Flaunting Five Fanciful Formulae

CENTRIFUGAL POKER

A pack of cards is shuffled. About half the pack is cut off and given to a spectator. The performer turns his back, and directs the person to give the half-pack one or more complete cuts, then to deal out five poker hands. It is explained that if there are cards left over after the deal, they are to be discarded onto the talon; if there are not enough cards, the necessary additional cards should be taken from the top of the talon. When this has been accomplished the performer instructs the participant to choose any of the poker hands, returning the unchosen groups to the talon. With his back still turned the performer is able to call out all five cards in the spectator's hand.

This routine makes use of a simple principle of distribution that has been explored over the years, primarily for various poker deals. Notable examples include Stewart James' *Jamesway Poker Deal* manuscript (1948) and the false-false-dealing demonstration popularized by Harry Lorayne as "Lorayne's Poker Deal" in *Close-Up Card Magic* (1962). In the 1991 book *Thavant* I offered 18 applications, including this one. As the principle had never acquired a formal title, I dubbed it the Centrifuge Principle, which seemed like a good idea at the time.

No gimmicks or duplicates are involved; the pack is ordinary. What *is* involved is a set-up of the top twenty-five cards: AS, 2S, 3S, 4S, 5S, 4H, 5C, 6C, 7C, 8C, 7D, 8H, 9S, 10S, JS, 10H, JD, QH, KC, AC, KD, AH, 2D, 3H, 4C.

Crimp the four of clubs and you are ready to begin.

At the start of the routine you can display the deck by spreading it face up, showing only the bottom portion of the pack. As these are random cards there is no sequence to be observed.

Turn the pack face down and shuffle in such a way as to preserve the set-up top half. Cut below the crimp, handing this portion to the spectator as you comment, "That's about half the deck."

Explain that you will turn your back and, when you do, the spectator is to give the half-pack one or more complete cuts, then to deal out five poker hands. It is advisable to pantomime the action of rotational dealing during this explanation.

Turn your back and tell the spectator to begin. While the dealing is taking place, comment, "I cut off about 26 cards, so there ought to be enough to construct five five-card hands. If any cards left over, replace them on the rest of the deck. If there are not enough to complete five hands, take whatever additional cards you need from the top of the deck."

Of course, as the spectator has been given exactly 25 cards, no cards will be added or discarded; however, your explanation of contingencies serves to suggest that the stock was randomly cut off.

The dealing is done, and the spectator picks up one of the hands, eliminating the others. Tell the person to mix the five cards, then to fan them out and study their faces. Pause, as if concentrating on the spectator's thoughts. Say, "Hold on; this may get confusing. We'll start with just the black cards. Put the red cards aside for now."

Wait a moment, listening for the sound of the spectator completing that action. As soon as you know the task has been finished, say, "Have you done that?" At the same time, glance back for an instant. This is a natural action to accompany your query, Because of that, no importance will be attached to it; in fact, as Annemann observed when he described the idea in the first issue of *The Jinx* in 1934 ("The Mystery of the Blackboard," later credited to Paul Rosini), the audience will actually miss the fact that you briefly turned around, and later recall that your back was turned the entire time.

It is during this momentary turn that you gain all the information you need in order to know all five cards in the chosen group. That information is simply the number of blacks and

reds that comprise the hand. Obviously, you can sight this information by glancing at the cards in the spectator's hands, but it is simpler and even more subtle to glance at the table and note how many cards have been set down.

In any event, you can now call off the cards. This does not entail memorizing the five hands, as there is a simple system built into the arrangement. The hands will consist of these sets (although the positions of the hands and their internal contents will vary):

1. AS, 4H, 7D, 10H, KD
2. 2S, 5C, 8H, JD, AH
3. 3S, 6C, 9S, QH, 2D
4. 4S, 7C, 10S, KC, 3H
5. 5S, 8C, JS, AC, 4C

The system operates by the following rules: The first card will be a spade equal to the number of black cards in the hand. From here, the values ascend in steps of three (as in the stack commonly attributed to Si Stebbins), with suits alternating. When the color switches to red the value sequence continues undisturbed, but the first red card will always be a heart.

