card" routine. This leads me to think about the blessing and curse of magic videos. I hear old-timers complain about the advent of video, but I think it's a great tool for learning. The blessing of video is that I can see great magicians perform. I love watching their style, seeing how they do things, and learning from them. I buy videos all the time because I love studying what works for other performers. The curse of video is that, in showing me a performance, I can steal someone else's act rather than create my own. This has always been a problem with magicians, of course, but it's gotten worse with the advent of magic videos. Suddenly everybody wants to copy whatever the currently hot magician is doing. I've seen people perform blatant rip-offs from Dave Williamson and Michael Finney, and it's too bad, because an imitation will never get the respect or the business that an original will.

When a working performer, say a Don Alan or a Michael Ammar, put their material into a book or video, they don't expect you to copy it verbatim. They expect you to use it, add your own lines and bits of business and make it your own. To be honest, I will on occasion find a routine that is already so well planned that I struggle to change anything. A good example is Michael Close's "The Card, The Forehead and The Salt Shaker." It's a perfect routine, and there is nothing I could change to make it better...however, there are things I can change to make it mine. And any time a visiting magician asks me about it, I give credit to the true creator of that effect. I figure Mr.

Close put it in his book so that I could use it, and so I do. I take this little digression for a couple of reasons. First, I think most magicians already have more than enough material. Like everyone else, I'm always tempted by advertising copy to purchase the latest book of tricks, but the fact is I've already got enough material to last me a lifetime, if I would only use it. However, I have to take any of those effects and make them mine, or they'll just come across to my audience as cheap imitations. A second reason I talk about this is because one fairly famous magician recently put out a book and tape series that stated, "These effects are for information only. Permission to perform them is not granted." Give me a break! If he wants to do a performance video, that's fine, but don't show everybody how to do it and then warn them not to.

Getting back to my main point, a key to working tables is to look for card tricks that you can turn into winners. I do a signed card routine that's a killer, and my co-author is known for a great version of the signed card to wallet. Stretch yourself. Do a story with a deck, in the mold of "Sam the Bellhop." Do a Dunbury Delusion effect or a torn-and-restored card. Use a rising card deck, or (if the restaurant allows it) a card on the ceiling. These will get your audience involved with you and help them focus on your act. Make sure you have a routine and not just a quick revelation — the average American has become sophisticated enough to expect more than you simply telling her the name of her card.

Be very wary of packet tricks, which leave the impression that special cards do the magic... an impression that might be awfully close to being right. I still use the old "Gypsy Curse," but those are made to look like special cards, and the package they come in fits the story I tell. Make sure to have your thumbtip with you. It's great for doing tricks with small scarves, and you can use it for bill switches and cigarette vanishes. Jerry does a number of tricks with a borrowed finger ring — ring off rope, ring flight, and even a ring to salt shaker. Jim does magic with miniature linking rings that are often the highlight of his act. Color changing knives work in restaurants, as do paper tricks, tricks with glasses, and small flash items.

One of the things you'll find is that you can start carrying around a lot of junk. That's a mistake. When I tablehop for two hours, I have about twelve items ready to perform. I used to worry about doing the same tricks for two tables close to each other, and I made sure to offer different routines for each table. But then I kept hearing people say, "Do the trick you did for them; the one where the dollar bill floats!" So I stopped worrying about repetition. Actually, I try not to perform for two tables right beside each other, but if a table asks to see me because I performed for their neighbors, I do the same routine. I have a good friend in magic who wears one of those special vests with all the pockets, and he carries perhaps fifty tricks on his person. That's fine, because it fits his personality. But I don't think I could even keep track of fifty tricks! My advice is to pack light.

I remember a night, early in my restaurant career, when I had loaded my pockets up with about 25 tricks. I was standing at a table, having just completed my opening effect, when I realized I couldn't find the prop I was looking for. So there's the audience, listening to a guy in a tux stumble around while his hands are digging through his coat and pants pockets. Pretty impressive. I keep fewer things on my person now, and I know exactly where each one is. Every trick I do is a winner, so I don't worry about displaying a vast repertoire as much as helping my audi-

ence leave with smiles on their faces.

When I see a repeat customer, I make sure to note that "It's nice to be seeing them again." Then I offer different tricks, so that they aren't seeing the same routine they did last time.

By the way, I usually keep two or three extra effects in my case, which is left in the manager's office or the kitchen. That way if we get a big party, or if the manager requests me to do something special for a table, I can go grab those specialty items. The chop cup is my favorite effect, but I don't do it on restaurant tables except for special guests. It's a dynamite routine, and that way I've got something in reserve when asked. Many performers also keep a needle-through-balloon, bill-in-lemon, or Benson bowl routine close by, in case they need something extra special.

I do not carry around a close-up pad. I rarely lay anything on the table, since tables are often wet and I don't want to re-arrange glasses and bread baskets. If you lay something down, someone is sure to pick it up — and then set it in the butter. You'll go through enough cards and sponges as it is, so why create further trouble? Besides, many people feel their personal space is invaded if you begin moving things on their table, and it's awfully hard to overcome their discomfort.

As much as you can, involve the audience in your effects. Try to get them to do something, as physical action increases audience attention. Don't just ask them to pick a card; have them put their finger on it, hold it, or even sit on it. It makes for a much more vibrant response.

A key to working successfully with the staff is to be aware of the people around you. If the aisles are tight, don't step backwards suddenly. I once caused a waitress to drop somebody's chicken dinner on the floor, and it was the last chicken dinner in the place. Generally you approach a table after the waiter has taken the order and before the food arrives. When you first start working, ask some questions about the food so that you know how long things take. For example, at Trader Vic's the roast lamb takes 40 minutes. I've got a full 20 minutes before the salad will be on the table.

When in doubt, ask the waiter. Do it quickly and clearly, since they don't earn tips for talking to the help, but let them know you want to help them by offering their diners a great experience. As you develop a good relationship with staff, you'll find plenty of bits of business to do with them during your act. Never make fun of them, but a cute line while they're filling water glasses or replacing breadsticks reveals camaraderic to the diners.

The ideal is to end your routine before the food arrives. If the staff walks up with the food and you're still performing, end your act immediately. Making them wait won't make you any friends, either with your busy coworkers or your hungry audience. That's why most routines need to be kept short, so that there's never a long wait as you wrap something up. I encourage you to also think of false endings for longer routines, just in case you have to bail out early. Most table shows last between five and twelve minutes. When you are putting your routines together, time them out. There's nothing worse than having to abandon your best effect because the steaks have arrived.

By the way, if you couldn't get around to a table before their food arrived, you can always do a short show during desert. These are usually five to eight minutes, and you have to be willing to perform while they are taking bites of chocolate mousse. If you are going to do this, keep a sharp eye out for the waiter. He wants to get the bill on the table, but he won't want to interrupt your act. So make the decision before you ever begin that as soon as you see the bill coming to the table, the show ends. Restaurants make money by turning tables, and you don't want to detain the people who are done. It's a cardinal rule. When the bill is produced, the magician vanishes.

Another key to working tables is that your routine should let everybody know when it's at an end. You don't need to step back and bow, but make sure your posture, your words, and your effect makes clear "This is the end." A clear end to a good effect will usually bring applause — which the management will notice.

Some very popular restaurants will ask you to perform for the crowd of people waiting in line for a table. I think that's the hardest crowd to hold, though I have at times volunteered to do it because the crowd was clearly getting edgy. The reason this is such a tough crowd is because no one is in a good mood. Nobody likes to wait, so they aren't thinking about the magic near as much as they are thinking about hearing their name called for a table. You can be in the middle of your most stunning "card to underwear" effect, when suddenly a name is called and your audience walks away, headed to their table. Because of that, I have two keys I always use when performing for the waiting line. First, I make sure nothing goes longer than one minute. I could lose these people at any time, so I want my effects to be short and sweet. Second, I try to do effects for the entire crowd, not just one or two people. That way if somebody heads off to eat, I'm not stuck without an audience.

This is a lot to swallow in one chapter, so do yourself

a favor and read it again. I don't want to sound arrogant, but working tables isn't an easy task. If you expect to make your living at it, you need to know the things in this chapter.

— 15 — The Magic Look

Overview:

- Make sure your outfit is appropriate for the type of restaurant.
- Make sure it has enough peckels to hold your props and that it still fits well.
- Keep your apparel laundered and replace items when they are worn.
- Choose appropriate and tasteful accessories (handkerchiels, jewelry, etc.).
- Have good personal hygiene.

Paul Gertner tells a story about being at a trade show, chatting with a businessman, when another magician walked up. This guy was dressed in a silver tuxedo, and he had come over to say hello to Paul. The businessman looked at the fancy duds and asked, "Are you a magician too?"

"What else would I be with a jacket like this?" the magician replied. To which the businessman said, "I figured either a magician or a dork."

Old habits die hard. Magicians are still so in love with the golden era of magic, when Kellar and Thurston and Carter and Blackstone and Dante held court, that they imitate the trappings of the thirties. They still do the die box and the squared circle, and they still think that Cardini was the epitome of magic acts. Then, as an honor to all that tradition, they try to look just like those esteemed fellows. Now, it should be noted somewhere that the last of those guys retired about the year Eisenhower left office. Elvis was just starting out. The average American had never heard of Vietnam. As far as popular culture goes, it was just past the stone age. This is my subtle way of suggesting that what worked in 1937 (or '47, or '57) probably doesn't work quite so well in 1997.

There's nothing in The Bible or the Dai Vernon Book of Magic that says all magicians must wear tuxedos. The thing that makes the most sense is for you to look like your character. Bar magicians understand that, and they've all started looking like bartenders (amazing, isn't it?). Siegfried and Roy understand that they need to look like Vegas headliners, so they wear outfits that are a cross between Wayne Newton and Zsa Zsa Gabor (only without the tasteful restraint). Salvano, a wonderful magician from Poland, still wears a tuxedo. That makes perfect sense for Salvano, who works all the fancy nightclubs in Europe, but it makes no sense for a restaurant worker at the Red Lion in Des Moines to wear a powder blue tuxedo with a blue ruffled shirt, when all the guests are in golf shirts.

I know what the argument is: "It looks magical." Maybe. Frankly, a lot of people think it looks dorky and hackneyed. It's better to wear something that fits exactly who you are as a performer. Weiss and Patricia, great performers from here in the Pacific Northwest, dress in fancy cowboy garb because that's the sort of act they do. Rudy Coby dresses like a space cadet, because he is one. What do you dress like?

It's my belief that magicians who don't know who they are as performers, who haven't thought through their magic paradigm, will dress like Cardini because they don't know what else to do. As a restaurant performer, I know who I am and how I ought to look. Jim's style tends toward the flashy, Jerry's toward the sedate. Jim offers a very modern look, with a white tuxedo shirt, a bow tie, and fancy vest. Jerry wears a plain blue coat and tie (though he steps into a wild vest when he does his bartender stuff). Both outfits fit our personalities. Jim is a flashy guy. Jerry is a self-deprecating fellow who makes himself the butt his own jokes. What are you? Who are you? And how could your dress reveal it?

There are a few practical things to keep in mind when working a restaurant. First, make sure your outfit is tasteful. It shouldn't make the manager cringe, or send the diners home sick. (One magician I know wears what I call his "Medusa jacket." If you stare at it long enough, you'll go insane.) It shouldn't be so tight that it leaves nothing to the imagination of the audience. Look at what the diners are wearing, and go one small step up.

Second, make sure your outfit has enough pockets to carry all your stuff without making you look like a relative of the Elephant Man. If you're going to do the card to wallet or the appearing wine bottle, you might as well decide right now to spend some time looking for a coat that fits those tricks just right.

