

Mordecai's Journal



www.ctmagic.org

June 2013



CCMA Officers

President: Dan Sclare
Vice President: Angelo Chirico
Secretary: Dana Ring
Treasurer: Soli Levine



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Secretary: Dana Ring
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President: Roger Cisowski
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Treasurer: Soli Levine

Meetings:

Second Monday of every month except December

Angelo's on Main

289 South Main Street
West Hartford.

(I-84 exit 41)

June Meeting: I Got It At The Hardware Store

Theme captain **Norman St. Laurent** asks you to show off a trick you created with something you found at Lowe's, Home Depot, or your local True Value place. Join your fellow tinkerers on **June 10**. Meeting starts at **7:30 PM**; join the officers for dinner at 6 PM.

Minutes of May Meeting

13 May 2013 7:31 PM

20 members attending
3 guests

MI **Dan Sclare** presiding.
Sec'y's Rpt. Accepted as published.
Treasurer's Rpt: submitted.
Dan called for a moment of silence for our departed compeer, **Bill Saypalia**.

No old or new business this month.
G&W: **Charlie Hayden** offered his house for a summer picnic. Details to be worked out later.

Ricky Jay has a movie out [*Deceptive Practice: The Mysteries and Mentors of Ricky Jay*]. It will run at Real Art Ways in Hartford from June 7 to June 13. Check the theater for times.

PNP **Rich Dooley** is looking for volunteers to do close-up/walkaround at the Cycle of Life event in West Hartford on June 2.

David Oliver is in the hospital, to improve his oxygen intake. VP **Angelo Chirico** reports the D.O. Benefit was a big success, raising \$1200. So far, the D.O. fund has raised over \$18,000.

David Haversat cannot do his presentation until the fall.

Adjourned 7:42PM

When Last We Met



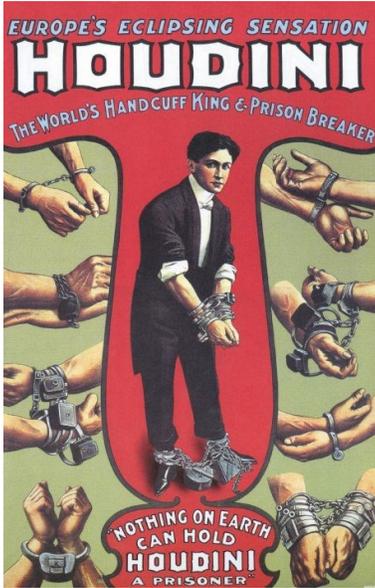
Dan Garrett with a helpful message.

Meeting highlight: Lecture!

A great lecture by **PNP Garrett**. His emphasis was on new presentations of perhaps familiar stuff. He started with the card-in-forehead (pictured), and touched on such effects as: gag production of a "Toyota", color-changing knives, cards as "flatworms," cereal boxes on cards, The Godmother Of All Book Tests, transpositions, the amazing jumping arrows/paddle trick, a linking safety pin trick called Grab That Pinhead, and a double card-find at any number. In the second half: Hertz, a lovely trick with sponge hearts, Premonition Outdone, King Brain, a couple of paddle tricks, and his Inversions. His finale included an excerpt from his two-man show in Atlanta, and Epic Marked Down.

Harry Houdini: The Connecticut Connections

cribbed from the Durham Patch, an article by Philip R. Devlin



Harry Houdini, Vaudeville's highest paid performer, owned a house in Stamford, and his brother, Dr. Leopold Weiss, once lived in Ridgefield.

Bow-legged, wiry and incredibly strong, Harry Houdini stood just 5 foot 4 inches tall. However, what he lacked in physical stature, he more than compensated for with his enormous ability to entertain people.

Houdini was an entertainment giant of his time, possessing a seemingly endless capacity for self promotion and marketing. Houdini's death-defying stunts drew huge crowds both at home and abroad. A creature of his times, he performed in theaters, produced and starred in films, and became among the first to fly an airplane in Australia. Few could match Houdini's star power and his cutting-edge presence in emerging enterprises such as aviation and the film industry.

Houdini's origins, however, were very humble. Born "Erik Weisz" in Budapest on March 24, 1874, he came to the United States at age 4 in the summer of 1878, the fourth oldest of seven children. Upon arrival in Appleton, WI, the family changed its name to "Weiss"—the German form of "Weisz," perhaps to blend in better with the predominant German population of Wisconsin. Young "Erik" became the German form "Ehrich."

As a boy, Ehrich Weiss distinguished himself in sports. He was an outstanding runner and an accomplished trapezist at an early age. Ehrich's father, Rabbi Mayer Weiss, moved the family to New York City in 1887. It was in New York that Ehrich became fascinated with magic and soon renamed himself after an admired French magician, Jean Eugene Robert Houdin. There are two possible explanations for his adopted name "Harry." One is that he named himself after a magician named Harry Kellar; the other is that the name came from his nickname "Ehrie," short for "Ehrich."

