

The Personal Prediction Principle

Methods are seductive and props are even more so. I know—a classy home-made prop has made me glassy-eyed more often than I care to admit. The artistic mania hits and after hours of wielding computer software, color printers, lamination film, spray glue, corner-rounders and the like, I'll come up with a doodad for a new effect I'm sure will be commercial. But when the cloud finally lifts and I see things clearly, I think back to what Dunninger accomplished with no more than an ordinary piece of chalk and a blackboard.

In many ways, props are the bane of mentalism.

Though the concept has been right in front of me for years, it's only recently I've really come to appreciate that mentalism is about people, not things. This has led me to something I call the personal prediction principle.

Here's the idea: when performing a precognition effect, I'm suggesting that the theme may be more interesting and even more convincing if you write the prediction down in the presence of the participant. The opposite of this would be where you pull a pre-written prediction or even worse, a laminated computer generated gewgaw as mentioned above, from your briefcase or jacket pocket.

In the first instance just described, you are apparently picking up on some vibrations from that particular participant; your prediction is somehow based upon personal interaction with him or her. In the latter case, since your prediction was obviously packed in the briefcase before you even arrived at the venue, the implication is that your work is independent of the personalities involved.

As the late T. A. Waters so eloquently observed, precognition is inherently the hardest of the three aspects of cognitive

parapsychology to get across. ⁽¹⁾ I believe that using a pre-written prediction only adds to the difficulty. The focus is on props rather than people, so it comes across more as a trick, puzzle or challenge. ⁽²⁾ Consider these examples.

In Phil Goldstein's commercial effect "Designated Thinker," a large prediction placard is set down at the start of the performance. ⁽³⁾ Later, after the participant has freely chosen a card you show that the symbol on the placard matches. As an alternative, here's how I personalize things. I had a local printer make up a bunch of good quality 10" by 10" writing tablets (about the same size of the original placard). I dispense with the placard altogether and instead sketch the symbol while gazing at the participant, sensing the atmosphere, etc. Any person's ego is inherently stroked by this individual attention, and sketching the prediction "especially" for that participant is a form of flattery I think.

Here's a close-up example, this time (!) from Max Maven. It's "Positive Negative," which appeared in one of his popular videotapes. ⁽⁴⁾ In this case, you start by bringing a business card forward which you claim has a prediction written on it. But why not actually remove a "blank" business card and write the prediction especially for the participant at the outset, again in his or her presence? You'll note the quote marks around the word "blank." Ethics preclude me from revealing Max's method here, but I think I can mention that there is one word already on the card that the participants aren't aware of. You'll know what this word is if you're a legitimate owner of the video.

Here's another illustration. It's the wonderful Jon Tremaine effect, "Round the Clock." ⁽⁵⁾ I absolutely love Jon's

approach to psychic entertainment, and think this is a terrific effect. It's fast, baffling, has a double whammy ending and, best of all, contains some superior, inherent (non-forced) humor.

However, the fact that the message to the participant is permanently printed on the back of the clock prop dilutes the personal feel. Once again, the pre-fab message makes this come across as a "trick." It might even suggest that any yahoo who owns the prop would be able to do the same thing.

In my rendition, I use a plain toy clock; there is no etched-on message. Instead, I bring forward my trusty writing tablet and say, "Give me a moment to ponder an event yet to come.... Let me jot my impression down as proof for later."

I then tear off the sheet, fold it in quarters and place it under the clock on the center of the close-up mat, saying, "We'll put it right here for safe keeping."

I proceed with the normal presentation. Near the end I say, "Now remember, you had complete freedom of choice when you made your decision, and I doubt there's any way you could have predicted you would land on the Six of Diamonds. But I told you, there's something about the face of a clock that synchronizes our thoughts and makes future events become clear. Recall that I wrote a prediction way back at the start of this experiment. Would you open it up and read my message aloud?"

I put the clock aside, exposing the folded message again and proceed to a delightful climax as per Jon's handling.

By the way, the tablet I use is a mini legal type, employed throughout the act for consistency. That's something I feel strongly about in mentalism; if you start with a certain tablet, then stick with it. And the same thing applies to writing implements. People will start to wonder if you change either the tablet or pencil during your act depending on the effect you're performing!

Did you notice, above, how I folded the prediction in quarters before putting it under the clock? This sets a precedent for the participant to do so likewise later in the act — leading up to a center tear, of course. There's nothing like teaching by doing!

As a final example, consider Doug Dymont's slick "Major Arcanum." ⁽⁶⁾ These comments refer to his Humber wallet version by the way.