Third, make very sure it's clean. O.K., many people are already skimming this page to move to the next chapter. But think about the wear your magic jacket takes. It gets hands going into pockets every few minutes — most guys only put their hands in their coat pockets a couple times a day. It gets cigarette smoke and alcohol on it nearly every night. And you'd better not expect to do any

children's shows if your coat smells like an old bar rag. Buy more than one performing shirt, and plan to get your coat pressed regularly.

By the way, after your coat or slacks have been pressed a couple dozen times, they'll start to look shiny. That's because the pressing not only takes out the wrinkles, it also wears down the top layer of fabric. That's the time to go shopping for a new coat, otherwise people will think you buy your clothes from Goodwill.

If you choose to wear a tuxedo or its trappings (bow ties, vests, and the like) call your local tux rental outfit and ask if they have an annual sale. Most rental shops have to unload last year's styles, and once a year they offer great prices on new or slightly used stuff. That's also a good place to find a heavy raincoat, which is a necessity in many parts of the country, and can protect those expensive silk shirts you bought.

Fourth, try to make your dress details go with the big picture. If you don't have an eye for fashion, ask your wife or visit a nice men's clothing store. Don't ask at a cut-rate clothing shop, most of the salespeople don't know the difference between a cummerbund and a cucumber. Ask at a good men's clothing store about ties, cufflinks, shoes and jewelry.

Some magicians are perfectly comfortable wearing fancy rings, but I've never been able to do coin routines without making them talk to my wedding ring. The choice is yours, but don't try to impress your audience by wearing something Liberace threw out,

Granted, there is a "magic look" that a number of performers try to emulate. We are just arguing that, rather than copying what somebody else is doing, you find something that is right for you in your particular restaurant. Now comes the worst part. (Your mother called me and begged me to say this, so listen up.) Never go to work without shaving, washing your hair, and using deodorant. Keep a box of Tic-Tacs handy and use them. For some reason, women think it's a big deal if you don't clean under your fingernails, so spend .59 cents on a nail brush. If your hair is long or droopy, buy some hair spray. If you need dental work, invest in a new smile. If you have skin problems, talk to a make-up professional at a nice department store and purchase something to help hide the blemishes. And remember, if restaurant management ever catches you performing with alcohol on your breath, you'll probably lose your job.

Okay, the bad part is over. You can come back in the room now.



Jim in one of his fantasies,

— 16 — Recommendations for Restaurant Magicians

There are a million tricks that you could perform, but there are a handful of things that you simply must have if you're going to be a restaurant magician. In alphabetical order, these are the items we believe you should invest in:

Cards - Bicycle decks, poker-sized. Sometimes it's cheaper to purchase by the case. Occasionally you'll find a better deal at a discount store or even your local drug store. Always bring extra decks — one spilled margarita can play havoc with your deck. If you're wondering about trick decks, the card rise, Svengali and Don Alan's Invisible Deck are the best.

Chop Cup - Sooner or later you're going to want to do either a chop cup, cups and balls, or Benson bowl routine. If you have the surface and can do it standing up, it makes a great alternative piece in your act.

Close-Up Case - You have to put your extra stuff somewhere. Jim uses a briefcase, which keeps everything together in one safe place. Jerry uses a camera case, which is set in case he is asked to do a sit down show or to work behind a bar.

Coins - Go to the bank and get a roll of fifty-cent pieces, plus a few silver dollars. If you have the money, Liberty dollars make a nice display on a tabletop. Bring extras, in case they disappear too well. You'll also want some gaffed coins, probably a "Scotch & Soda" and a "Hopping Half' set. You may also want some foreign coins, a folding coin or a cigarette-through-coin, and some coin clips to hold coins for productions.

Flash Paper - All you need is a little piece to make a big impression. Make sure you have a lighter, too.

Mike Kozlowski's \$100 Bill Switch - Every working performer can use this to switch one bill for another.

Mouth Coils - If you do any magic for kids, you can't beat a mouth coil (unless you do balloon animals!).

Ring and String Routine - Magic with wedding rings is a natural for restaurant workers. Find a good ring and rope routine and put it into your act. (Hint: "The Homing Ring" is a good one.) You can also add Don Alan's "Ring Flight," or one of the other ring routines.

Rope Routine - Rope magic works well in restaurants, so plan to learn a short routine that's a winner. Use magicians rope, because it cuts easily, and purchase a book of basic rope effects.

Sidewalk Shuffle - The only packet trick that I consider a must. There are several versions of it. Pick one, develop your story, and you'll have a short, professional routine you can do on a moment's notice just about anywhere.

Silks - A colorful handkerchief or just a men's pocket square can prove invaluable to a restaurant magician. Always have a back-up in your case, because if they get wet, they are absolutely unusable.

Sponges - Whether you use red balls, neon blocks,

homemade shapes, or professional bunnies, invest in a bunch. The best new utility device of the last 40 years. Thank the Lord for Al Goshman.

Thumbtip - Gotta have it. If you aren't using one, you're missing out on a number of dynamite routines.

Thread Reel - Use it for floating bills, making them stand on edge, etc. Quickly becoming a necessity.

Topit - Carl Cloutier's and Michael Ammar's Topit tapes can tell you all you need to know. I use mine every time I perform. Don't purchase the old "pin in your jacket" type. Get either the Cloutier or Ammar pattern and have it sewn in.

Utility Vanisher - Just having a clip or holder on the end of elastic can turn you into a miracle-maker. Wear this at all times.

Wallet - Nothing has more of an impact to a spectator than having their signed card or bill arrive in your zipped wallet. There are a bunch of good ones on the market. Purchase a nice one that you'll use as your regular wallet and add it to your act.

Any time you begin recommending magic books, you face a daunting task. In the first place, there are a ton of excellent books. Second, you're sure to offend someone when you don't mention their book. Third, there are constantly new things being written, so this will probably be out of date by the time it goes to the publisher. With those caveats in mind, we'd like to suggest the following books for people who want to make a substantial part of their living doing restaurant magic:

For Coin Magic:

- Modern Coin Magic, by J.B. Bobo
- Expert Coin Magic, by David Roth
- CoinMagic, edited by Richard Kaufman

For Card Magic:

- Card College 1 & 2, by Roberto Giobbi
- Close-Up Card Magic, by Harry Lorayne
- Expert Card Technique, by Hugard and Braue
- At the Card Table and Cardshark, by Darwin Ortiz.

For General Magic:

- Workers 1-5, by Michael Close
- The Magic of Michael Ammar
- The Performance of Close-Up Magic, and The Secret of Restaurant Magic, by Eugene Burger
- Smoke and Mirrors, by John Bannon
- The Book of John, by John Mendoza
- Magic Menu, by Jim Sisti
- Seven Secrets and Commercial Magic, by J.C. Wagner

- Magicomedy, by Mike Caveney
- The Art of Astonishment, by Paul Harris
- We also recommend nearly anything written by Scotty York, Eugene Burger or Harry Lorayne

For Reslaurant Work:

- Manual of Restaurant Magic, by Kirk Charles
- Table Hopping, by Bruce Posgate
- Table-Hoppers Source Book, by Paul Hallas
- The Art of Hopping Tables, by Mark Leveridge
- Professional Restaurant Magic, by Jim Sisti
- Restaurant and Table Magic, by Dan Tong

And Magic Videos:

- Don Alan, Greater Magic Series
- Bar Magic, Greater Magic Series
- Restaurant Magic, Greater Magic Series
- Mike Rogers, Greater Magic Series
- Eugene Burger, Greater Magic Series
- Topit Tapes, Card Miracles, by Michael Ammar
- The Power of Palming and Workers, by Michael Close

- Any tape by David Roth, John Bannon, Harry Lorayne
- Brad Burt's Private Lessons Video Series
- Carl Cloutier Topit & Sleeving Tapes

There you have it, our recommendations for the best in magic. Now go out and spend that fortune!



Inside Callin's House of Magic at the magic counter... If you are in Portland, Oregon, it is a great place to spend some time.

-17 -

Roulining and Personalizing Your Magic

As you begin, make sure you have selected tricks that appeal to you, and try to visualize how they will look when you have routined and are performing them. If you aren't sure how a trick should look, talk it over with someone. I'll sometimes ask a fellow magician to show me the effect, so that I get a better picture of what I should do with it. That's one of the reasons I like magic videos, particularly performance videos. They allow me to see great magicians performing routined effects for an audience. As you begin to move to routining a trick, you must make sure that you are confident in the mechanics of it. Practice it out loud, just as if you were performing for an audience. Where would you be looking if you were an audience member seeing this effect for the first time? What would your response be? How much time would you need for the impact of the trick to register with you?

As you think through these questions, you will begin to add in pauses, to physically allow the spectators to respond. Dionysius said, "Silence commands attention." Pausing does that. That's why a speaker who wants to quiet a crowd will simply stand at the podium and look out in silence until the masses become silent. Yet pauses, even short pauses, are the most difficult thing to do well as a new performer. It takes utter confidence to stop talking in front of an audience, and most magicians aren't confident in their magic or themselves. So they talk incessantly, even when they should be quiet, and it spoils the

impact of the effect.

You have no doubt heard entertainers talk about "comic timing" — the ability to say the punchline at just the right moment to get the maximum laugh. Much of good timing is simply learning to pause. Ken Brooke, the great British performer, was a master at comic timing. He would do his Passé Bottle routine, stop, look at the audience, look at the bottle, look back at the audience, and finally shrug his shoulders and go on. This gave the audience adequate time to let the effect register, and it drew them into the routine. But most magicians will simply do a quick look at the change of bottles, then move on, as if speed were their primary motivation.

Terry Seabrooke, another British magician, is also a master of timing. He understands that a pause can sometimes make your act funnier. Several years ago I heard him speak at a PCAM convention, and he talked about the unnecessary hurry the competition contestants used. They raced around, trying to get as many tricks as possible into the allowed eight minute slot, when they would have been better served by relaxing and allowing a pause for their tricks to register with their audience.

I'm not saying that you need to have a slow pace in restaurant magic. On the contrary, you've got to keep it moving or your audience will get distracted by the bustle. But learning good timing will make your routine more effective, rather than causing you to hurry to get to the next trick. Timing, according to John Mendoza in his overlooked book Close-Up Presentation, "... is the starting and stopping of your normal or purported to be normal actions for maximum audience viewing and impact. Misdirection is the starting and stopping of your deceptive actions for minimum, in fact hopefully total lack of audience

viewing...Timing is what makes the moves look deceptive."

As you begin to work on the timing of your effects, think about the misdirection you will use to strengthen your magic. Your eyes can create great misdirection, as can your words. Any movement your hands make will draw attention, so think about moving your hands (or perhaps one hand) to draw attention away from the dirty work. Remember, if you lean forward, you increase attention. As you lean back and your arms relax, attention decreases — therefore, think about doing the work when the audience is relaxed, but presenting the effect when they are most attentive.

Make sure your effect is crystal clear. Every motion you make and every word you say should support the impact of the effect. If your audience doesn't understand what a miracle you've just performed, then you aren't done with your routine.

Remember that any instructions you give to a spectator must be short and very clear. When you get a chance to practice the routine with someone, test any instructions to see if they make sense. Years ago I used to say, "Place it back in the deck," and people would start shoving their card into the middle of the pile of cards in my hand. I've learned to say, "Place your card on top of the pile," and they always get it right.

How do you routine a trick? Well, think about any other sort of entertainment besides magic. If you turn on a television show or go to the opera, if you attend the ballet or walk into a concert, you will find a clear beginning. No one stumbles into the start. The house lights dim, the stage lights come up, and the action begins. (For television, the opening credits roll and the intro music plays,

but we've all become conditioned to that as the beginning of a program.) There is plenty of action in the middle—perhaps conflict or comedy—and the story is told throughout. There is momentum; a building from one activity to another. Even in a concert there is a definite feel that we are moving toward a climax. Then there is a clear ending, which brings the audience to its feet.