(There is one exception: According to these rules the final card of the set containing five blacks should be the four of spades, but it is actually the four of clubs. This is easy to recall, as the four of cards was your crimped key card at the outset.)

Let's look at one example. Assume that the spectator has set three cards onto the table when the colors were sorted. This tells you that there are two black cards; thus, one of those black cards is the two of spades. The other will be three steps higher in value and of the opposite suit, hence the five of clubs.

Having verified your calls on the black cards, the spectator is told to pick up the red cards. One of these will be a heart that is three steps higher than the previous card, thus the eight of hearts. The next will be a diamond three steps higher, the jack of diamonds. The final card will be a heart three steps higher, and as the sequence cycles past the king to the ace, it must be the ace of hearts.

The amount of mental effort required is slight, so it is not a burden to ascertain the cards and then call them out of order, which will further conceal the sequence of values.

CHIPPER

The magician brings out five plastic items, and asks the audience to guess what they are. The answer is obvious: "Poker chips." The performer responds, "Well, you were part right; these are *computer* chips. In fact, if you were to pry open the hard drive inside your home computer, these are exactly what you would find!"

Two decks of cards are now introduced, and one is chosen. The pack is cut by a participant, who then deals five cards from that random location, one in front of each chip. The next card is placed in the person's pocket, unviewed.

A spectator is asked to choose red or black. The five dealt cards are turned up, and according to the person's color choice the chips in front of the cards with the appropriate color are set aside. Those randomly designated chips are turned over, and found to bear numbers, which are added together to produce a total.

The other deck is taken from its case. A person is asked to deal down to the position dictated by the numbers on the chips. When the card at that location is compared with the one in the first participant's pocket, it is found that they are *the same*—a perfect match!

The decks are legitimate, but they are stacked. For the purpose of this explanation we will assume that the first deck is blue. It is set with its top 31 cards in this color sequence:

1. B	6. B	11. R	16. B	21. B	26. B	31. R
2. B	7. B	12. R	17. R	22. R	27. B	
3. B	8. R	13. R	18. R	23. R	28. B	
4. R	9. R	14. R	19. R	24. B	29. B	
5. R	10. R	15. B	20. B	25. B	30. B	

The second deck, which we'll assume is red, has an arrangement as shown below. The initial ten cards are indifferent ones that do not match any of the 31-card set-up of the first deck. The next 31 cards do match, but in a different order. This is shown below, with the relationships indicated in parentheses. Thus, for example, card 15 in this deck matches card 23 in the blue deck; card 35 in this deck matches card 4 in the blue deck, and so on.

1. X	6. B	11. (31)	16. (14)	21. (13)	26. (12)	31. (10)	36. (8)	41. (15)
2. X	7. B	12. (30)	17. (28)	22. (26)	27. (24)	32. (20)	37. (16)
3. X	8. B	13. (29)	18. (25)	23. (21)	28. (17)	33. (9)	38. (1)
4. X	9. B	14. (27)	19. (19)	24. (11)	29. (2)	34. (18)	39. (3)
5. X	10. B	15. (23)	20. (6)	25. (22)	30. (5)	35. (4)	40. (7)

Here is a sample arrangement for the blue deck:

1. 4C	6. 3C	11. 7D	16. KS	21. 8X	26. KC	31. 8D
2. 2C	7. JC	12. JD	17. 8H	22. 4H	27. 7S	
3. 6S	8. 2D	13. 6H	18. 4D	23. 9H	28. 10C	
4. 10D	9. 5H	14. 3D	19. QH	24. 5S	29. JS	
5. KD	10. AH	15. 7C	20. 9C	25. AS	30. AC	

Here is a sample set-up for the red counterpart:

1. joker	6. B	11. 8D	16. 3D	21. 6H	26. JD	31. AH	36. 2D	41. 7C
2. X	7. B	12. AC	17. 10C	22. KC	27. 5S	32. 9C	37. KS
3. X	8. B	13. JS	18. AS	23. 8S	28. 8H	33. 5H	38. 4C
4. X	9. B	14. 7S	19. QH	24. 7D	29. 2C	34. 4D	39. 6S
5. X	10. B	15. 9H	20. 3C	25. 4H	30. KD	35. 10D	40. JC

You will need five chips, each bearing a number on one side:

(1) (2) (4) (8) (16)

At the start of the routine, introduce the chips, explaining that they are "computer chips." Arrange them, number-side-down, into a row on the table in ascending order so that the 16 chip is at the left end *from the spectators' orientation*.