I still believe that a prediction which is created on the spot, personally for the participant, is stronger than bringing out a sealed envelope, computer printed message, whatever, in which the prophecy was clearly made hours before in an impersonal manner. So, how about this alternative? The Humber wallet has three folded billets with the ranging force predictions (of which more, later) in the hidden side. The other side contains a slip of paper and a pen is clipped to the wallet. Bring the affair out, open it, remove the slip, close the wallet, and using the latter as a "clip board," inscribe the prediction on the spot. Obviously, you jot the fourth and remaining ranging force prediction. Fold it identically to the other three, and put it in the empty side of the wallet, showing all very openly yet casually. Actually, writing a personal prediction in this effect offers a number of advantages:

- The prediction is, of course, written extemporaneously for the participant. This is more in keeping with the psychic reading/Tarot theme I think.

- A Humber wallet gives me the willies, not looking like any wallet my friends carry. (Maybe I move in the wrong circles). But when presented as a pocket secretary I think it might be more believable.

- You've clearly shown the wallet contains one prediction only (since you put it there in full view after writing it), without beating the scene to death. There's no need to remove an envelope, flick it to show it's single, etc., as suggested in the

original presentation. I think the approach I've proposed might seem more natural and yet it still gets the point across.

- Not using envelopes at all might disabuse the audience of the idea that alternatives exist. Anyway, I've always wondered: as mentalists we all know what pay envelopes are, but just how natural do they appear to most laymen? A folded slip of paper probably seems more commonplace.

- Since the Himber wallet is really just a pocket secretary in this instance (an ordinary workaday item), it garners little interest compared to the Tarot cards or the dice that are more exotic in nature

and draw the heat. Incidentally, the Kenton Knepper verbal bit of "sealed in this wallet" might be useful here. See his *Wonder Words* linguistic deception audiocassettes for details. ⁽⁷⁾

I'm not claiming to have invented relativity, but do believe this simple idea of a personal prediction may actually strengthen an effect. And it certainly doesn't cost anything to try. Perhaps it'll turn out that the audience really doesn't care one way or another, but only repeated trials in the field will determine this.

And then again, maybe I just have a terminal case of "the Emperor's New Clothes."

□

Interpretation is Everything

When working up and scripting a new item, I've found that I often take one of two paths. Sometimes I mentally interpret and visualize the action in terms of the method, from the performer's point of view. This is probably how most novices approach magic or mentalism. Later, I might think I'm being more clever and attempt to view the method from the participant's point of view, trying to discern if holes can be poked in it.

But neither is good, at least not when it comes time to compose the script. Instead, I should be trying to visualize how the effect (not the method) appears from the audience's standpoint. Here's an easy to understand and practical example.

It's the general-purpose technique used in Bruce Bernstein's "Telepathy by Item." ⁽⁸⁾ This is an excellent minimalist method for divining which item out of several the participant has secretly decided upon. In particular, she writes down the names of several objects on a notepad, and the mentalist correctly determines the special one.

Here's where the interpretation comes in, and I'll try to explain it without revealing the subtle gaff Bruce uses (get his book to learn the details ethically.) What's going on is that you, the mentalist, are able to determine which item the participant has written down first; this is the secret object she concentrates on later. Then several other duds are added to the list. Interpreted baldly in terms of method, then...

The mentalist correctly determines which item a participant has written first.

Not much of an effect, is it! But that's because the interpretation stinks, not the inherent method. What if we change the focus and have the participant think of her favorite travel destination, some country she's visited and absolutely loves. Get her to visualize it for several moments, and only after she can see it clearly in her mind's eye should she write it down. Then she (or other participants for that matter) adds several other countries to the list, only this time they must be places she or they've never been

The Linking Ring

to. To conclude the effect, you correctly determine that one special country. Under this interpretation, the effect becomes...

The mentalist correctly determines which item the participant cares most about.

That's a big difference! In a nutshell, for this type of mentalism at least, try to see beyond the method and focus on putting a new interpretation over.

If the approach taken in this particular example appeals to you, let me point you toward Bob Cassidy's "Black Lipstick #2," which is based upon similar thinking. ⁽⁹⁾ Bob and reporter Jerry MacGregor also provide a good real-world script to give you a feel for what this type of gimmick/effect is capable of. Likewise, Werry has released a commercial version called "Pen-Sation" which is usable with any ballpoint pen. ⁽¹⁰⁾

You might also want to think about using this "what's written first" technique as an adjunct to other effects. For example, Michael Sibbern's excellent pseudo-psychometry item which appeared in *The Linking Ring* comes to mind. ⁽¹¹⁾ In this case, the gimmick would



Thomas Henry

give you knowledge of which item was written first, and this could be used to implement a kicker of some sort or perhaps throw in an incidental convincer.

Key-R-Rect and the Bleeding Obvious

"There's nothing so deceptive as the obvious fact." So claimed Sherlock Holmes in one of those cheesy Basil Rathbone movies from the 1940s. As performers, sometimes things right in front of our noses go unnoticed and yet they make all the difference in how our mentalism is perceived by others. Here's a classic example I stumbled upon some years ago. It really drives home how the simplest nuance can speak directly to the subconscious.