A magic show should follow the same pattern. Each effect should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and each set of effects should have a sense of building from the opener to the closer. The openers should be visual and should create interest. The middle routines should sustain interest and draw people along. They should be offered at a brisk pace, leaving no dead spots or gaps. The ending of each effect needs to cap off the action, and the final climax should really be your strongest bit of magic. You should have the attitude that nothing could top the last trick, so you'd better stop. Think about moving toward a crescendo, and end with a bang.

Quick, visual tricks make the best openers. I love using MacDonald's Four Ace Trick in the middle, though
only with a table that I know has plenty of time. Many
coin routines and sponge ball routines make nice middle
effects, since they are often great magic without drop-dead
endings. Unique card effects like "Sam the Bellhop" or
"Cannibal Cards" can be good in the middle of a routine,
but be wary of using more than one card revelation. My
favorite effect, signed card to wallet, makes a super closer,
as does a strong card revelation (Dunbury Delusion, colorchange moves, Overkill, Eddie Fechter's "That's It").

As you begin to put your routines together, think about using tricks that go with one another naturally. For example, I'll tie together a bill switch, a bill penetration, and a floating dollar bill because they are all good effects that can smoothly flow from one to another with a borrowed bill. However, I watched a performer open his act with a floating bill, and I thought that was a mistake. It was the best thing he did, and for the rest of the act his audience was thinking, "How in the world did he get that bill to float?"

Most of my routines are about three tricks long, plus an opening quickie and some added bits of business throughout. That gives me enough time to really entertain the table, without getting so long that I'll be interrupted with the meal.

Make sure to practice not just the individual tricks, but the smooth transition from one effect to another. Transitions are probably the biggest thing that separates the "greats" from the "pretty goods." A pretty good performer will offer some excellent effects, but stumble or seem awkward in moving from one to another. A great performer will have a flow from the tricks to the bits of business, then go right into the next trick with new props already in hand.

Again, I hate to offer a sample routine for fear some readers will simply take and copy it, but something that has always irked me is a magic book that tells you the principle without offering an example. (You know the kind I mean — they say, "Be natural," then they fail to state what being natural is, or what I can do to appear natural.) So here are a few sample restaurant routines that I have used.

Rouline #1:

- A. Flash paper appearance of coin, coin flourishes, followed by short Miser's Dream routine, handful of coins climax, ending with three coins on table.
- B. Short business with coins, coin that falls up. Two in the hand, one in the pocket routine, done twice and ending clean.
- C. Ambitious card routine, with kicker climax.

Rouline #2:

- A. Wine glass vanish and thumbtip and silk bits, plus coin vanish and production of glass of water.
- B. Sponge bunnies routine.
- C. Double signed card revelation.

Rouline #3:

- A. Flash sponge appearance.
- B. Short sponge ball routine in hands, with multipleball kicker.
- C. Ring flight.
- D. Multiple card-to-pocket, with thrown color-change climax.

Rouline #4:

- A. Short coin routine in my hands.
- B. Borrow bill, change to newspaper, then Chop cup/ glass thru table routine.
- C. Dollar penetration.
- D. Floating bill.

However you end, it should be in an applause-catching way. The applause might be quite soft if the restaurant is classy and quiet, but even soft applause will tell the management that you've done another great performance, and it will cue everyone at the table that the performance is at an end.

Put your routines together, prepare the moves, practice the tricks, then rehearse the entire routine. When you have two sets ready to go, with eight to ten minutes of solid magic and entertaining patter, then rehearse another three to five extra effects for special guests. No more than three of those extra effects can be card related. Rehearse your magic with friends and family, then offer to help out at a party or social function. This will help you tighten up the weak spots, and get you ready to face the real world. At that point you're ready to begin prospecting restaurants.

One more thing: Putting together routines one time isn't enough. If you plan to do this for a living, you must make the decision to sharpen your act regularly. Watch good magicians. Listen to criticism (the mark of a mature person is that he or she can unpack a rebuke). Look for effects to add that are better than the ones you are currently doing. Notice how your audience responds and make your magic suit them rather than the boys at the monthly IBM meeting. Spend some time and money on quality magic books occasionally, so that you have some new thoughts entering your mind. And above all else, purchase several copies of everything I write, and tell your friends to do the same. (You can also make direct donations to my retirement fund by sending your check or money order today, to MagiScam, care of the publisher.)

— 18 — Орепетs

Nobody will buy a magic book without tricks, so in a crass marketing move... No, wait, let me start again.

We are very pleased to offer a couple of good openers. Every once in a while I'll read a magic book that has a trick which is a cute idea, but clearly won't work. I always wondered, "Why didn't the author include any of his real stuff?" Then I began writing books, and I thought, "Why should I give away my act?" Well, we have both decided to include some of the good stuff. These are pet effects which we use just about every day of our lives, so we know they work. Do us a favor and rehearse them; they're winners.

Jim's Flash Opener

Buy a pad of flash paper, then cut the sheets in half so that they look the size of cigarette paper. (Actually, I started doing this because I wanted to cut the cost of flash paper, but everybody immediately assumed the pieces were cigarette papers, so I thought I'd take credit for it.) I keep the papers in the collar of my vest, so that I can quickly grab one when I need it. Put a lighter in your left vest pocket, a silver dollar in your right pants pocket, and you're ready to go.

I watch to see when the waitress has taken a table's order, give them thirty seconds to settle, then I walk directly to the table, finger-palming the coin in my right hand and pulling out a half sheet of flash paper in my left. Without saving a word, I hold my left hand out to the man of the table, handing him the paper. (I've found that if they think you're staff, they'll take something from your hand without a word.) After he takes it from you, he'll examine it, while your left hand goes into your vest pocket and brings out the lighter. Retrieve the paper with your right hand, then hold it still. Bring your left hand up to display the lighter, and their eyes will move to look at it. At that time, transfer the coin in your right hand from a finger-palm to a clip position between your first two fingers. Flick the lighter, move the left hand and lighter to the right, light the paper, and as it flashes, simply flip the dollar up with your thumb. It will appear as though you pulled a coin right from the flame. Pause for a split second, just long enough for the coin to register, then begin a roll down flourish on your right hand as your left hand puts the lighter back and comes out with another dollar finger palmed. This is the point when I say my first words, introducing myself as the entertainment for the evening.

Flip the coin in the right hand up in the air, then pretend to put it in your pocket, actually classic-palming as many coins as you can. While your right hand is still in your right pocket, your left hand begins to move forward, toward the head of the person sitting on your left. "Remember this?" you ask, pulling a coin from behind their ear. "I've heard of cash-ears ("cashiers") before, but this is ridiculous."

As you say this line, your left hand simply turns over above your right hand. It appears as though you are transferring the coin from left hand to right, but actually you are "You keep one in your ear, I keep one here," you say, as your left hand apparently produces a coin from under your vest. "That's why they call it a treasure chest," you say, as you again do the false transfer with the left and lay down another coin with your right.

You can continue producing coins from the audience (and bad puns from the pit of hell), until you have three coins left in your right hand. At that point, reach over with your right hand close to the nose of a child at the table, and simply drop the coins a few inches into your left hand (so that it looks like you squeezed a series of coins from her nose). This will get a laugh, so gently toss the coins onto the table and move on to your next amazing coin feat.

I usually produce about fifteen coins with this. It's funny, flashy, short, and immediately establishes me as the magician. Better yet, it makes everybody at the table want to see more magic. My favorite opener!

MacGregor's Vanishing Wine Glass

In 1981 I watched John Cornelius vanish a red rubber ball right under people's noses. I thought it was a nice effect, but wanted to use something better than red rubber balls. Using his "pendulum principle" I created an effect that's proven to be a winner for me.

The basic effect is this: You walk up to a table, toss

back the remains of your drink, pull out your pocket handkerchief and cover the wineglass. Holding the glass by the top so that everyone can see the rim, you suddenly toss it up into the air, where it vanishes in mid-air. (Really.) It's a stunner, and it's easy to do with a bit of practice.

To do the effect, you'll need a needle and some thread that matches your jacket. Sew one end of the thread to your coat's right armpit. The other end should be a self-tightening loop, which you can slip over the base of a small wine glass or cordial glass. With your coat undone, if you hold the glass by the rim in your right hand, with it just to the right of your centerline, you can let go of the glass and it will swing down to your side, under your coat. Try it in a mirror several times, and you'll see how it swings quietly down like a pendulum. You'll want to experiment a little bit, as you'll find that raising your right elbow just a tad makes your coat open up, making the flight of the glass a bit easier. But if you raise your elbow too much it looks unnatural, and it can even open your coat too much, so that it no longer adequately hides the glass.

Two important thoughts: Don't stiffen your right fingers as you let go of the glass, or it will be obvious you have done something. And don't ruin the effect by feeling you've got to hurry everything at the moment the glass drops. A continuous, flowing motion will turn this into a miracle.

I keep a white handkerchief in my dress pocket (over your heart, for those of you who don't wear suits). It's actually two handkerchiefs, with a small Tupperware lid sewn to the back one. The lid is the same size as the wineglass. As I walk up to the table, I pretend to have a small amount of liquid in the glass and I toss it back, my right hand holding the stem. My tongue reaches out just a bit, to catch the imaginary drop of wine on my lips. With my left hand I reach up, pull out the handkerchief, and touch it to my lips. As I do so, I feel where the gimmick (the Tupperware lid) is. With some apology I'll say, "Hello, my name is Jerry MacGregor." Then my left hand simply tosses the handkerchief over the mouth of the glass — this will take some practice, so that you can do it smoothly. At this point my right hand is holding the stem of the glass, which is covered with a handkerchief, gimmick over the top of the glass.

Now my left hand lightly grasps the wineglass through the handkerchief, while my right hand lets go of the stem, comes away from the handkerchief, and grasps the gimmick from the top. As I let go with my left hand, I simply allow the wineglass to pendulum under my coat. I can then drop my right arm a bit, which ensures that my coat conceals the glass. Now it looks as though I am holding the glass from the top, though actually I'm just holding the gimmick. I complete my introduction by saying, "And I'm... the entertainment." As I take that short pause, I flick the handkerchief into the air, catch it, give it a flick and place it back into my dress pocket.

The whole thing takes less than thirty seconds and it's a winner. I've had people make all sorts of suggestions, but I haven't found many that improved upon the basic effect as I conceived it fifteen years ago. Some have used elastic rather than thread, but I felt that caused the glass to pull back, rather than drop down; the handkerchief offers plenty of cover for the drop). Pete Biro was nice enough to write this up in Genii a few years ago and he added an "asrah" floating addition, but I felt that took away from the basic effect by adding another element, so I've never used it. You can really have liquid in the glass, but you never quite get it all, so you'll soon have drops hitting your pant leg.

One magician uses this with his "card to wineglass" effect, vanishing the glass and making the cards change at the same time — too confusing for me.

You can also reverse this and produce a glass of wine by stretching a balloon over the mouth of the glass. By the way, I used to throw the handkerchief out toward the table, but I soon discovered that screaming women don't add to the ambiance of most restaurants, so I now just give it a little toss straight up. It's a great effect, but you'll need to rehearse this one in front of a mirror so that you don't educate your audience.

One last point: I'm told that Danny Korem of Texas, one of the true gentlemen of magic, used a similar item in the early 1980's. We talked about this effect over the phone and apparently we both came up with it independently.

There are any number of ways to start strong. Dan Fleshman uses a Professor's Nightmare to open his routine. Michael Close starts by giving something away (you'll have to buy his book to find out what it is). Doc Eason uses a card trick to begin, as does Dan Tong. Jim Sisti cracks me up. This rumpled looking guy comes wandering up to the table, tells his audience that he's the entertainment, then asks to borrow money! Michael Ammar, in his book, offers a great opener called "Did You Order Salt or Pepper." Look around and find just the right way to introduce yourself as a magician in a restaurant. Remember what your mom used to tell you: "Well begun is half done." What's true with yard work is just as true in magic.