Bring out the two decks. The blue deck is about to be put aside for later, but a verbal gambit will be used to make the audience think that they get to choose which deck will be used. Point out that there are two decks, one red and one blue. Ask a spectator to choose either deck. If blue is named, hand that to the person saying, "Fine, hold on to your chosen deck." If red is named, hand the blue deck to the person saying, "Fine, we'll use the other deck later; hold onto it for now."

In either case, remove the red deck from its box. Spread the cards to display the assorted values, then turn the pack face down and ask a person to give the pack a complete cut. There is a lot of leeway here; the trick will work as long as they cut off at least five cards, and no more than 36. (You'll find it is quite easy to visually estimate whether or not they have cut within this range.)

In the unlikely event that the cut is too shallow or too deep, simply ask another spectator to cut the pack again "to make things completely fair and random."

The cut completed, ask a spectator to pick up the pack and deal five cards into a row from left to right, one in front of each chip. (Thus, the first card goes in front of the chip with the number 16 on its underside, the next goes in front of the 8, etc.) The person is then told to pocket the next card, unviewed. The balance of the pack is set aside.

Here, a spectator is given another choice that is actually inconsequential. Explain, "We'll use the colors of the five cards in the row to determine which chips will be used, and which removed. Please choose a color, black or red."

If red is named say, "Fine, the chips that are next to red cards will be removed." If black is named say, "Fine, the chips that are next to black cards will be used." In either case, turn up the five cards and pocket the chips that are in front of the ones with red suits. Gather the five cards in the order they were dealt. Set them aside, dropping the rest of the pack on top.

Turn over the remaining chips, displaying their numbers. Ask a spectator to add those numbers together to produce a total. The person holding the blue deck is asked to remove it from its box, then to deal to the position defined by that total. Have the person work from the top of the face-down pack, turning the cards face up as they are dealt. This accomplishes two things: It makes it clear that all the cards are different, and it also keeps the stack intact.

When the designated position is reached, have that card displayed, then ask the person holding the pocketed card to remove and display that. Surprisingly, the two will match.

To reset the blue pack, have the blue selection returned to the top of the undealt portion of that deck. Turn the dealt stock face down and drop it on top of all, and case the deck.

To reset the red pack, have the red selection returned to the top. Cut the joker to the top of the deck, restoring the stack to its original condition, and case the deck.

THE THINKING CARDMAN

A deck, which may be borrowed, is shuffled by a spectator. Five cards, legitimately chosen at random, are shown to the participant. At no time does the performer look at the face of any card. The deck is re-shuffled. The spectator chooses to call out the name of any of the cards just viewed. Instantly, the named card is located by the performer, using only one hand.

This is an unusual outgrowth of Dai Vernon's "Think Of An Ace" from *More Inner Secrets of Card Magic* (Ganson, 1960). There is no preparation. When you receive the shuffled pack, hold it in the right hand from above, Biddle fashion. Explain that you will display five cards, one at a time, designated by the participant, who is to remember any one of the five.

Dribble the cards into the left palm, until the person calls stop, at which time you raise the right hand so that the face card of its stock is displayed to the spectator. The right-hand stock is now replaced onto the left, apparently losing the stopped-at card. In fact, you use an Ovette Master Move to secretly bring the card to the bottom of the pack.

Again, dribble the cards from the right hand to the left, until the spectator tells you to stop. Again, raise the right hand to display the stopped-at card—but this time, as you do this, the left wrist turns inward, enabling you to sight the outer index of the bottom card of the pack (the first selection), as shown in the illustration.
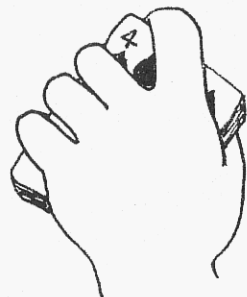
The audience's attention is on the raised right hand, so this glimpse will not be noticed by the audience. Remember the *value* of the sighted card. There is no need to actively commit the suit to memory; you will find that the suit information will come back to you if and when you need it.