It concerns the well-known and excellent effect Key-R-Rect manufactured by Merriss Magic; this is a gaffed version of

Theo. Annemann's classic "Seven Keys to Baldpate." The standard routine employs six ordinary keys, one hot key, one large key ring and one small key ring.

The original instructions with Key-R-Rect give the full details on how to show that the other keys don't work at the conclusion (i.e., that the key you psychically detected is unique.) Does Al Baker's line, "The wicked flee when none pursue" come to mind? I threw all of that out, and instead use a wonderful combination of suggestion and subtlety to show everything is fair at the outset, without

coming across as “proving” anything. Here’s how.

Begin with the six ordinary keys on the big ring and the hot key on the small ring. Hand the big ring to the participant, have him open it and try each key in the lock. They fail. Now hand the small ring to the participant, have him open it and try the key in the lock – it works.

What you have unconsciously suggested is that the ordinary keys belong on a separate big ring (after all, it needs to hold more), while the small ring is especially reserved to hold the “one” working key. So at the conclusion, while making your final remarks as you move to the next routine, you merely take the key that sprung the lock (presumably the one you originally showed as a working key) and “return” it to its ring. This really looks great – very subtle, and no words are needed to convey that you were supposedly using only one working key all along! If you do Key-R-Rect already, then you’ll know at this point that actually any of the keys will open the lock. But this one simple action completely dispels that possibility from the participants’ minds, and without beating it to death.

While on the subject of overlooking the obvious, consider how this applies to the presentation of Key-R-Rect as well. Some of the ideas from the past seemed pretty silly to me, things like hooking the lock to a buttonhole, or to a ten dollar bill. I wanted much more than a lock-

smith’s Bank Night out of this. I asked myself the obvious question: what is a padlock used for normally? The answer, of course, is to secure things (but not buttonholes!) This immediately suggested a way to dramatically increase the “size” of the effect. I added in a 24” length of heavy-duty chain. Then the question is why would I need a lock and chain on stage? Again, the answer is clear: to have my wrists shackled together. Last question: why would I want to have my hands chained? The answer: this provides the necessary motivation, commitment or “edge” to properly receive the psychometric vibrations. Anyway, audiences expect a certain amount of show biz.

Consider how this looks to everyone. I start with a hefty, nasty looking chain locked in a loop. The participants try the keys one by one. Once the chain is unlocked, my wrists are shackled with it, and the padlock secures everything. Do you know that classic film clip of two people ratcheting the straitjacket on Houdini? They really tug at it, while Houdini gasps and responds to the actions. I do something similar: I insist that the committee members really bear down on the chain and strap my wrists in as tightly as they can go.

This really sells, and looks quite powerful! With a quick visit to the hardware store I have magnified the size of the effect considerably; talk about packs small and plays big!

popped up on his tape, VideoMind.⁽¹²⁾ Naturally, I won’t be detailing his method entirely, but if you know the effect then you’ll be able to figure out my comments.

- Pair the matching cards face-to-face before putting them in the envelopes. When the time comes to extract them,

pick up a pair of envelopes, blow an end open and extract a card. Then (and this is the killer), turn the envelopes over laterally 180 degrees, blow and extract the next card. This imparts a real feeling of individual cards coming from separate envelopes without being overt. The face-to-face business guarantees that the cards always come out face down. The pairs are all extracted this way, and remain face down on the table until the time comes to reveal them at the denouement. Note that there is a discrepancy here (after the participant shuffles the envelopes, why would exactly half of them necessarily contain face-down cards and the other half face-up?), but this is so subtle and the turnover so strong that I think it passes everyone by. Anyway, at this point in the routine, no one knows what’s inside the envelopes.

- A little linguistic deception goes a long way here as well. For starters, never use the word “pair” until the very end. Instead, as you extract each card, use phrases like:

...here we have a card, and inside the other one is another card...

...getting one card from here, and the other card from there...

Note that these words are carefully chosen to suggest that the cards are being extracted from distinct places without being pedantic. (The words “other,” “another,” “here” and “there” are the keys.)

- I didn’t want to do this as a Zener card effect, and came up with the following. I now present it as a test of the participant’s talent in remote color viewing. I made a set of color spot cards: blue, orange, red, purple and green. Double blank cards provide the stock, and the color spots are 1-1/2” in diameter, cut from sticky-back colored plastic sheets. I used a circle cutter to make the spots. I got these sheets and the circle cutter at Hobby Lobby. The result is a very visual, professional and sturdy set of “testing

cards.” Uh-oh-I feel a bout of prop concupiscence coming on again.