There you have it. Two openers that are winners. Practice them and they'll be winners for you, too.

Magic books are lilled with great middle routines, so before revealing some of our lavorites, let me restate some principles:

- Pick tricks that are direct. Nobody should have to lumble for the meaning of a trick.
- Make sure the effects you select for your middle routines quickly reset, can be done standing and don't have a lot of angle problems.
- Use audience parlicipation in your middle routines as much as possible.
- Select tricks that flow one to another.
- Don't settle for a bunch of card revelations.

With those caveats in mind, here are a few of the strong middle routines that we use on a daily basis in restaurants.

Flashy Spange Balls

Using the same lighter and flash paper described in the previous chapter, you can also produce a sponge ball in your right fingertips. Then stop to look around for the clown who lost his nose. Do a retention vanish into your left hand, retaining the sponge in your right. Move your left fist forward and ask the child to blow on your hand it's gone! "That's because it's traveled to my pocket," you say as your right hand reaches into your pocket and pulls out a sponge ball at the fingertips (still finger-palming the original ball).

Next, if the table is clean you can do a ball split, apparently roll the ball in your right hand into two balls. If the table is dirty, simply bring your left hand over and apparently "tear" the one ball into two, then display the two balls in your right fingers.

Do a retention pass with one ball to the left hand, secretly retaining it in your right. Hand the other ball (really two) to the child, saying, "I want you to hold onto your ball." Then step away from the table, slowly open your left hand, casually put both hands in your pants pockets, and smile. Don't say anything, just look at them and they'll figure the magic must have happened. When they open their hand you've got perfect misdirection to steal out of your left pocket as many small sponge balls as you can in your left hand.

Reach over and pick up the two balls on the table, one in each hand. Shove them both into your left fist and hand them to a different person at the table, asking them to hold "the two balls." Make a gesture with your hands, then relax and smile again. Again the spectator opens her hand. This time six or seven sponges bounce onto the table.

I'm not going to give you my patter. Figure out something that works for you. This is an easy and quick sponge ball routine that gets directly to the magic, involves the audience, immediately resets and has a nice little climax to it. In a restaurant, that's a winner. If I'm working for a couple, I'll often use my version of Paul Harris' "Las Vegas Leaper" in the middle. Begin by thumbing off ten eards, turning them face up onto the deck, then getting a break under three more face down cards. Lift this packet of thirteen cards in your left hand and discard the rest of the deck. As you count "one" out loud, you take the top (face-up) card and move it face-down to the bottom of the packet. Do the same thing as you say "two" then ask one of the ladies to count the rest of the cards. If you have time, you can even hand the packet to them and let them count "three" to "ten." Then ask her to place the packet of "ten" cards under her right cheek.

Next, pick up the rest of the deck and pretend to count of three, but leave one. As you bring the three cards close to your own cheek (this time the facial kind), snap the cards and show that only two cards remain. "That's one."

Now hold the two cards in your left hand as though you were doing a French Drop. Pretend to take a card (actually it falls on the other), bring the "card" to your cheek and it disappears. "That's two." (This is the Tent Vanish.)

Show the two cards as one, point out the card's identity (let's say the six of clubs), place it on top of the deck and do a rub-away vanish onto the table. Bring it to your cheek and say, "That's three." (If anybody accuses you of stealing it back onto the deck, you can turn over the top card and show it is not the six of clubs.)

"I call this cheek to cheek, because if you'll take your packet and count them face down onto the table, you'll find that your cheeky packet of ten is now a packet of thirteen." As she does so, palm off the three top cards, then during the laughter at her finding thirteen, appear to spread the cards, actually adding the three palmed cards. You can then turn over the top two and say, "Oh, there's that six of clubs we vanished."

You now have a packet of sixteen cards that the woman just counted as thirteen. Ask her to put them under the other cheek, pretend to take three cards from the deck using a Biddle Count action, but actually you don't remove any cards. Apparently vanish all three of them at once by slapping them against your other cheek and ask her to count the cards again. She'll find sixteen — another laugh for you, the miracle maker. There are obviously all sorts of patter possibilities with this, so give it a try.

Slealing Away

This works best when the table you're working at is cluttered. After I've magically produced a coin, I'll do the "rubber coin" sight gag, then do John Cornelius' "coin that falls up." Next, I pull a fancy silk handkerchief from my vest pocket, placing it over my left palm. Pretending to place the coin in the center of the silk, I actually steal it away with my right hand, then reveal the vanish of the coin by pulling down slowly on the silk with my right fingers. After just a moment to let the vanish sink in, I say, "There it is," and reach across the table to pull the coin from under the edge of a plate.

However, the real magic is set up as I reach across the table. The silk is still draped over my left hand, with my left arm bent at close to a 90-degree angle, held close to my body but as relaxed as possible. As I reach across

with my right to pull out the coin, the eyes of the spectators watch my right hand. Meanwhile my upper body, following my right hand's movement, moves over a wine glass, beer bottle, or glass of water. The left hand fingers simply grasp it and as I lean back to hold up the coin, the stolen item gets spirited away under cover of the silk.

That allows me to straighten up, put the coin on the table and say, "If you think that's something, you ought to see me produce a glass of champagne." With those words, my right hand moves under the silk and my left hand pulls the silk away, revealing the glass of champagne (or whatever you stole).

Everybody's jaw will drop. Honest. Of course, they'll quickly realize you stole it from the table, and they'll laugh. That laugh is good for you, because it creates misdirection so that as you place the item back on the table with your right, you can steal something else with your left! They won't be expecting it, so you get a double climax. Be warned: You can't get away with it three times in a row, though you might find it makes a nice running gag if you spread the steals over the course of your act.

I've found this makes the biggest impact if the item you steal belongs to the diner. Wine bottles are easiest to grab, though I'm of the opinion you could steal one of their children if the misdirection is good enough.

If you're at one of those restaurants that seems to keep two glasses of water on the table for every person, you can produce a full glass and they won't remember if it came from the table or you pulled it out of thin air.

This takes some practice to do well. The real secret is found in not moving your left arm or hand, but keeping them relaxed as you do the steal. The spectator's eyes will follow whatever is moving, so if you move that right hand, they'll watch it and miss the dirty work. If, in the middle of copping the glass, you move that left hand or arm, it's over. Their eyes will notice the movement, and you won't fool anybody. As you lean forward, that left arm and hand should be locked in place. Your body moves over the object, rather than your hand moving to it.

I encourage you to get a copy of the great Bob Read's video tape to see how he does his "Appearing Wine Bottle." He has worked out every little nuance, and the tape offers not only a good trick, but a wonderful lesson on how to make an effect your own.

Don't be afraid to try this. It's a great middle effect, and you can practice it with your family at your dining room table!

Pace's Coin Rouline

Jim does a great "2 In The Pocket" routine in two phases. If you've been looking for a clean coin routine for your restaurant work, give this your consideration.

Phase One:

Begin with a coin classic-palmed in your right hand, and place two coins on the table. Do a Kaps subtlety to "show" your hands empty, as you ask, "Do you believe in magic coins? I have some. Let me show you how they work. If I have two coins, and I put one in my pocket, how many do I have in my hand?" Pick up a coin in each hand, pretend to place the left hand coin in your left pocket but thumb-palm it out.

"Right, two!" Show the two coins in the right hand by turning your hand up, so that the coins clink together. "Because these are magic coins. Let me show you again." Keep the right hand coins in exactly the same location in your hand. Pretend to toss the two coins to the left hand, but actually toss the upper one, classic-palming the other. That allows you to show the two coins in the left hand. Toss the two from the left hand on the table again. "If I have two coins, and put one in the pocket, how many do I have in my hand?" Pick up one coin in each hand, this time really put the left hand coin in the pocket, then turn the right hand over again with a clink and reveal the two coins have returned.

"Right, two! Are you keeping up with me, sir? Look, if I put both coins in this hand," at this point you do a friction pass from right to left. It looks like you tossed both coins over, but actually your right fingers kept one back. You now have one coin in each hand, but the audience thinks they are both in the left. "Then I take one out and put it in my pocket," pull the coin from your left hand, and slip both into your right pocket. "How many should I have?" Reveal your left hand empty and say, "I guess it's not your day." And relax.

Phase Two:

"Let me show you how that's done." Reach into your pockets. Your right hand classic-palms one coin and brings out two others. Your left hand brings out one coin. "They're not really magic coins. I actually do the whole trick with three coins, so I'm always one ahead of you," you say as you place the three on the table, and turn each over so the audience can see both sides of all three coins. "Now if I took one, two, and put number three in my pocket," as you say these words your right hand picks up one coin, tosses it to the left. Then it picks up a second coin, and tosses it

and the classic-palmed coin into the left. Then your right hand picks up the third and pretends to place it in your pocket, but classic-palm it back out. "The third coin magically jumps back into my hand, since I'm one ahead." Open your left hand and show all three coins have returned by tossing them onto the table.

"Did you see how I did it that time, sir? Here, let me show you." At this point you repeat exactly the same motions. Your right hand picks up one and places it in the left. Then it picks up a second and tosses it plus the classic-palmed coin into the left as you say, "One, two in the hand, and three goes in the pocket." This time really put the third coin from the table into your right pocket. "And, since I'm sure you've seen this part before, I once again have all three coins back in my left hand, since I'm one ahead. Now you've got it, don't you sir?" Reveal all three coins in the left hand, and drop them on the table.

At this point the audience will be leaning in, trying to watch your actions as closely as possible. Use that against them by changing your motion. "One more time. Watch closely now. If I put one in the hand," do a retention pass, keeping the coin in your right hand. If you've followed me this far, you haven't done a retention pass, so it's a new move to your audience. "And I put two in my pocket," your right hand picks up the two coins on the table and places them plus the hidden coin in your pocket. "How many should I have?" Show your left hand empty, then your right hand, as you say, "Like I said, it's not your day."

It may look complex in print, but it's actually a simple, straightforward coin routine. It moves pretty fast, is entertaining, and leaves you with your hands empty to move into your next trick. What's unique about it is that you do the same routine twice, but with the twist of "explaining"

it the second time. I do this routine several times every evening, and it never fails to fool people and draw them into my act. Give it a try.

There are plenty of great middle routines. We've already stated a few we like — The Card, the Forehead, and the Saltshaker; MacDonald's Aces; Ring Flight; Sponge Bunnies; Sam the Bellhop; Cannibal Cards; Four Ace Routines; Card Warp (though you should see Michael Close's "Dr. Strangetrick" in Workers #1); the Cigarette-through - Quarter; an up-to-date Card Stab; and a good Ring-on-String routine. Make them strong, make them your own, and you'll have some winners.



Jim producing a giant coin as the climax of a coin routine,

– 20 – Closers

Twenty years ago I watched a young magician named John Mendoza do a close-up show. After several amazing routines, he did a trick with a chop cup and a penny that was without question the most impressive closer I've ever seen (get a copy of his Book of John if you want to read it). I mean, my jaw hit the floor. I'd never seen anything so amazing in all my life. I still think back to that show with fondness, because I learned that night the importance of having a "haymaker" to end your show.

Your closer should leave the audience gasping for breath or rolling in laughter. It should obviously be the end. Never fade away — go out with a bang. That's why you want to time your act so that you're not interrupted by the food. You don't want to have to draw something to a premature close, or it won't have the full impact.

Don Alan closes his show by producing his famous big nut—an idea which has been stolen by many, though they would be better off producing something that was unique to their own style. The giant production is an obvious closer. The audience is blown away, usually applauding wildly, and it's the perfect time to leave the table.

Daniel Cros ends his show by floating a tiny violin, creating an amazing piece of theater that is never forgotten by those who see it.

Daryl ends his close-up show with his amazing Ambitious Card routine. I've seen audiences burst into spontaneous standing ovations at the final "jump." Tom Mullica ends his hilarious act with a "card-in-apple" trick, and bartender Doc Eason closes with a dynamite version of the "signed card-in-lemon." Paul Gertner just destroys people by producing a giant steel ball from a small chop cup, then he follows it up by having a spectator's finger ring appear on the middle of an hourglass!