Again, the displayed card is brought to the bottom of the pack via the Master Move. Repeat the actions of the preceding paragraph. At the conclusion of these actions, you will be remembering a two-digit number (the values of the first two stopped-at cards), and the three selections will be in 3-2-1 order from the face of the pack.

Have a fourth card chosen in the same manner as before. However, this time make no effort to sight the bottom (third selection) card. Again, use the Master Move to bring the fourth selection to the bottom.

A fifth card is chosen in the same way, then brought to the bottom. At this point, five selections located at the bottom of the deck, in 5-4-3-2-1 order from the face, and you know the identities of numbers 1 and 2.

Take the pack into the right hand, in position for an Overhand Shuffle, the back of the deck to your left. As the deck is brought into this position, it is an easy matter to sight the bottom card (the fifth selection). Remember this card's value; you now retain a three-digit number in mind.

Begin to Overhand Shuffle the cards. As you start this, the left fingers press on the face card of the pack, so that it is kept at the face while the other cards are shuffled off the top into the left hand. As you near the end of your shuffle, run the cards singly, so that you end up with the first four selections on top, in 4-3-2-1 order from the top down.

The pack is given one more Overhand Shuffle, as follows: The right hand lifts off the top half of the deck. The left thumb draws the top card onto its stock. The next card is drawn onto that, but in-jogged. The next card is drawn onto that, in line with the rest of the cards. Drop the balance of the right-hand stock onto the left. Table the pack.

So far as the audience knows, all of the previously displayed cards, none of which you saw, have been lost in the pack. In fact, the status is that the top card of the deck is the first selection. Near the center of the pack at the inner end is a jogged card (the third selection); above it is the second selection, below it is the fourth. The bottom card of the deck is the fifth selection.

You are thinking of a three-digit number, which correlates to the values of the first, second and fifth selections. At this moment, you are ready to reveal any of the five cards immediately, using one hand. Ask the participant to call out the name of the remembered card.

If the first selection is called, simply turn over the top card of the pack.

If the fifth selection is called, turn over the entire pack to reveal the face card.

If the second selection is called, cut the pack above the jogged card (the thumb presses down on the jogged card to accomplish this). Turn up the cut-off stock, revealing the face card to be the named one.

Should the spectator call off selection three or four, you have nothing to fear, even though you've not memorized those cards and thus do not know which is which. When an unknown card is named, promptly cut the pack *below* the jogged card. Raise the cut-off portion, tilting that stock toward yourself in order to sight its lowermost card. If it is the one just named, continue the action, turning the cut-off section over to display the selection.

If the bottom card of the cut-off stock is not the named card, then it must be the one atop the tabled portion. Point to that card, defining it as the card you cut to. Have it turned over.

Accept your applause graciously.

AUTOMANTIC

The discussion having turned to fortunetelling, the performer brings out an efficient device for that purpose: a pack of over 30 cards, each bearing a different divinatory message. The pack is mixed, as a spectator is invited to take part. "The system," he explains, "has its roots in Numerology. Now, surveys have revealed that among the numbers under fifty the most popular 'lucky number' is seven, while for some reason the number least often named is sixteen. Therefore, we'll use those numbers as our frame of reference."

The person is asked to decide on any number between 7 and 16. He is then instructed to deal two piles of that quantity onto the table; the rest of the pack is set aside. The performer explains the mystical sorting procedure for generating a revelatory card from each randomly configured group. To preclude any suspicion that the performer might influence or even alter the outcome, he stands aside and allows the participant to handle the sorting for both packets. Two cards are thus delivered.

"Let's look at mine first," says the performer. The person turns up that card. It states: YOU ARE SCRATCHING YOUR EAR. The group looks at the performer, who has indeed been engaged in that very activity. "That's amazingly accurate!" the performer exclaims.

The audience is not sure; it certainly seemed that the performer had started scratching his ear before the message was disclosed, but...

The performer presses on with enthusiasm, telling the participant, "Read out what's written on the card you chose for yourself, and lets see if your message is as appropriate as mine." The card is turned over. Its message reads: YOU WILL SELECT THIS CARD!

