



THE SILENT MESSENGER

Silent Mora—Ray Goulet
www.Ring 122.com
March 2016

March Meeting

Our next meeting is on **Wednesday, March 30th, 7:30pm**, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Watertown, 35 Church Street.

Meeting Event: 8pm

Another outstanding **AUCTION**, with the gavel held by Ray Goulet.



A variety of props, small magic effects, literature, and memorabilia will be available. This auction is open to everyone, both buyers and as sellers. There is no entrance fee, and Ring 122 receives 20% of the seller's proceeds.



April 14 through 17: Oceanside Magic International (OMI), at Red Jacket Beach Resort on Cape Cod in South Yarmouth. The special guest and honoree is the legendary **Harry Lorayne**. More information at:
<http://www.oceansidemagic.com/>



June 3rd: Ring 122 show at the Regent Theater, Arlington, MA. To perform or support, please contact Ryan Lally:
lallymagic@gmail.com

Groundhog and Valentine Magic

Our February 2016 meeting had a reduced attendance due to bad weather, but those who came were treated to Ray Goulet's return and to some lively member performances on the theme of February Holidays. We also had a guest, Alex Moorehouse, with us for the meeting.

Debbie O'Carroll performed a routine she created for a library show in 2013. The theme for her show was "Dig into Reading." Deb featured creatures that dig in her act. In honor of Groundhog Day, Deb brought out her puppet groundhog (also known as a woodchuck), named Punx. After some byplay with Punx, Deb used three differently-sized ropes to show Punx looking for his shadow to see if winter would be long this year. Deb's clever use of the Professor's Nightmare effect has Punx casting a long, medium, and short shadow, none of which are to his liking. Punx gets a magic wand to make his shadow the same size, but Mother Nature doesn't like him messing with his shadow and returns his shadow to their previous sizes.

Pat Farenga showed two tricks he was working on, but none had an easy tie-in to February, but he showed them nonetheless. Pat started with 3-Card Canasta by Doc Hillford. A blue deck and a red deck were shuffled. Pat then asked Ryan Lally to cut the deck a few times behind his back, then choose three cards from the red deck, and place each into three of his pockets. Pat then asked Debbie O'Carroll to cut the blue deck behind her back and hand Pat three cards, telling Pat into which pockets of his clothes they should be placed. Ryan then took the cards out of his pocket, one at a time. As he revealed his red card, Pat revealed the same card in the same pocket, only his cards are blue and were chosen by Debbie.

Pat followed this with a drawing duplication effect. He had audience members write down the name of their favorite or most feared animal, and place them in cardboard box. Dan Bybell opened the box and chose one of the animal names. He stood back to back with Pat while Pat sensed the image of the animal in Dan's mind, and correctly drew it in front of the spectators before Dan revealed the animal.

Dan Bybell was up next, continuing with the Groundhog Day theme. Using some cute props from a Tenyo effect based on the boomerang principle, Dan pattered about two cats who wanted to nab a groundhog. Each cat was 7 "kitty meters" long and Dan proved it with a measuring stick. As they tried to nab the groundhog, the cats got mysteriously bigger and smaller, and the measurements proved it. Mike Lee ended

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**“Groundhog and Valentine Magic”
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the evening appropriately with a Valentine’s Day heart filled with Hershey Kisses inside it and a ring. Mike first penetrated the ring onto a solid plastic straw, showed that it was on the straw tightly, and then separated the ring from the straw—a neat, closeup solid-through-solid effect. Mike ended by saying, “I’ll take the ring and you can help yourself to a chocolate.” This was a nice note on which to end the night.

—Patrick Farenga
Photos by Bruce Fenton



Debbie introduces Ring members to puppet groundhog Punx



Debbie uses ropes to show the different lengths of Punx’ shadows



Pat’s performance of 3-Card Canasta



Dan picked an animal’s name from a box, and Pat revealed the animal by drawing it ... while back-to-back with Dan



Dan’s cats somehow got bigger and smaller



Mike Lee uses a heart, ring, and straw for a great solid-through-solid effects

**From the President
Gimmicks, Gaffs, and Gizmos**

You really have to admire the old time magicians. They were as talented at invention and craftsmanship as they were at performing. Before the days of magic shops and factories, they were able to pull off some spectacular illusions that were totally conceived in their imaginations, and executed entirely by hand.

These early illusions were pure genius ... a combination of machining, stitching, cabinet making and artistic painting that all merged with audacious showmanship to astound an audience under the gas lamps.

We are fortunate to be able to examine many of these items at Ray’s Museum. His many recent acquisitions are stunning examples of the magicians’ art, a collection of Money Maker illusions, Cardini’s precision equipment for making watch reels, and much more. You really must see these things.

From the 1940’s to the 1960’s, magic manufacturing had reached it’s peak as magicians were producing copies of their best tricks for sale to others. This continues today with widely varying degrees of quality. The names Schoolcraft, Lassen, RnT2, Myatt, Ousterling, and many others, stand out among the best. On the other hand, there have been a number of recent releases that look spectacular on YouTube but are poorly constructed and undependable in reality. Several flash changes of cards and card boxes come to mind. The gimmicks you receive in the mail barely last long enough to get out of the envelope. All is not lost however. You can use that piece of junk as a template and make your own, better and stronger.