What piece of dynamite would you like to leave your audiences with? Perhaps you don't have the ultimate closer yet, but can you imagine what you would do if you were to develop the perfect routine? Granted, many of those listed above are "sit-down" routines, where the performer has more leeway in terms of hidden props, but that doesn't mean you can't think of a great closing effect. Get out a piece of paper and pencil and describe to yourself what you think would be the ultimate closer.

I'll tell you mine. I'd like to be able to pull out a ball of some kind, do a few tricks with it, then float it. I'd like to float it not only left and right, but upwards over my head. I've never figured out how to do it, but I think it would be a killer ending! (If you figure it out, please write and tell me.)

Now that we've set you up, understand that you may not have a haymaker in your current repertoire. That's all right; use the strongest routines you've got as your closers. Many restaurant performers use a card to wallet, and several use a "card to whatever." They may put the card in a watch, a locket, a sock, a drink, or as one performer back east does, the infamous "card to zipper" (he pulls it out of his fly). Many others use a chop cup or bowl routine, so that they can end with the production of a large item. Still others close with a specialty item, like a floating bill or a mind reading routine.

One alternative ending is to have a running gag that you bring back at the close of your act. I used to do a version of the borrowed bill to lightbulb, having borrowed a bill and made it disappear, I kept referring to it throughout the act. At the end of my set I would break a lightbulb and find the bill wrapped inside the wires (an idea stolen from Michael Ammar). It was a great closer, and I only stopped doing it because I tired of having to ditch broken lightbulbs.

Jerry MacGregor often closes with a card to wallet effect, using a Bendix Bombshell Wallet or a Confabulation Wallet, where the signed card is found in a zippered compartment. The impact of the spectator seeing that the card under his finger is no longer his card, then seeing it turn up in a wallet that has been laying on the table all the time, makes it a winner. There's almost nothing he could do to top that effect. In his other set he usually closes with a nice chop cup routine, performed in the spectator's hands and done with a borrowed bill as his ball. (On rare occasions he will also do a "ring to stem of wine glass," but that requires a seated performance.)

Jim Pace often closes with a card revelation or a floating bill. His card closer consists of having up to ten people select cards from the deck, then he finds each of them in spectacular fashion, the last one changing from an indifferent card to the selected card right before the spectator's very eyes. Magicians will sometimes beg Jim for his routine (sorry — maybe in the next book).

All of these have two things in common. First, they are the strongest effect of the set. And second, they nearly always draw applause. That applause is a great place to leave the table.

By the way, I don't think you should have to "milk" applause from an audience. Just taking a step back and

We've got two closers to share with you. Once again, we'd prefer not to share them, since we both use these effects every night of our performing lives. But we feel strongly that we need to offer good examples of closers, so here goes.

Jim Pace's Two Hearts That Beat As One

This effect is a perfect ending to a routine done for a couple. There are only two hard moves in it, but it can get you a lot of work.

Have the woman select any card and sign the front. It goes back in the deck, and the performer controls it to the top, where he does a short ambitious routine, bringing it to the top three times. You can patter about how she just stood out in a crowd; how she stayed on the mind of her man. If you need ideas for an ambitious card routine, take a look at Daryl's The Ambitious Card.

Now they've seen magic done with the woman's card, and it's time to change the pace a bit. Here comes the first hard move, which you can find in Alton Sharpe's Expert Card Chicanery. Hand her card to the man, tell him to "Say stop," as you riffle through the deck. Pull off one third or so of the deck into your right hand and ask him place the card on top of the deck, which is in your left hand.

Next, two things happen at once. Turn the packet of cards in your right hand face up, changing your grip on the cards so that your thumb is on the face and your first and second fingers are on the back of the cards. Look at the block of cards and ask him, "About how many cards do you think that is?" He will have to look at your right hand with its cards. When he does, the left hand (which is holding a bit more than half a deck, face down, with the signed card on top) levers the deck open. This doesn't have to be anything fancy, simply allow a few cards in your left hand to fall away from your thumb, holding them with your fingers. This creates a "V" shaped opening.

Whatever he replies, you repeat it, still looking at the packet in your right hand. For example, "Seventeen cards." As you repeat it, place those cards face up, right into the "V" shaped opening. Both hands are rotating as you do this, the right hand turning face down, the left turning back face up. This makes it appear as though you are placing a stack of cards on top of the deck, but actually you will have brought the lady's card to the top of the deck. (This is difficult to describe in print. If you don't understand it, don't worry. Basically all that has been done is that the chosen card has been controlled to the top of the deck. So... if you want to, simply use your "favorite" method.)

Start to close the two sections of the deck in the left hand, but keep a big break. Move your right hand over the top, pick up the top half and repeat his number again. "Seventeen cards" then let the deck close.

Now double lift, showing that the card on top is "not" her selected card but, for example, the six of clubs. Thumb the top card off, which is really the signed card, and ask the man to "sign the back, not the face of this card." By doing so you emphasize to him that this is not the same card his lady had (though it really is). Have him place his signed card on top of the deck.

Now comes the other hard move. You're going to perform a color change as you talk about how nature just can't keep two people like these apart from each other. Holding the deck in the left hand, with the signed back on top of the deck, your left thumb slides the top card to the left just a bit. As it does so, your right hand comes over the top, the right little finger striking the right edge of the second card in the deck. As your right hand moves right, then left. it simply pulls the second card out, then slides it onto the top of the deck. (Just about any simple color change move will work here. The one described is similar to a sidesteal move, another option is an Erdnase color change.) The effect is that you have "rubbed off" or vanished the man's signature from the back of the card. In reality, the signed card (woman's signature on the face, man's on the back) is the second card down from the top. The top card is the card the man thinks he signed. Push the top card off the deck into the right hand as you do a wrist turn to hide the signed back of the second card. Reveals that the six of clubs, which he just signed the back of, no longer has his signature on it.

While their eyes are on that six of clubs in your right hand, do a Hermann pass with your left hand, cutting the top card into the middle of the pack. Then begin to thumb through the deck with both hands. When you find her signature on her card, pull the card out and slowly reveal her card now has his signature on the back. "Two hearts that beat as one. You may keep that card, as a cheap souvenir of your evening." Step away and offer a very slight bow.

This is a great effect. It's got drama, it's got romance, and it's got a stunning ending. They even get to take home with them a card you did magic with which contains both their signatures. A winner!

MacGregor's Doker Mental

The late Frank Garcia, in his book Million Dollar Card Secrets, offered a wonderful little routine that was nothing more than a puzzle. John Mendoza turned it into a nice routine in his Book of John, and I've developed my own version which I have used successfully in restaurants and trade shows for a number of years. Be advised that this is a great closer, but you can only do it when you are absolutely sure you have the time to complete it. If there is any doubt, don't start it.

One of the added benefits of this routine is that it plays great to a big group. I've had dealers suggest that this be sold separately, so I really think this routine alone is worth the price of this book. It's a mind-reading card trick with a great climax.

To understand the basic working of the trick, do this: Deal out five hands of poker, five cards each. Let's say the first hand to your left contains the 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of Clubs. Now pick up that hand and place it on top of the second hand. Pick up both of those and place them on top of the third. Pick up all of those and place them on top of the fourth, do the same with the fifth, then put the whole packet back on top of the deck. Are you with me so far? Good. Now do a couple of false cuts and (if you're a stud) a Zarrow shuffle. The cards are in exactly the same order you had them in, right?

O.K., now deal out five more hands of poker, dealing

single cards, left to right. If you are careful to place each card on top of the previously dealt cards in that hand, you'll know that the bottom card of each of those hands are the 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of Clubs. If you can understand that concept, you can perform a miracle.

Here's what I do. I invite four people to play a special game of poker with me. (They can even shuffle the cards and do the first deal if you've got the time.) As I deal each person plus myself five cards, I explain that this game is special because all they have to do is think of a card. They don't have to select one, they don't have to touch one, all they have to do is think of one. Then I ask them to pick up their hands, and I pick up mine. "O.K., you've got five cards in your hand. I don't know what any of them are" (which is true, by the way).

"Here's what I'd like you to do. Mentally select one of them as your card. Have you got it? Good. Now close your eyes and say it to yourself a couple times, so that you remember exactly what your card is." I then turn to the person on my left and say, "Have you got yours?" as I pick up her packet. Then I turn to the next person and ask, "You know yours?" and I place the first packet on top of his. I do the same with the third and fourth people, making sure they know their card and that I keep the packets in order. Then I place all their cards on top of mine, and put the whole pile onto the deck.

Next, I do some false shuffles and false cuts while I explain that I've been studying how to use the senses to read people, and I volunteer to give a short demonstration. I should point out here that this first part goes extremely quickly; I just deal cards, ask them to mentally select one, gather the cards up, and "shuffle."

This next part is the most important. I re-deal five

hands of poker, one to each of them and one to myself. I pick up the first pile on my left, spread it out face down, then I say, "Please don't tell me what your card is. Just give me a 'yes' or a 'no.' Is your card in this hand of poker?" And I show it to each of the four.

The reason I'm careful with the cards is because if the person on my left says, "Yes, my card is in that hand," I immediately know that her mentally selected card is the one on the bottom! If the second person says "Yes," I know that his card is the second from the bottom, and so on. I don't have to know exactly what the card is as long as I know it's position. And I know that all five mentally selected cards have to be in one of these five hands that have been dealt!

So I pick up the first hand of five cards and show it around the table. Let's say that nobody's selected card is in this particular hand. "Fine," I'll say, and I'll dump that hand back onto the deck and pick up the next hand. "Again, don't tell me the name of your card, just 'yes' or 'no,' is your card in this hand?" This time, for instance, the third person from my left says "Yes." I know that her card is the third card from the bottom.

You can reveal them any way you like. Obviously some mentalists who use this principle simply grab the card and fling it at the person, or turn the hand face up and "feel the psychic energy" from the correct card. I wanted something that was mysterious but not overwrought, so here's what I do. With the first card I say, "I'd like to try something. Let's see if I can tell your card just by the use of touch. Would you reach your finger out and touch the top card? Thanks. Now touch the next one. Now the next." When they've touched all five, I turn the cards face down, look them in the eye (so they don't see which one I pull

out), and say, "Could anybody else tell the difference?" as I place their selected card face down in front of them. Don't reveal their selection yet. Let the drama build.

Pick up the next hand and show it around. Let's say that this time two people say, "Yes, my card is in that hand." With the second person, I'll try to find the card "by use of sound." I show them each card separately, asking, "Is this your card?" They are to say "no," five times, which means they have to lie to me once, and I pretend I can tell from the sound of their voice. Asking the group, "Did you hear the difference?" I lay their selected card face down in front of them.

For the third card, I pick up the pace by using "sight" as the way to reveal the card. I simply flip up the hand and quickly move it toward their face, then drop the hand face down and say that their "eyes gave it away," as I deal their card face down onto the table.

The fourth and last card is always the most dramatic. It doesn't matter which person of the four it is, I simply use this on the last person who tells me they see their card. Let's say it's the second person in. I know their card is second from the bottom in this stack of five cards. Here's what I do. "I'm going to make it even harder with this last card. I'm going to put all the cards together back into the deck, and have you shuffle them!" At that, I cut their card to the bottom, stack all the other cards on top, and turn the deck on its side to straighten it. As I tap the side of the deck on the table, I look at their card, which is on the bottom of the deck. Then I hand the person the cards. They shuffle them, cut them, and hand them back to me. I go through the deck, find their card, pull it out and place it face down in front of them.