By age 17, Houdini had launched an entertainment career, first by doing amazing card tricks, then by becoming an escape artist. He possessed an incredible ability to pick locks. At the suggestion of Martin Beck—an entertainment manager—Houdini began to focus on escaping from handcuffs. His escape act became very popular and was booked on the Vaudeville circuit. Employing a clever marketing strategy, Houdini would publicly challenge local police to handcuff him and to put him in jail; naturally, he always escaped, much to the amazement and delight of the locals.

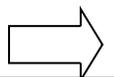
Soon, Houdini flirted with death by having himself shackled and lowered underwater; handcuffed and buried in a coffin for over an hour; placed in a straitjacket while handcuffed and hung upside down; and even placed handcuffed inside the belly of a dead whale that had washed up onto a shore near Boston! His ability to remain calm under pressure, slow down his breathing rate dramatically, deliberately dislocate his shoulders temporarily, regurgitate lock picks that he had concealed by swallowing, and withstand water so cold that it would chill a polar bear made him a sensation. Not surprisingly, he soon became wealthy.

By 1904, Houdini had not only purchased a home in New York City, but he also bought a seven-room retreat in Stamford on Webbs Hill Road. Interestingly, despite all of Houdini's notoriety, there is no known photo of his Connecticut home; furthermore, no one seems to be able to locate the actual address of his home there.

Houdini's brother, Leopold, also owned a home in Connecticut on about 5.5 acres in Ridgefield known as "The Highmeadow Estate." Dr. Leopold Weiss, Houdini's youngest brother, was one of America's first radiologists. Leopold—for some reason estranged from his more famous brother—died in October of 1962 at age 83. His Ridgefield home was for sale as recently as 2008 for over \$7 million!

Houdini died at age 52 on Halloween in 1926 in Detroit. Like another megastar of his time—Rudolph Valentino—Houdini had contracted peritonitis from a ruptured appendix. In fact, Valentino had died just 4 months earlier at age 31 from the exact same cause!

Houdini's appeal continues. There are over 1,000 Houdini-related items for sale on EBay each week. In fact, there are many active Houdini societies throughout the world. Each Halloween, many Houdini fans conduct a seance to try to get in touch with Houdini's spirit. Prior to his death, he had told his wife, Bess, that his biggest escape would be to contact her some day "from the other side" using a secret code—"Rosabelle believe."



It was a line from a play in which Bess performed when they first met. Bess tried to contact him through a seance held every Halloween for 10 years, and thousands of Houdini fans continue to try each Halloween. So far, no luck.

first published March 2013 at durham.patch.com

From The President's Hat

The warm weather has arrived and I'm happy. As I write this tonight, 5 magi from CT and MA have volunteered to do magic at the Cycle of Life Childhood Cancer Survivors Event in West Hartford, CT on June 2nd. It is a great event and I'm looking forward to helping again this year.

I'm also looking forward to attending this years S.A.M. convention in D.C. If you have not attended a S.A.M., I.B.M. or other large multi-day convention you should add it to your bucket list. I will miss the July meeting because of this and then Patty and I are going to continue south to Florida via the Blue Ridge Parkway and Savannah.

I'm sure a lot of us spend more than a little time on the computer. How about you share some of your favorite magic sites with us or links to some great You-Tube magic videos. Email this information to Dana [at dana@danaring.com] so that it could be included in our newsletter. If you come across anything of magical interest please share it with us via our newsletter.

This evening I sent out a request for bios to our members who have not sent one in. If you are one of those people that have not taken a few minutes yet to do this, PLEASE do it now. We have a great history and we need your bio for our archives.

See you at the meeting. Please join us for dinner at 6:00 and support our meeting place.

Magically yours,
Dan Sclare
CCMA President/Historian

From the August 1948 Sphinx:

Northern Conn. Assembly No. 21 (NE) (H★S)

Pres.—WILLIAM F. CHENEY, JR.
Secy.—F. BASSET MORDECAI
1063 Corbin Avenue, New Britain, Conn.
Scribe—LEONARD LORD
Morgan Street, Middletown, Conn.
Meets—2nd MONDAY OF MONTH
Hotel Bond, Hartford, Conn.

Hartford, Conn.—The program for 1948-49 meetings, naming a master of ceremonies for each meeting, was presented by Jim Boyce and gratefully accepted. It was voted to hold summer meetings in July and August, the one in July to be a picnic with invited guests to be held in Middletown at the L. B. Riding Club.

Bill Greenough gave a very interesting report of the conference in Atlantic City. However, he failed to mention the fact that he won the contest for the best presented trick. We were justly proud but not too

greatly surprised as we have witnessed many extraordinary tricks most cleverly presented by Bill.

At the close of the business meeting, Bassett Mordecai gave a very interesting and instructive lecture accompanied by illustrations of the technique of magic. Bill Greenough, Vynn Boyar, Fitch Cheney, Nelson Demers and Jim Boyce also were called upon for further demonstrations and all came through with entertaining feats of magic.

In attendance at the Atlantic City Conference from Assembly No. 21 were Bassett Mordecai, Vynn Boyar, Col. and Mrs. Arthur Grayson, Prof. W. F. Cheney and family, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Greenough and Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Boyce.