- Per this presentation, here are a couple phrases from my script you might find useful: Now I bet you’re wondering what that was all about. Well, you might have heard that back in the 1960s the Pentagon conducted research into whether it’s possible to sense colors by some means other than ordinary vision. This has been my version of an experiment in remote color viewing.

...nonetheless, if you’re truly gifted with the power of second sight, then perhaps you were able to sort the envelopes in a surprising way.

- You might find the magazine article, “Ah, the Blue Smell of It!,” useful for patter ideas.⁽¹³⁾ This concerns synesthesia, where the senses get “crossed,” and someone can see a sound, hear a color, etc. Apparently this condition is quite common and affects nearly 1 out of 2000 people. This ties in quite nicely with the notion of detecting a color by some means other than sight.

- Here’s a probability thing that may prove useful. Have the envelopes set in your briefcase so that they alternate. (You’ll know what this means if you’re a legitimate owner of the effect). When you hand the stack to the participant, here’s something that *might* happen: he mixes the envelopes by a series of straight cuts, or perhaps does a variation of the Charlier False Shuffle (the Hay Mow). Let’s face it, envelopes are not very conducive to riffle shuffles, so the odds are whatever method the participant uses to mix the envelopes maintains large portions of the alternating arrangement, perhaps even perfectly. This makes the divvying up process, prior to the Gilbreath Principle, much simpler and direct. And if he does a Weave Shuffle of the envelopes, well then, you’re no worse off than if you had started with the envelopes in a haphazard arrangement.

...And Another Incidental Convincer

Incidental convincers like the key ring bit are my Holy Grail. There’s nothing quite like hitting upon an angle that takes two seconds, speaks volumes and yet isn’t pushy – all at the same time. Along these lines, here are some ideas for Max Maven’s effect “Zenvelopes,” which appeared in *The Linking Ring*, and also

• To make the envelopes, I created two templates on sturdy cardboard. The first is a cutting pattern that includes the necessary tabs and the second is the folding block. Using these, along with a straight edge and X-Acto knife permits me to rapidly manufacture the required envelopes from black construction

paper. A glue stick secures the tabs.

• And speaking of which, did you know that construction paper comes in different qualities? (I didn't!) At Hobby Lobby, I found a high quality construction paper, which looks the same as any other, but is guaranteed to fold without cracking or breaking.

The Expectation of Threes

How many phases should an ESP presentation contain? For whatever reason, most Communicators, such as actors, politicians and writers, find that things that come in threes satisfy audiences. This expectation seems to be built into our genes. Of course, you probably don't want to come across as too predictable, but it's certainly the case that three-phase effects have a classical air about them. Here's an example of how I've applied this idea.

While reviewing a number of older books, trolling for things I might have forgotten, I came across Larry Becker's "It's in the Bag."⁽¹⁴⁾ It was already routinized in three phases, but I was immediately struck by how an easy change in the presentation could add to the dramatic appeal of the thing. In Larry's original treatment, the performer reads three people's minds, respectively. I'd like to humbly suggest that it is possible to punch up the impact by making the three instances increasingly "more difficult," thus giving a very natural build, so that the audience knows when to applaud. There's no real change in the method (although see my comment below); it's just the presentation that's different. Here's the new description.

Three participants are invited on stage. #1 is handed a pack of Zener cards. He mixes these, then hands them to #2 who further mixes them. And likewise #3 is encouraged to mix the pack and

drop it into a paper bag. In the meanwhile, the performer displays a sealed prediction that is handed to #3 for safe-keeping.

The mentalist indicates that there are three aspects to ESP: telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition.

Telepathy is the easiest, since it involves two minds. #1 withdraws a Zener card from the bag and looks at, projecting its image to the performer. The mentalist successfully announces what it is.

Clairvoyance is a little harder, since neither the performer nor the participant knows the symbol in advance, like a double blind. #2 selects one without looking at it, and the mentalist accurately determines it.

But of the three aspects comprising ESP, precognition is the hardest. Reminding everyone that #3 has been holding a prediction since the outset, the participant selects one of the Zener cards. Of course, the performer has successfully predicted it.

From a method point of view, this is nothing more than three revelations in a row. But the alternative interpretations (of which I spoke earlier) add variety and interest. More importantly, see how neatly this builds dramatically? And it also allows the performer to explain a bit about ESP, which might help the rest of the performance. By the way, Henning Nelms has a fair amount to say about dra-

matic structure and climaxes, which is what got me thinking along these lines in the first place.⁽¹⁵⁾

If you'd like to try this effect yourself, here are a few additional tips:

• I place the three cards face-up along the back edge of the bag (I don't use the narrow end as in Larry's description). I'm trying to be careful here not to rob him of his method, but if you read his write-up and try out what I suggest, you'll see what I mean immediately. In any event, I can easily flip the bag open in an extremely nonchalant fashion.