Now the actor in me really comes out. I point to one

person and I say, "You mentally selected a card, right? Did you ever touch that card? Did you ever whisper it to me? What was your card?" As they say it, I turn the eard over, revealing that my selection is correct. Then I point to somebody else. "Yours was harder, for I had to find yours by sound alone. What was the name of your card?" And I flip over their mentally selected eard. Turning to the third person, I really get going fast, saying, "I couldn't have know what your card was, you never even touched it. Name your card," and I flip it face up in front of them. Then I turn to the last person and say, "Yours was the hardest of all, for not only did you mentally select a card, you reshuffled the deck so I certainly couldn't have used any trickery. Your card could be one of fifty-two - tell us, what was your card?" And as they reveal it, I turn it over with a flourish, saying, "That, my friends, is magic!"

I hope this routine reads as well as it plays, because it plays like a monster. Laymen love it, and I've fooled my share of magicians with it. (For some reason, some people just can't seem to grasp the big picture that five hands of poker picked up and re-dealt merely moves the cards around the table in an ordered fashion.) There is nothing I do that tops this routine in terms of audience impact. People who saw it ten years ago still ask about it. It's a megawinner at trade shows as well as close-up shows, and I've even done it in parlor performances.

The only trouble with it for restaurants is that it contains some dealing, so it breaks my own rule about directness, and it can run long if you aren't careful. Hey, a meal arriving in the middle of this routine will kill you. If you just aren't sure you have the time, don't bother. Wait around until you do. But if you have the time and the right atmosphere, use it. So now you've got some great routines, and you know how to find work as a restaurant magician. The one missing piece of information you'll need is how to handle people. Magic audiences come in all shapes and sizes, and the good magician will give considerable thought to shaping his routine for special people.

Children

Performing for children is a special responsibility. If you are in a family restaurant, much of your time will be spent doing tricks for kids, and you'll have to plan your routines accordingly. Choose tricks that are extremely simple to follow, like the sponge bunnies, the miniature die box, or a good bowl routine. I rarely do card tricks for kids, since they often forget their card.

A principle to keep in mind is that most children hate to be fooled. It makes them feel as if everybody else gets it, but they don't. So stay away from sucker tricks or things that make fun of the children. Any sort of production item is a winner, so doing a bowl routine, the miser's dream, or even an egg bag will work. Coins are always a solid bet, but keep it moving or they'll start shouting out the locations of the coins. (For this reason you'll also find it works much better to produce coins for kids, rather than to

vanish them.)

Other items that restaurant magicians use regularly when performing for children include Jerry Andrus' Linking Pins, Max Londono's Eternal String, and if they are wearing any jewelry, try Don Alan's Ring Flight. Some guys even pull out their magic coloring books, funkenrings, and the snake-in-the-can — these get good reaction, but I hate having that stuff with me. And, of course, you can always pull out those balloons and start creating those balloon animals (Quick! Where's my syringe?!) If you're going to do that, make sure to create the animal in front of the child. I once worked a store opening where the clowns had made up a thousand balloon animals and simply handed them out. Bo-ring! Kids are amazed at the magic of seeing you create the animal out of a long balloon.

Never do anything for children that looks dangerous. Kids might try to imitate it, and you'll hear about it from management. I once saw a performer pretend to stuff cigarettes up his nose, and you can guess what the five year old spent the rest of the meal trying. Use your head — if the effect would be dangerous if imitated, don't do it. Mac King recently did a television special where he taught the "fork in the eye" trick. Now Mac is a great magician and a likable guy, but he ought to be slapped upside the head for doing something like that in prime time. Let the police dramas bring the violence into America's homes, not the friendly magician. (Sure, there have been times when I've wanted to stick a fork into some smart-mouthed little hooligan, but so far I've been able to fight the urge.)

Doc Hillford has a great tape called "Twenty Minutes with a Balloon." If you do a lot of magic for children in restaurants, purchase a copy. The tape is shot at a school assembly, but you should be able to steal a ton of good ideas for restaurant work.

I generally am performing for adults, so if a child is present I recognize him or her as a guest of honor, and I always do a trick for them. Actually, I have to, since parents always like seeing their little ones made happy. I keep an old routine, Don Alan's Egg on the Head, in my close-up case. When I see children enter the restaurant I go and get it. The routine takes about two minutes, offers good magic, and ends with them selecting a piece of candy from a jar of candies I've produced.

Involve children as much as possible by asking them questions and using them in the trick. Don't talk to them as though they were babies. Make them laugh, keep the pace fast, and try to get them on your side. Remember that young children might really be frightened of your "powers," so smile and be very gentle with them. A shy child can often be drawn out simply by getting down on one knee so you're the same height, and talking quietly with them as you get your thumbtip on and get ready to produce a colorful silk from inside their napkin. Parents of a shy child will love the fact that you get her to laugh.

Older children can be a tough audience, for they long to seem "grown up." Some of them will want to show their vast knowledge by telling everyone at the table how the tricks are done. Don't challenge them. Kirk Charles, in his "Manual of Restaurant Magic", suggests saying something before you start like, "We all know that magic involves secrets, so if anyone thinks they know how the magic is done, keep it to yourself. It'll be our shared secret."

Even so, television shows in recent years have featured gobs of smart-mouth youngsters who are much smarter than their parents, so you're sure to run into your share of spoiled brats. Try to stay positive, keep it short, and walk away without strangling the little bleeder. If the kid is acting up and the parents say nothing, politely tell the child to calm down or you will leave. On the other hand, if the child has been a great audience, reward him.

Finally, learn to approach each child as an individual. What works for one won't necessarily work for another, just like performing for adults. That is especially true for teenagers. Some will love seeing tricks, and some won't. I hear magicians complaining that teens are the hardest crowd because they are so negative, but I haven't found that to be true. Treat a teenager the very same way you treat an adult, and they'll often appreciate the performance. Never allow a teen to be the butt of a joke, but treat them as a peer. Some performers are able to do a good job of connecting with youth culture by mentioning popular music groups or television shows, but I haven't been able to master that skill. I come across as a forty year old guy trying too hard to act hip, and it invariably falls flat. The key is to simply do the show as though you were doing it for adults, and it usually works.

Families

Again, parents expect the magician to perform for the kids. So have something ready, and try to make it appeal to both children and parents. If there are several children, perform for the oldest one first, to get him on your side. This will show the young kids that it's a good thing to like the magician. If you start with the youngest, the older kids will turn on you as not being sophisticated enough for them.

Once in a while a mother will ask me to perform a trick for her baby. Really. I don't know why, though I always assume it's because the parent just beamed down from the planet Zorgon. I guess every parent assumes their children are the smartest on the planet. (They're not — mine are.) The first few times I was at a total loss — "Magic... for your baby?" Now I just smile, pull a few coins from the baby's ear, and warn the waitress not to allow the mother to play with anything sharp.

That reminds me, don't assume the adults are the mom and dad. The divorce rate being what it is, you never know, and I've been corrected countless times by kids saying, "That's not my dad!" Oops.

Generally the bigger the audience, the bigger the trick. So on those rare occasions you get a family of nine, don't settle for something small. Break out that special prop and do a nice show for them. You should have plenty of time, as big orders take longer for the kitchen staff to fill.

Lovebirds

You will have to learn to "read" a two-top. If a man and woman are sitting together at a table, you can't assume they want to see you. They may be on a first date, and your magic can break the ice between them. On the other hand, I once had a guy say to me, "Look, we're talking about getting a divorce. Do you mind?" And I hadn't even done a trick yet!

The approach is crucial. By simply getting eye contact or walking up and introducing yourself, you can often tell if the couple wants to see you perform. I've noticed more magicians wearing nametags that identify them as staff, which takes some of the pressure off the couple as they see this stranger approach the table. Jerry will often say,

"Good evening, is everything okay?" Jim doesn't usually say anything, he just walks up and begins. Either way will work. If the couple clearly doesn't want to see you, tell them you hope they enjoy their meal and leave.

Most magic books suggest starting your magic with women, and performing the tricks for women, because they are generally more expressive. I don't do that with couples; I start with the man. There are a lot of macho guys out there who resent having anyone pay special attention to their lady, so by starting with him you are "asking permission" to perform your next effect for the woman. I know that sounds sexist, but it's a fact. Once you've got the guy on your side, you can move to the woman. Try to make the guy the hero. One of the reasons I use Close's "The Card, The Forehead and the Saltshaker" is because it starts with the man reading the woman's mind, so it gets him on my team right away.

Jim's signed card routine, given in the previous chapter, is great with a couple because it offers the idea of the two people becoming close. Bringing a little romance into your last routine for a couple is a definite plus.

Sometimes the gal will be very positive and the guy will sit there like a rock. Don't take it personally, it might be that he's just not terribly expressive. I've had some of my biggest tips from guys who didn't crack a smile, but who I made look like a hero in the eyes of his lady.

Get the man's permission first. If you can't get it, either cut your show short, or at the very least keep any activity with the woman impersonal.

I never flirt with the women I perform for and I don't solicit dates. (Note from Jerry: "Me neither... my wife has no sense of humor about me dating other women.") Restaurant magic is close, even intimate at times. Keep from getting punched in the nose by acting like a gentleman.

If you are one of the few female restaurant performers, I urge you to also start with the man. My experience has shown that the woman at the table is going to look at you as competition no matter what you do, so start by getting him on your side, then follow up your opener with your most friendly routine, done solely for the woman.

Businessmen

Two suits are one of the hardest audiences to read. If they are talking business, I usually skip them altogether. If there is a lull in the conversation, I'll go and introduce myself, aiming my first trick at the older of the two men. This is because I want the older person to respect me, then the other will fall in line. If the older one isn't interested, it's no use going on, even if the younger guy is foaming at the mouth to see magic. You'll just make his life hard for him.

For some reason, I find that two men often won't go for coin work. Card tricks are your best bet, particularly if you've got a strong closer, like Fechter's "That's It." Tricks with bills are also good, as are most transformations and a good chop cup routine. Jim's "Stealing Away" works great with two businessmen, and most guys respond well to things that look to be great sleight-of-hand, like MacDonald's Aces.

The approach I'll often use is the "gambler" or "heavy card man" joining the boys to reveal a few secrets. I've even been known to sit down if I'm invited, and do a short gambling routine. Again, I want to get these guys on my side, do really strong magic, and get out of there before the food arrives.

Problem People

Occasionally some guy will start acting like a total jerk. He'll challenge you, he'll tell everybody how the tricks are done and he might even try to do one himself. I like Kirk Charles' advice: Don't get involved in a battle of egos. If a table like that is insisting on seeing the magician, do one great trick and say good-bye. Do not go back, even if they demand to see another.

If you're performing for a big group and you've got a heckler, don't try to cut him down to size. Rather, perform a trick where he is the hero. It gives him what he wants, and shows everybody else that you're big enough to allow somebody else to be the star.

If you see that somebody, man or woman, is drunk, my advice is to stay away from the table completely. It's a "pearls before swine" situation — your art will be wasted on these people.

On the other hand, just because somebody's had a few drinks doesn't mean they are drunk. They might just be happy, in which case the show becomes very similar to a performance for children. Do short, visual things, and don't ask them to hold any props. People who have been drinking react a bit slower, so you can steal nearly anything and produce it, but you must wait for the impact of the trick to reach those pickled brain cells.

Try to keep a smile on your face and a deferential atti-

Magicians

First of all, you'd better know that there is no money in performing for magicians. They can be tough audiences because they know what you're doing, so rather than appreciating the effect they evaluate the technique. However, most of us have magic friends come to visit occasionally, and we want to do something really good for them. My suggestion: rather than trying to fool them, impress them. A roll-down flourish means very little to a layman, but a magician will be impressed. I don't mean you have to show off, but in the course of a routine, show them what your fingers can do. A great version of "Cutting the Aces" or any other obviously difficult trick done well will set you in good stead.

Another thing you can try is to let them think you've fouled up a trick, then reveal your kicker. Derek Dingle's "Davebury Delusion" or "Panello" are good, as is Harry Lorayne's "Gambler Versus Magician" in his book Personal Secrets. Using a card stack is good too, since most cardicians will always assume you're using sleight-of-hand to try and impress them!