You will be surprised how inexpensive and simple it is to make your own props. Begin with a "dedicated space". This could start as a plastic box with a lid. Within, you store various items like tape, glue, scissors, X-Acto knife, cutting surface, straight edge, etc. Browse the aisles of the craft and fabric stores. There are lots of new elastic and adhesive materials just begging to be magical. What miracles would the old timers create if they had Velcro and Kevlar?

Making simple gaffs can be an enjoyable part of magic. A word of caution: building your own magic can become addictive. You may find yourself with a garage full of equipment and supplies ... broke and happy.

—Bruce Fenton

Notice

The photoshoot for our Regal Theater Show advertising has been POSTPONED until the April meeting, so that everyone will be able to attend and the lights won’t be in the way of the auction. Performers should be in costume and bring a favorite small prop or two. We will do individual headshots and a couple of group photos.

Acting for Magicians Presenting your Props

By Debbie O'Carroll

After an anxious wait of several days to audition for a part in a touring production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* while in high school, I was hired to play a role in it as Second Gravedigger! I threw myself wholeheartedly into the rehearsals, and my enthusiasm was only slightly lessened by the fact that the production was to tour high schools.

However, there were two memorable stage "disasters" that turned the students boredom to glee. The first misadventure was when Laertes accidentally stabbed Hamlet with his sword, causing a minor flesh wound with just enough gore to satisfy their thirst for blood. The second was a prop malfunction. It happened during the famous graveyard scene, the one where Hamlet speaks to the skull of his late father's jester, Yorick. The scene opened with me, the Second Gravedigger, standing downstage with my shovel.

The First Gravedigger was standing inside a "grave" surrounded by a pile of dirt. The grave was a typical regional theater touring prop. It was a mound of chicken wire covered with papier-mache and painted to look like freshly dug earth. There was a waist-deep well in the middle of the mound and this is where the First Gravedigger stood. Yorick's skull was also in the grave, placed on a little shelf out of view. The chicken wire was nailed to a plywood platform with wheels on it. The wheels made it easy for the stage manager to push the grave onto the stage during the scene change. It had a brake to keep it from rolling about.

Hamlet and Horatio entered from stage right. The actor playing Hamlet strode across the stage, lifted his foot and rested it firmly against the side of the grave. However, the stage manager forgot to set the brake. I heard the grave whiz past me as it sped toward the wings with the First Gravedigger inside. I stood very still, resting on my shovel and staring at the floor as the crowd screamed with laughter. Wild applause erupted when the First Gravedigger returned to the stage pushing the grave before her. She set the brake, clambered back into the grave and repeated her lines. Later, when asked why she bothered to bring the structure back onstage, the First Gravedigger replied, "Yorick was in the grave! It is essential that Hamlet hold him in his hand during his speech. What could I do?" What could she do? The poor actress was charge of handling the most recognizable prop in the history of theatre.

This incident brings magic to mind because our props feature so prominently in our performances. Should we as magicians, treat our magic props with the same care that the characters in *Hamlet* give Yorick's skull? We are often instructed to handle magic props casually as if they are ordinary, everyday objects. Our props may be ordinary everyday objects but they are used to make marvelous magic. The wording of instructional books and directions

may cause us to treat our props as trivial, but we should handle our magic tricks with care and a bit of awe. Do we find ourselves rummaging through our tables or trunks looking for a special prop? If the object is so important, why wouldn't we have it at hand or in a special place?

In one performance, I remember shuffling a deck, slapping it down on the table, and asking my volunteer to choose a card. When I found her chosen card, I showed it to her and tossed it aside. "Don't you like my card?" she said. I was trying to impress her with my cleverness, instead of recognizing her specialness. My handling of her card should have reflected the respect I had for her as my volunteer.

I have also tossed my props aside after performing wonderful magic with them. Surely my audience's amazement diminished as they watched me carelessly discard my tricks. Their delight would have continued if I was mindful of my props at the end of the effect.

Whether elaborate, comical or commonplace, your props are where the magic happens. It doesn't matter if your your magician character appears sponge balls from a brown paper bag or a dragon-decorated chest. It is the *treatment* of your prop that makes your magic magical!

(Debbie O'Carroll is a full-time magician from Massachusetts where she teaches a weekly acting and movement improvisation class.)

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Secretary's Report

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by our president, Bruce Fenton.

The secretary's report was accepted by the members. There was no treasurer's report.

David Reshef was welcomed as our guest.

Correspondence was received from David Libby, who has a number of items for our next magic auction. We decided to have an auction at our March meeting.

Ryan Lally announced that there are seven or eight performers for our June 3rd show at The Regent Theatre.

Bruce Fenton and Debbie O'Carroll asked to be put on the list of pre-show lobby close-up performers. We will arrange a date and place to take publicity photos for this show.

Pat Farenga alerted us to a telephone scam that affects performers who advertise on Gig Masters and Gig Salad. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

—Debbie O'Carroll

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The Silent Messenger is published every month except for July and August. Editorial duties rotate each month between Jerry Schiowitz (editor of this issue) and Pat Farenga (editor of next month's issue). The deadline for submissions is the eighth of the month. Articles, inquiries, and letters can be emailed to the editors: Pat: pfarenga@comcast.net; Jerry: annjer@rcn.com