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I have explored both this premise and method several times before, but never concurrently. It would be difficult to establish a seminal reference for this sort of whimsical plot; perhaps in some previous millennium capricious soothsayers were tossing in similar bits to liven up their readings. The method is far easier to trace: It is built on Alex Elmsley's "7-16," which appeared in the March, 1958 issue of *Ibidem*.

You will need to construct a deck of message cards. These can be standard fortunes (e.g., YOU WILL TAKE AN OCEAN VOYAGE); or somewhat humorous (YOU HAVE A HOLE IN YOUR SOCK).

Eight of the cards describe specific actions, that potentially could be chosen on your behalf; simple activities that you'll be discovered doing when the text is read aloud. These are common actions—rubbing or scratching various parts of your upper body—that if done idly do not call attention to themselves, so the audience will only really notice your behavior after the message is read. You will need to memorize these body locations, linking each with a number from one to eight. These associations can be learned in more than one way. Here's a simple system:

1. YOU ARE SCRATCHING YOUR HEAD *(Highest on the list, highest point of your body.)*
2. YOU ARE RUBBING YOUR NOSE *(Think of two nostrils.)*
3. YOU ARE SCRATCHING YOUR EAR *(The numeral 3 resembles an ear.)*
4. YOU ARE RUBBING YOUR ELBOW *(Think of your* fore*arm.)*
5. YOU ARE DRUMMING YOUR FINGERS *(Five fingers.)*
6. YOU ARE STROKING YOUR CHIN *(Picture sixes as curls of a beard.)*
7. YOU ARE RUBBING YOUR COLLAR. *(The numeral resembles a pointed collar.)*
8. YOU ARE RUBBING YOUR MOUTH *("Eight" sounds like "ate" = mouth.)*

For those who are familiar with Number Alphabet (a standard system explained in any basic text on mnemonics, wherein consonant sounds are linked to numbers), the same set can be memorized as follows:

1. HEA**D**   2. **N**O**S**E   3. **M**OUT**H**   4. EA**R**   5. e**L**BOW   6. **CH**IN   7. **C**O**L**LAR   8. **F**IN**G**ERS

Finally, there is the message that will be forced on the participant, to bring the routine to its conclusion. There are several options, although only one will be used in any given performance. The first, as described at the start of this write-up: YOU WILL SELECT THIS CARD!

If you can find out the name of the participant in advance, you can prepare a card that states: YOUR NAME IS CHRIS! (or whatever the person's name may be). Even without that advance information, you can enable this outcome at least some of the time by preparing several cards with common names: MICHAEL, DAVID, JOHN, MARY, ELIZABETH, KATHY, and so on. Yet another climax card is suggested by Ton Onosaka: YOU WILL PAY FOR THE DRINKS! In the right circumstance, this has its own obvious advantages.

Now, for the method. The deck is arranged with the set of eight action cards on top, each in the position dictated by its numerical value according to which system you have learned. The climax card you've decided to use for this show is in the sixteenth position from the top. The rest of the cards can be in any order. (As will be explained momentarily, there is some presentational value in putting two or three of the standard fortune messages at the face of the pack, followed by several of the more humorous ones.)

At the start of the routine the pack is brought out, and it is explained that it is an extraordinary set of tools for divination that works with staggering accuracy. Turn the pack face-up, displaying the message on the bottom card and reading it aloud. For example, it might be: YOU WILL RECEIVE A LETTER FROM A LONG-LOST FRIEND. Comment, "Now, this might or might not be true—but if at the conclusion of the mystical sorting procedure this card were to be designated for you, then it would *definitely* be true."

Continue, "The cards bear a wide range of messages." Spread through the next several cards, reading each message aloud. If you've arranged these as suggested, they will gradually increase in absurdity, creating an amusing sense of expectation on the part of the audience.

Turn the deck face down, and shuffle it in such a way as to retain the set-up stock. Invite someone to participate, and table the pack in front of that person. Following the patter scheme described above, have the person decide on a number between 7 and 16, and then deal two piles of that amount. These are *not* dealt back and forth; rather, the chosen number of cards are dealt one-by-one into a tabled pile, then a second pile is similarly formed.