You don't have to perform for magicians, but it's always nice to have something on hand so that you can. Family vs. Strangers

There is one group of people who never get talked about in magic books: your family. What do you do when Great Aunt Tilly and Uncle George are brought to the restaurant by your parents? Other than cutting out that hilarious "Magic Ding Dong" routine, what should you do?

The fact is, it's often harder to perform for family than for strangers. The Bible tells us that "a prophet is never recognized in his home town," and it's possible to feel under-appreciated by those closest to you. So if family comes in, do something fun. Don't try to impress them with your skill, they don't want to be impressed. But they do want to have fun. So pull out those sponge bunnies and do your routine. Use your handkerchief to make their glass of wine appear in your hands. Tell them the story of "Sam the Bellhop." Then tell them you've got to work, and move on to another table.

Repeat Customers

I don't think it's ever a good idea to repeat a show for a customer. The human memory is an amazing device which actually creates details with the passage of time. That's why a person will remember that you "never went near the glass, yet made the card appear underneath it." In my view, it's never as good the second time, and it only gives the audience a chance to figure out the secret.

Therefore, you've got to have things in reserve. The reason I wear a Topit is so that I can take something belonging to a repeat customer, vanish it, and have it appear in my left coat pocket. Using anything from their table is perfect for the repeat customer — they already trust you, so it's generally alright for you to touch items on the table.

Study your card books, and have a few really good tricks that you hold in reserve. Many restaurant magicians use packet tricks with repeat customers, but never with first-timers. The approach they take is something like, "Hey, since you're back again, let me show you the real stuff. I've got this packet of cards..."

It's also good to keep a few special props in your close up case. I don't often do a chop cup or dice stacking, but I keep them around for that occasional special customer. The same is true with card stabs or specialty card tricks. My favorite routine for repeat customers is probably to make their chosen card appear somewhere on their table, either under their napkin or drink, of even in the champagne bucket.

Remember that everyone likes to be recognized. You can keep that sales perception active by saying hello to repeaters and using the names of regulars. It's not necessary to perform for somebody who eats at the establishment twice a week. Just stop and say hello, and they'll appreciate your politeness.

Many magicians keep track of their routines and constantly update them. Some even track their customers, so that they don't repeat their effects. I don't. Oh, I add new things to my repertoire regularly and drop some of the older tricks out, but I don't find it helpful to chart the tricks I'm doing. If somebody says, "We've seen that," I reply, "Oh, you have," cut the trick short and do something else. Big Groups

Occasionally you'll have a party of twelve to twenty people come in for dinner. There are two ways to handle this. If they are in a separate room, you can go into your parlor act. If they are simply in the dining area, you may find it best to do several mini-shows, moving around the table and performing for a few at a time. Check with the head of the party to make sure you aren't interrupting a sales meeting or cutting out a retirement speech.

One thing that often happens is that I'll start out working for three or four, and by the third trick I've got the attention of the entire group. In that case, make sure you're doing something that plays for a larger group (cut the "Magic Dime Trick") and has a big climax. Then you can either take a short break before doing something for a few again, or simply move on to another table. One good thing: you'll usually have plenty of time to perform.

No Customers

Finally, there are those nights when nobody goes to dinner. You are there, cards in hand, and you've already done complete routines for the three tables that have people. What to do? Hide. Don't let the management see you standing around. Go in the back and wait for a few more people to arrive. Check the reservation list so that you know when the slow times are coming. Lengthen your routines from three to five, so that you spend more time at each table.

If it's a total deadster, suggest to the manager that you come back the next night, and don't charge him for the dead evening. Some magicians have the opinion that you should never not charge for the evening, even when no customers show. They fear it will set a precedent where the management will send you home whenever it is a slow night. While there is some risk of that, I think that if you treat the management like your "customer" and work to reach an understanding with them, this can be averted. Perhaps you have an agreement that on slow nights if asked to leave you will charge 50% for the unused portion of your time. At any rate, if there are a lot of "slow" nights then perhaps you should be looking for a new restaurant.

Section Four: Propositions and Preferences How to make a living at restaurant magic.

-22 -

Secrels for Increasing Your Income

You don't have to be a math whiz to figure out that working four nights a week, two and a half hours each night, at \$25 per hour will make you twelve thousand dollars a year. That's probably one-half or at least one-third of an average salary. Nice money for ten hours a week, huh?

And it gets better. You might find a place that pays \$40 an hour. I know three restaurant magicians in the Northwest who are making at least that much. One performer, who has been working the same restaurant for twelve years, made \$23,400 last year in salary — and that was without tips! If you do this right, you can make that kind of money. You're going to be worth it.

I urge you to make a budget and figure out how much money you need to earn each month to take care of your family. Maybe you're also working a day job — that's fine, all of us started that way. Set a goal for how much you would like to make from your magic, so that you have something to shoot for. When I started, I just wanted to make \$100 per month doing shows. Then my goal jumped to \$300, then to \$500 and later to \$1000 per month. But you've got to know how much you need to earn, and you need to have a goal in mind.

I don't just work at the restaurant. I also do a lot of magic shows at private parties and I work some trade shows. Jim works at a magic store. Jerry helps people write magic books. Many guys do school assemblies or perform at kid's birthday parties. Whatever it takes, you've got to have a goal, then set up some sort of business plan to get there. A goal without a plan to reach it is just a pipe dream. Create your own business plan. Who would you like to be doing shows for? Where would you like to be working? Who do you need to see, what do you need to buy, and where do you need to go to make it happen? What will you need to do to put it all into place? These questions are essential if you're going to make money at magic.

When working tables in restaurants, always get the people involved in your show, and always, always give them your business card or get one of theirs. I encourage you to get them your card in the most magical way possible. Jim sells a great tool called "Flash Cards," which produces his business card in a flash of fire. Believe me, there's nothing they'll remember more than getting a card pulled magically from fire!

Michael Ammar teaches a nice "magical printing of business cards" on his video tape, "Magic, Mastery, and You." There are also some magical business card holders that can change a blank card into your card right in the spectator's hands.

Jim actually has decks of playing cards printed with his business card on the back (in place of the angel on the bicycle). That way, when a spectator signs her name, she can keep the card and also get Jim's business number. Nobody ever throws Jim's card away, because it was used as part of the trick. It's magic.

Your business card is as good as cash in your pocket, for they lead to paying jobs from happy customers. If you do ten tables a night, twice a week for a year, you'll hand out more than a thousand cards — all of them to people

who have seen what good magic you do! Believe me, people will start to call. I average a show every other week just from handing my card out at the restaurant. So if you charge \$150 for a show, and you get 30 shows, your investment in business cards produced another \$4500.

If you're not handing out cards, you're probably not getting work. You're only as good as your promotion. Spend the next \$100 you make in magic on getting some good cards printed.

Don't settle for the plain old cards, either. The advent of desktop publishing and laser printers have revolutionized the printing industry. Get some color in your card, or add your picture. Do something to make it stand out, it's your best advertising.

By the way, if anybody says they are really interested in having you perform for their upcoming function, don't just give them one of your cards... ask for one of theirs. You can follow up by sending along a brochure and some testimonials and a week later you can call to talk with them about their interest. This sets you apart from the guy doing balloon animals at the pizza parlor. They're hiring a professional magician, not a kid's performer.

Stay away from discussing the cost of your show while you're at the restaurant. Years ago I was asked by an obviously wealthy gentleman, "How much would it cost me to have you entertain guests at my open house?" I told him it would be \$100, which was my fee at that time. Suddenly the guy next to him shouts out, "A hundred bucks!? Geez!!!" I learned my lesson. I don't negotiate my fee while performing. I send anyone who expresses interest a brochure, and the two of us talk privately about my fee.

One of the best things about working restaurants is that you come in contact with people who like to go out, and who are willing to spend money on a good time. So you're rubbing shoulders regularly with people who might be interested in hiring you, something most magicians scratch their heads over. It also leads to trade show and convention opportunities, but that's the subject of another book.



Jim levitating a silk behind the counter at Callin's.

I never solicit tips. I figure if people think I'm trying to get money from them, they won't enjoy the performance as much. I've seen guys hustle tips from people with money and lose out on a chance to get hired for a private party paying ten times as much. However, I never refuse a tip. To do so is to insult the giver. A tip is a gift; an audience member's way of saying thanks. Imagine taking a gift to a friend at Christmas and having them say, "No, thanks." You'd be offended and so is the tip-giver who is refused.

Some people will ask about the cost of a show. They're unfamiliar with table entertainment, so they might say, "Is this going to cost anything?" I smile and say, "No, I'm employed by the restaurant."

Others, wanting to be polite, will ask how much they should tip. You don't really answer the question by saying, "Whatever you think is fair." So I usually respond the same way, "Tips are nice, but they're not necessary. I'm employed by the restaurant." If they press me on it, I might occasionally say an amount that's appropriate for the restaurant, perhaps \$5. But that's rare.

Some magicians leave a tip jar by the cashier and make good money through it. (Never place a tip jar on the table; it makes you look like a beggar. You'd be better off to stand at a busy intersection with a hangdog look and a sign that says, "Will Do Card Tricks For Food.") At some places you can do tricks with coins or bills that stick to the ceiling or the bar. That way you create not only tips, but interest when others come in and ask, "Why is all the money on the ceiling?" If that sounds like your sort of thing, get a copy of "The Commercial Magic of J.C. Wagner" for details.

I have a friend who has an arrangement with the servers at his restaurant. Whenever he is performing in their section, they come over to him and say in front of the customers, "This tip is from that table over there." Then they leave a five dollar bill in his hand. It creates extra tips, but I've always wondered what impact that has on a returning diner. Do they see through the ruse and feel cheated? By the way, if you use that method, offer twenty per cent to the server, and don't get upset if they forget to do it during the busiest times.

Some magicians have had a lot of success by creating little playing card give-aways, which make the audience feel beholden to you and usually brings a tip. I don't do this because I always give them my card, and I don't want to give mixed signals or mess around with a hundred extra packets of cards.

There is, however, a subtle way of getting tips that I use quite frequently and that is to ask to borrow a bill and do magic with it. The more you use their bill in your performance, folding it, changing it, switching or floating it, the more likely it will be yours at the end of your set.