• I use a very cheap sandwich bag; it's the cheesiest generic brand our local grocery store has to offer. Because it's so flimsy, it appears beyond reproach and yet hides the secret something nicely.

• As per Larry's idea, I cut the bag down. This not only makes it appear less of a concealing prop, but also actually eases the handling as the participants reach in.

• And here's a subtle thing that cranks up the volume a bit. I'm using a poker sized Zener pack, with Bicycle backs that not only match the bag size better but also are easier to see in a cabaret setting. The circles are yellow, crosses are black, waves are blue, squares are red and stars are green. The important thing to note is that each symbol is of a particular color (unlike the Piatnik pack in which each symbol is present in each color). So when divining the participant's choice whether by telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition, I make a big deal out of getting not only the symbol but the color correctly. Larry mentions in his write-up that participants seem to pick up on this. I've had this pack lying around for years (I got it from Cards by Martin) and never had a good use for it – now I do!

The same idea can be applied very nicely to a book test. Consider the approach taken by Richard Mark in his brilliant "Peek-a-Book Plus."⁽¹⁶⁾ This really caught my eye, for not only does it

expand the typical book test into a major three phase routine, but it's also far more direct than most. As the late T. A. Waters wrote in his epic mentioned earlier, if you were really going to ask someone to choose a page in a book, you'd simply ask them to do so without any intervening monkey business concerning page numbers, etc.⁽¹⁷⁾ Well, Richard met this challenge very nicely, and with an additional tip of the hat to the memory of T. A., here's how I adapted things to fit my style.

I like the three-phase approach taken by Richard, but suggest altering the order and the build-up slightly. Instead of simply exhibiting three instances of telepathy (which don't build dramatically) I start with #1 strictly as a demonstration of telepathy; you directly divine the word the first participant has glimpsed.

For #2, you're exhibiting clairvoyance (after claiming this is harder, since neither of you knows the word ahead of time). Per Richard's method, the first book gives you knowledge of the word in the second book (which #2 is holding closed at the clairvoyant moment). This seems much stronger than the first test.

And for #3, you do much more than divine a word, but actually reproduce a drawing of the scene he reads over in his book. (For the books I'm using, the drawing is that of a wineglass and a beer bottle). Here you indicate that receiving an entire image is even more difficult than receiving a single word or two; it always pays to tell them just how hard things are! The third test is done with a force, of course. An easily missed point in my variation is that you'll need to set the force book down in order to pick up the tablet and marker with which to make the drawing, meaning that you end clean. The other two books still in the hands of the participants are unfaked and of no concern.

I'm trying to stay ethical here, but without giving everything away, I think I

can say that in Richard Mark's approach only one book is faked, the one you handle. His method for arranging the force is tried and true, but I'd like to suggest a less invasive alternative. This is described by T. A. Waters in his book mentioned above.⁽¹⁸⁾ There are two advantages to the Waters' force. First, there is less of a problem if you flash the edges of the book – all the pages look the same. More importantly, you can easily change the force page from one night to the next, in case you have repeat audiences. With Richard's method you're stuck with the same force page until you replace the book.

Also note, by using the three participants in the way I've described above, it won't hurt if more than one sees the same page number, since each is processing the information in differing ways. So if

the force page keeps coming up accidentally (your grip is too tight or whatever), it simply doesn't matter. In other words, you really only need the force for #3, but if the gimmick makes that page come up for the other participants in the heat of the moment, it's not a big deal, sort of like the "Tossed Out Deck" in an odd sort of way.⁽¹⁹⁾

Finally, David Jelinek proposed an interesting multiple page method in a magazine article published several years ago.⁽²⁰⁾ The idea is that the force can be continued if the participant wants to change his mind midstream. (T. A. Waters suggested something similar in the mentalism bible I keep referring to).

⁽²¹⁾ But to my mind, using multiple force pages and asking, "should I keep going?" smacks of magic, not mentalism; I mention it here in case you disagree.

Searching for Patterns

Here's something that might suggest an original presentation to you. Have you ever considered doing mentalism with the Gypsy Witch Fortune Telling cards? Made by U.S. Playing Card Company, they've been around forever. (I remember running across a set when I was a kid in the early sixties).