The "mystical sorting procedure" is now explained to the participant. This is an Under/Down Shuffle (i.e., the top card of the packet is transferred to the bottom; the next is dealt to the table; the next to the bottom, and so forth, until only one card remains). The procedure is applied to the first packet, yielding a card for the performer; it is repeated with the second packet, producing a card for the participant.

While these operations are taking place, you will have ample time to mentally convert the chosen number into your key number. This is not a demanding task: The chosen number is simply subtracted from 16. Thus, for instance, if the participant were to name 11 your key number would be 5.

This key number is converted into a key word via whichever system you've learned; that tells you which of the eight memorized actions to carry out.

Ask the participant to turn over the card that was generated for you, and to read its message out loud. It will describe the action you are currently in the act of doing. Feign astonishment about this.

It's worth taking a few moments to let this sink in. At first, the spectators will think it is a silly situation. Of course, it is—but not quite as initially perceived. They will correctly realize that you tailored your actions to conform to the written statement, but then it will occur to them that those actions began well in advance of that message being revealed. As a result, there will be amusement but also some uncertainty on the part of the audience, focusing that much more attention on the second message which, when found to be appropriate in a quite unexpected way, will bring the routine to a satisfying conclusion.

CALCULATED THEFT

Discussing the wonders of technology, the performer displays a new invention: a calculator designed for doing card tricks. This is given to a spectator to hold. Another spectator removes four cards from a deck, and mentally chooses one. The cards are then sealed in an envelope, which the second spectator holds. The first spectator enters the appropriate information about the thought-of card into the calculator. When the envelope is opened, there are only three cards—the selection has vanished. It is found, sealed inside another envelope which is inside the calculator.

This routine is an offbeat outgrowth of Henry Hardin's classic Prince's (*aka* Princess) Card plot. We will first discuss the revelation of the selection, and then the vanish. The calculator is actually a flap card box, with some buttons and dials glued onto the top. It contains a double-envelope in each side. By first opening the card box to the proper side, then opening the envelope to the proper side, any one of four cards can be found.

These four cards are duplicates of the four from which the spectator makes his/her initial mental choice. (Obviously, the four cards are forced.) They are then apparently sealed into an envelope. Actually, the envelope is prepared by having a slit torn into its back, about an inch from the top. Previously, you have placed three cards into this envelope; these are similar to the four force cards. Medium spot cards are recommended.

When the spectator has taken the four cards, hold the pack face down in your left hand. Introduce the envelope, and hold it on top of the deck, as shown in the illustration. After the participant has thought of one card, the four-card packet is taken with your right hand and inserted into the mouth of the envelope. It is promptly fed through the slit, and stolen back on top of the deck. (I devised this switch-out in the mid-1970s. I later discovered that it had already been invented by Leslie May of Scotland. It turns out we were both preceded by Harlan Tarbell, who used the idea in "Eskimo Magic," an undated manuscript probably written in the late 1920s that was published in *A Tarbell Scrapbook* [Kaufman, 1993].)
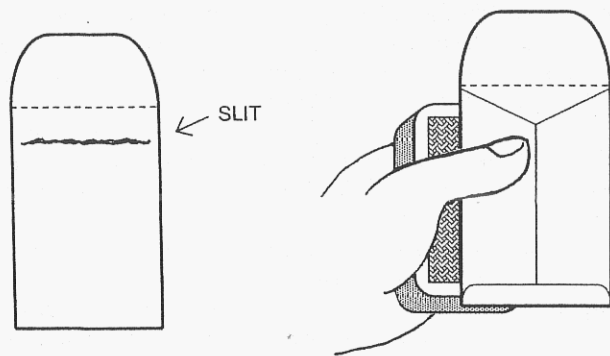
The envelope is now sealed, and handed to the spectator. Don't be concerned about the slit. It will not be noticed now, and will be disposed of shortly.

Ask the spectator about the thought-of card—color, suit and value. Play up as much comedy as you wish in having the other person punch the various buttons of the calculator to "program" the machine for that card. Now take back the envelope, and tear off the end (thus eliminating the evidence of the pre-torn slit). The spectator looks inside, and finds only three cards; the thought-of card is apparently the one that has disappeared.

Direct the other participant in the appropriate actions to reveal the thought-of card inside the envelope inside the calculator, then accept your adulation.