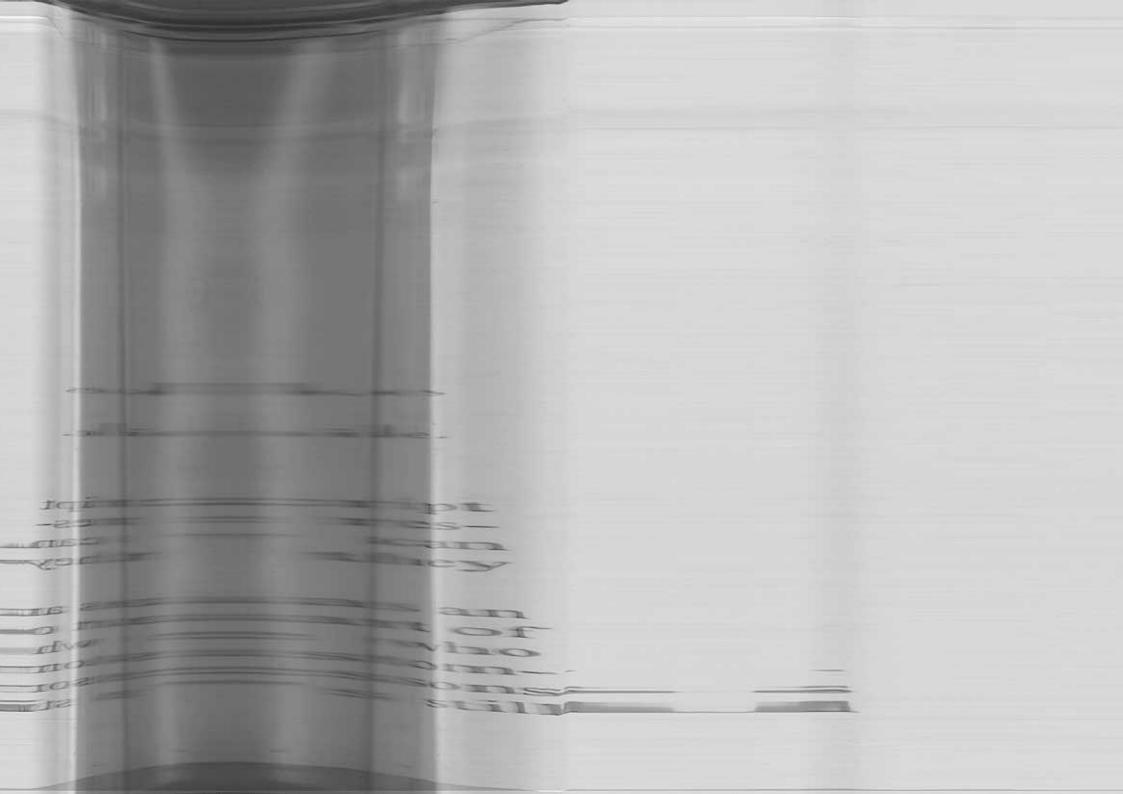
That doesn't mean as soon as somebody hands you a bill you should consider it yours. Just borrow the bill and go into your magic with the idea that you'll show the audience good magic with their own money. But if you do good magic, and the bill is crumpled or bent at the end, more often than not they'll invite you to keep it. At the end of your set, you don't even have to hand the bill back to them. Lay it on the table, just out of reach of their arm. Rather than reach across for it, many people will just say, "Go ahead — keep that." The real trick to getting a lot of tips is probably just to work a lot of tables. The more people who see you work, the more money you'll make.

Another idea is to simply say, "For my last trick..."
This lets them know you are about to wrap it up, so if they want to tip, they'd better be reaching for their wallets.

By the way, there is something that happens to some men that I call "the slow reach." Every once in a while I'll finish a routine and I'll notice the man very deliberately reaching for his wallet. It's like he's moving in slow motion, and it's awkward for you to stand there while he pulls out that wallet and fumbles for a bill. Any time you see a guy pulling the slow reach, he's really hoping you'll stop him by saying, "That's okay, sir, the restaurant takes care of me." I used to hate to say those words; I figured if the guy thought I was worthy of a tip, he should tip me. I no longer worry about tips. The guy with the slow reach is just trying to impress his date. His body language is screaming, "Stop me!" So I let him off the hook.

Some people will offer to buy you a drink or dinner rather than a tip. Thank them profusely, but tell them you can't eat or drink until you're done working, two hours from now. However, if they really want to buy you a drink, they can tell their waitress and she'll simply add it to their bill. Then the waitress, rather than buying that drink, gives you the cash. If you do this, make sure to invite the customer to join you for that drink (they rarely find you so entertaining they'll wait for two hours), and be certain that you give part of it to the waitress for helping you out.





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Overview: Rules to work by

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can make your job almost impossible. really make your job easier. If you irritate the staff, they taurant staff. If you get the staff on your side, they can regarding the magician's relationship to the rest of the res-You've seen several notes throughout this manuscript

active in magic today, almost fifteen years later. and introduced him to the local magic store. He's still ers. Once I saw he was serious, I gave him a few lessons wanted to learn a few tricks to show his late night customyour show. I worked with a bartender for a while who interest in magic. Look for ways to make them part of Every once in a while you'll find a server who has an

> isn't on the magic. that doesn't work for me. If I worry about the tip, my mind funny comments about "don't applaud, throw money," but more aggressive and make more in tips through bar bets or by people simply handing me bills. Maybe others are Again, I don't try to get tips. They come in, most often

That bartender used to help me do an amazing trick every once in a while. We had a row of tables by the window, though they had curtains over the lower part so that passers-by couldn't stare at the diners. I would ask a spectator to select a card, sign it, then I'd palm it off and simply drop it on the floor, out of sight from the diners. The bartender would walk by, drop a napkin on the floor, and as he unobtrusively bent over to pick it up he would also quietly pick up the card. Then he would go outside and tape it to the window outside the table I was working. It was a lot of work for one trick, but you should have seen the look on the faces of those diners when I tossed the deck against the window and, as we pulled the curtains aside, they saw their signed card stuck to the outside of the window. Often they would reach for it, thinking it was on the inside, then their jaws would drop as they realized it was stuck to the outside of the window. A great trick which would be impossible to do if it weren't for the help of a staff person.

Other magicians have had waiters steal cards away or set up invisible threads for them. The audience never thinks you'd get that sort of help, so it can make for an impressive routine, though you can only use it on occasion.

There are several things that a restaurant magician needs to remember when working with the staff. Here are what we consider to be the ten rules of working with people.

#1. The boss is always right. That means if he asks you to do something, the correct answer is "yes." This may be hard to believe, but most restaurant managers I've worked with know considerably more about managing their establishments than I do. Your job depends on keeping him happy.

#2. If the boss is ever wrong, see #1. Okay, that's

putting it too strongly. I have made plenty of suggestions to managers over the years and there's nothing wrong with stating your case. But in the end I'll do what they decide. One good thing about working for family-owned restaurants is that the management are usually 100% committed to the establishment's success. They are often willing to take some risks and they really do want to do what's best for the customer.

#3. The customer is always right, too. The only reason you're doing magic is to make the customer happy. Don't perform the effects that you cherish, but the effects the customer's love. If they ask you to do a particular trick, try to accommodate them. If you're worried about them learning the secrets, do a similar trick but do it a different way. (Addendum to #3: This rule gets tossed out when the customer has had too much to drink or is a horse's ass.)

#4. The servers make the place go. The magician is window dressing. If the servers do a good job and take care of people, the customers will usually enjoy their meal. Even an average meal can be compensated for by excellent service. So don't get in the way of the server. Help him or her. If there is something the waiter needs to know about the table, tell him. If the waitress is new and you recognize the diner as a regular who wants fresh coffee every ten minutes, politely offer a word to the new gal. If the waiter needs help and you help him, you've got him on your side. You'll soon learn that if the servers make the customers angry, you're going to have a tough show.

#5. Busboys are people, too. Take time to be friendly with the busboys, hostesses, and Captains. I've had busboys offer significant assistance when something spilled and I needed help to clean it up. Hostesses and Captains can be great at letting diners know there is a house magi-

cian, and at keeping you informed on busy nights about who needs a show.

#6. Share your tips with the team. If a waitress holds a tip for you, or a bartender holds your drink money, let them have a share of it. It costs you very little, and the return on your investment is immense. It helps them to see how much you value them.

#7. Remember that people do what makes sense to them. It's pretty uncommon for somebody you're working with to purposefully try and screw up your show (I've never had it happen). So if somebody makes a mistake, like moving the glass with your invisible thread anchor, or stepping in to fill up water glasses just as you're about to reveal the signed card in your wallet, learn to brush it off. You can talk calmly about it later with the person if you desire, but keep in mind the principle that people do what makes sense to them.

#8. Offer to do magic for the help once in a while. Sometimes the people who work with you never get to really watch you perform, so give them a special routine on their birthdays, or do a show at the Christmas party for no pay. Not only is it a nice gesture, it reminds them that you'd be a good entertainer to recommend to others.

#9. Don't hang out at the bar with the staff. You want to be friends, but familiarity breeds contempt and the management usually looks down on employees who drink at their own establishment.

#10. Everybody enjoys a gentleman. I know I sound just like your mother, but remember that people prefer a gentleman to a jerk any day. In the words of George Carolly, "If I'm the magician, everybody is my boss."

Don't expect the restaurant to promote you, especially if magic is a new concept for them. They won't know what to do — so do the work for them. It's been my experience that nobody is going to trumpet your work except you.

When you start working, notify the newspaper. Get a photo to them, so they can print something about you. Restaurant magician Kirk Charles notifies the paper when he is given a contract extension, so that people can read how he's been "held over." All of that stuff should be saved for your files and pointed out to restaurant management.

Hire a graphic artist to create a nice poster of you with a photo, perhaps a nice quote about you, and your working schedule. The restaurant may have a lobby board where they can put it, or you may also have to invest in a sandwich board. Some magicians also use table tents, small triangle shaped advertisements that are placed on the tables.

Occasionally a restaurant will be willing to buy an advertisement in the weekly entertainment section, trumpeting your magic. This costs money, so don't expect management to leap at the idea at first.

If you will work diligently on promotion, you'll also find that you can get a feature story in the newspaper or on television. "Local boy makes good" is always an interesting topic to the media, even in large cities. Again, you've got to have business cards and you really need a good brochure. Don't let your brochure be something you threw together on your old Selectric. Find a person who can create something nice, get help with the writing by somebody who knows advertising and have them create a nice piece. The advent of copy centers allows anybody to make professional copies from a master.

You might be able to find an advertising student to help you, which will cut your costs. Or you could look for somebody who does this on the side and can knock it out in an evening. Either way, remember that you're only as good as your promotion. Think about a buyer comparing your brochure with somebody else's — will he be interested enough to call you?

It's also become necessary to have personalized stationery. This is easy with a laser printer and at most copy centers you can use a colored ink on a nice quality paper, so that it looks as nice as something the printer did.

You can get a starter set of the whole enchilada for about \$150. It's money well spent.

– 26 – Leaving the Restaurant

Sooner or later the management at the restaurant will change or business will fall off and you'll be out of work. Or perhaps you agreed to a three month trial period and the contract is done. Occasionally you'll feel that it's time for you to move on, or that you can find a better deal elsewhere.

When that happens, please do three things. First, exit with grace. Offer them a warm smile and a handshake. Don't burn your bridges, because restaurant people move around. Maybe next year those same folks will be running the hottest restaurant in town and you can renew your friendship. I've had to fire people in the past and I've never enjoyed it. The manager is human (more than likely) and would prefer to keep you happy. Sometimes that isn't possible. If business is slipping, entertainment is always the first thing to go. So make it easy on management by going with grace.

Second, if it's a limited engagement, tell them how much you liked working for them and encourage them to invite you back in the future. I've returned to restaurants to work banquets and holidays, so keep the relationship going.

Third, write a letter of recommendation and ask them to sign it. You can always just ask for the letter, but most people hate writing them. Make it easy on them by offering them a sample letter, or at least an outline of what you'd like said. I've done this for years, and I've never had anyone complain.

Then get a friend to buy you a drink and tell you what a great person you are.

– 27 – Contracts

Here is a sample contract that works for me. Notice that the word "contract" doesn't appear anywhere. That's by design, since that word scares the bejeebers out of most people in management.

December 7, 1941

Mr. Manager Joseph's Bar & Le Grill 131 Lucky Lane Portland, Oregon

Dear Joe's,

This letter is to confirm that Jim Pace will perform his magic act at Joseph's Bar and Le Grill, from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the following dates: January 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30, 31 and February 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28. The fee for this will be \$30 per hour, for a total of \$150 per week. Payment is due each week following the Saturday performance, in a stapled envelope.

Changes, cancellations, or extensions of this schedule must be agreed upon by both parties.

To signify your agreement, please sign below, keep one copy and return the other using the enclosed envelope.

Thank you!

Jim Pace

Joseph's Bar

Address

Address

Some choose to print up formal contracts. I find that a bit too intimidating, so I simply print the contract on my stationery and send it to the restaurant.

-28 -Finis

There you have it — everything you always wanted to know about restaurant magic! We hope you've found this book informative, but more than that we hope you start to use the information to earn a living at the art we love.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding ideas, questions and routines.

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Dr. Jerry "Chip" MacGregor can be contacted at:

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