If you've never seen them before, they

are poker-sized and have an attractive witch motif on the back. There are 52 of them; each shows a playing card face, a number from 1 to 52 and an image of some sort in three colors (very Victorian looking, by the way-good for atmosphere). I put together a list for my notebook showing the relationships. Here 'tis if you wish to examine it:

1. 3H (O) Sun	14. JD (L) the rider	27. 4D (L) dog	40. 0C (O) wine
2. 5H (O) Moon	15. KD (O) letter	28. 5D (O) anchor	41. 9S (L) rose
3. 6H (O) house	16. 9H (O) ship	29. 6S (L) mouse	42. QS (L) amor
4. 4C (O) key	17. 4H (L) fish	30. 10S (O) the rod	43. 6C (O) lightning
5. 3C (L) tree	18. 2D (L) lady	31. AC (O) crossroads	44. 8D (O) broken glass
6. 5S (O) coffin	19. 2H (L) gentleman	32. 8S (O) mountains	45. JC (O) order (medallion)
7. 10H (L) bouquet	20. 7C (L) lilies	33. 5C (L) cloverleaf	46. 2C (O) railroad
8. 10D (O) scythe	21. 7H (L) stork	34. 2S (O) star	47. KS (L) bride
9. AD (L) birds	22. JH (O) book	35. 10C (O) tower	48. 3D (O) safe
10. 3S (L) pig	23. QH (O) ring	36. 8H (L) cat	49. 4S (L) eye
11. AH (L) fox	24. KH (L) hand-in-hand	37. AS (O) rapiers	50. KC (L) bear
12. QD (L) children	25. 7S (O) clouds	38. 7D (O) flames	51. 6D (L) lion
13. 8C (L) snake	26. 9C (O) park	39. 9D (L) heart	52. JS (L) shepherd

How can these be used in mentalism? The first thing that comes to mind is Phil Goldstein's "Centrifugal Variations."⁽²²⁾ This depends upon having cards that fall into two or more disjoint sets. There are a number of ways of splitting the images up in the Gypsy Witch cards. For example, I've shown them divided into living things and otherwise (denoted L and O, respectively, above). Note that, conveniently, there are exactly 26 cards in each group. One might also try for flowers, animals, stellar objects, etc.; the images cover a fairly interesting array of topics.

To use these in the centrifugal effects mentioned above would require mnemonics linking the cards or their numbers (1 to 52) with the images, but this is a snap using standard memory training devices. Anyway, by making such a link, you've actually pushed the

method back one notch, which might be a good thing if performing for extraordinarily alert audiences. And you could probably tie in a psychic reading with the effect, although that sort of thing doesn't appeal to me. I don't really know yet how useful the Gypsy Witch cards are in centrifugal effects and may even be dulling Ockham's Razor just by considering it. But see what you think.

By the way, since these cards are poker-size, they accept a breather crimp quite nicely, which makes cutting a stack to the top a breeze.

And while brainstorming, you might also want to check out how the late T. A. Waters (in his book mentioned earlier) has combined them with the Annemann Mental Masterpiece impression case for a rather compelling bit of psychic entertainment.⁽²³⁾

Performing Naked

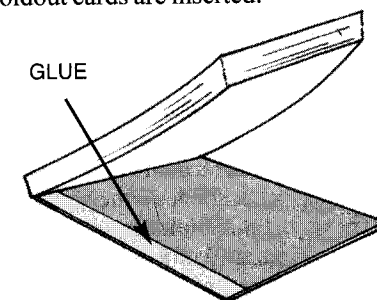
Well, almost: while much has been written over the years on angles, venues, working with microphones, dealing with hecklers, and so forth, there is one environmental hazard that really hasn't gotten the treatment it deserves. Just what do you do if you don't have pockets? Here's my humble contribution to the topic.

I've always wanted to perform Stewart James "Miraskill," but the one thing holding me back was a lack of pockets.⁽²⁴⁾ I frequently perform casually in jeans and a tee shirt, while seated at a dinner table. Obviously, this makes fetching the holdout cards for the second phase difficult. Pockets in Levis don't have nearly the flexibility of a jacket pocket, and fumbling about in them might give the wrong impression.

So, here's a simple utility prop I came up with that you might find useful, too.

Since a scratch pad is needed for this effect anyway (on which to write a pre-

diction), it's a simple matter to modify it to deliver the holdout cards surreptitiously. Constructing it is easy. Open the scratch pad up to the cardboard backing and apply a single swipe of a glue stick down the left edge, about a quarter inch wide. Then secure the paper to this by patting it down, and let it dry. Thus, the last sheet of paper in the pad is firmly attached to the cardboard backing by the normal binding at the top (in common with all the sheets), and the glued left edge. This forms a pocket into which the holdout cards are inserted.



When performing, bring the scratch pad out. You can casually set it down so the two fixed edges are facing the participants, and the two open edges facing you. But even this isn't strictly necessary. Since scratch pads are a fairly innocuous item, no one will ever suspect it to be guilty of anything.

When it comes time to write your prediction for phase one of Miraskill, take the pad and pen below the level of the table to jot your impression. Supposedly, you're doing this for dramatic reasons so that the participants won't see your message prematurely. As soon as you dive below the table, simply extract the hold-out cards and jam them under your thigh. They're now ready when you need them in phase two. Palm them out at any con-

venient moment later and continue with the usual execution of Miraskill.

I had the local printer make up some scratch pads for me. They're 3" by 4-1/2" in size, specially cut to fit inside my tiny close-up mentalism pouch (which I got from Jerry Mentzer's *Magic Methods*). I actually use the scratch pad in an earlier effect and procure the cards at that time. They simply rest between my right thigh and the chair until I need them two effects later. The neat thing is, everyone can see me sit down cleanly at the table, and yet the pad delivers the cards when required. It's like G. K. Chesterton's *Invisible Man*; scratch pads are so commonplace that they're not noticed.

And if it isn't obvious, this can also be used as a billet dropper.

Almost a Force

The Law of Excluded Middle states that a proposition is either true or else it is false — there is no in between. Logic and mathematics depend upon it. But it can prejudice your thinking in mentalism, obscuring what might otherwise have been an elegant solution to a problem.

Consider forcing, for example. Paraphrasing, we arrive at "either you force a particular item, or else you allow a free choice from the sample space." For ages this is the way I viewed forcing, as a singular absolute. It's only in the past several years I've started to see that relaxing the standards actually makes things easier, in addition to creating a procedure that seems more natural. Here are several examples.

Phil Goldstein gives a good learning piece in his classic booklet on equivoque.⁽²⁵⁾ You make a prediction and then the participant "chooses" one coin from five (penny, dime, nickel, quarter, half-dollar). Naturally, the winnowing process ensures that you're right. Yes,

the logical steps are easy enough, but as Phil explains, carrying them out so that they seem natural and so that the participant feels like she has truly made free decisions is another matter altogether. In fact, I consider equivoque to be the single most difficult technique I use. One of my scripts has been continually revised since 1996 and is still a work in progress. Experimentation, careful observation, and seeing things with perpetually new eyes ensure that it keeps maturing. For a slightly different take on the psychology involved in equivoque, you might also want to look into David Eldridge's booklet and video, in both of which I found some good ideas.⁽²⁶⁾

But what if two of the coins were force objects, with either one being acceptable? Well, for one thing, the probabilities certainly lighten up in your favor. At the first step when the participant touches a coin, you now stand a 0.40 probability of it being a desired one (instead of 0.20 as in the single coin case). And if the

first coin eliminated is a dud, well then, things skyrocket to 0.50 for the next choice (instead of 0.25). Clearly your opportunities for success have doubled all along the way.

More importantly, with two force objects, things really open up for a consistent and very fair looking process. For example, one of the problems with a poorly done equivoque is the painfully obvious contrast between eliminating and keeping indicated objects in various steps. But with two force coins, you now have greater flexibility and can adopt a much more laid back attitude. If you loose one of the force coins along the way, no big deal: you still have another. And at the last stage, if you're left with two force coins, well then, try not to rub your hands in glee. The participant can do anything she wants, including selecting one blindfolded!

Pull out some coins and actually play with this a bit, while trying some sample patter lines aloud, and you'll rapidly come to appreciate the freedom an extra force coin offers.

And this brings us back to the Law of Excluded Middle and the notion of "almost a force." There are two coins of interest now, either one of which may be selected, so how do we conclude? Simple — whip out that almost forgotten Sun/Moon coin (US half-dollar on one side, English penny on the other). Here's how I do it.

A rubbery plastic coin purse contains all the coins at the outset, making this great for easy packing and walk-around. The purse is one of those squeezable things, shaped like a flattened football; when you squeeze it latitudinally, it opens up like the mouth on a puppet. Inside it is a Sun/Moon coin, half-dollar side up. On top of this are a regular half-dollar, a regular English penny and three other foreign coins. Pick each one from a different country, and then your presentation can focus more on the participant

freely selecting a country, not a measly coin. I think this gives things a larger feel.

To begin, remove the top five coins and arrange them in a row. This leaves only the Sun/Moon coin in the purse that the participant hasn't seen yet. Doing your best equivoque sequence, get it down to either the half-dollar or English penny. In the first case, you majestically squeeze the purse open flashing the half-dollar before extracting it and tossing it nonchalantly on the table. In the latter case, you tip the purse toward yourself, squeeze it open and let the coin fall out on the table, penny side up. Toss the purse on the table, toward the participant to subtly indicate you don't care if she wants to look inside. As for the faked coin, don't worry too much about it sitting out in the open. The participant has already handled its "mate" to her heart's content earlier. And obviously, a reset is very easy as you gather the coins up; just be sure to note which side of the Sun/Moon coin you leave face-up.

In a way, this is a simple example of what's called a ranging force. Of the five coins, three are duds and two are hot; you simply guide the participant toward either of the latter.

Another common implementation of a ranging force is the so-called Koran Deck; it has been applied both to cards as well as date book effects over the years. Ranging forces are also well-suited to design duplication and Zener card tests, a number of which can be found in Max Maven's excellent VideoMind series mentioned throughout here.

But can a ranging force be applied to a book test? Absolutely, and there have been lots of good ones over the years. Max Maven's clever "Autome" comes to mind, as does Larry Becker's "Bell, Book and Candle."⁽²⁷⁾ For that matter, an excellent implementation of the latter appeared here in *The Linking Ring* several years back.⁽²⁸⁾

But while thinking about how a ranging force could be applied to a book test, I hit upon the following several years ago. I'll describe it in the context of a complete presentation, but keep in mind that the idea can be applied in a number of different ways.

Six people each merely think of any word, and write them down one-by-one in a column on a notepad (without you seeing, of course). This is handed to a seventh participant who secretly chooses one word from the list. He looks it up in a Scrabble dictionary and concentrates on the definition. You are able to sense the meaning and reveal the actual word.

The method is simple and direct. Six words of your own are substituted along the way for the ones the audience members fill out. A commercial Add-a-No notepad (like the Kozar Prediction Pad, which I like) comes to mind here, but homemade switching pads are certainly possible, too. You could even try the impromptu business card handling (with some adjustment) used by Max Maven in his "Autume," mentioned above.

Your words are chosen so that two begin with the letter B, one a verb and one a noun. Another two begin with the letter M, again one a verb and one a noun, and the last two begin with Y, also a verb and a noun.

While the participant looks up his word in the Scrabble dictionary, do the innocuous Annemann glance-over-the-shoulder bit to simply note where he has opened it: toward the front, the middle or the back. ⁽²⁹⁾ Then a simple pump will narrow down if it's a verb or noun.

An alternative would be to segregate your six words so that one of each pair is on an even page, while the other is on an odd page. If the book is sufficiently large, then you will be able to tell if the participant is looking at a left- or right-hand page. The choice of books is important. A hardbound Scrabble dictionary is preferred, because unlike a regular dic-

tionary, the type style is big and the definitions simple, making it easier on the participant (especially in this day and age of poor readers). ⁽³⁰⁾ The hardbound version is quite fat, making it easier for you to tell where he has opened it with just a quick glance.

And, oh, the rationale you give: "Just in case you might think I saw what one of them wrote, I'll let you decide which word you'd like to use. I really am trying to be as fair as possible. So go ahead, look at their words and select the one you'd like to work with."

You obviously choose the six writers from different parts of the room so they can't compare notes later and learn that the word used wasn't in the original list. At which point you're probably bothered that the sixth participant would in fact have seen all of the words and knows that the one the seventh selected wasn't on the list. The solution, in a nutshell, is audience management. First, you might choose your sixth participant to be shy or mousy or a loner. Have her visualize her word first, and only then hand her the notepad to record her choice. This will keep her moving, and a bit of polite impatience should cause her to jot the word down rapidly without focusing on the other words. Or if you use the Kozar Prediction Pad like I do, you'll find it's conducive to simply obscure some of the words on the pad with your finger as you hold it open in a "helpful manner." ⁽³¹⁾ In any event, this is a very direct book test without any page number monkey business, making a little extra effort in audience management well worth it I think.

Here's another idea for those of you in search of new lamps for old. Peeking to notice which section of a Scrabble dictionary a participant has opened to is extremely useful in Phil Goldstein's "Word Games," another of his centrifugal variations mentioned earlier. ⁽³²⁾ There's no need to peek how many alphabet cards he has now; in fact, the

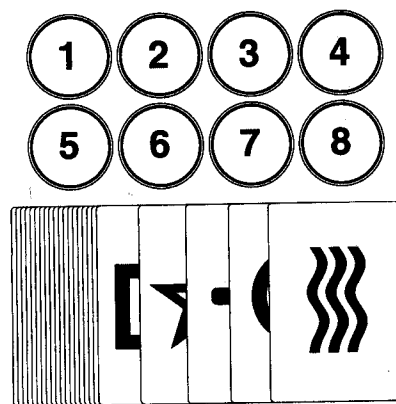
participant can hide them altogether making this a very hands-off presentation. This is a killer, but it'll keep you busy finding suitable words. You're welcome to the hint, but I'm definitely keeping my word choices to myself-it took me hours to arrive at them! (Fortunately, I like playing Scrabble.)

If you stop to consider it, Nick Trost's "Eight Card Brainwave" is actually an example of a ranging force too in an odd way. ⁽³³⁾ The range is, of course, either a blue-backed or a red-backed card. You get the participant to choose one of these (!) and are able to show after the fact that it's the only card of that back design. Of course, you'll never know for any given performance what the result will be ahead of time. I've thought about this for

years, wondering if a person could get around the undesirability issue and make this into a true force with a single, predictable outcome. After much cogitation, I recently discovered that it is indeed possible. I want to be careful about revealing other's secrets here, but can say that my solution is to be found in Peter Kane's "Kane's Variant." If you know this and Nick's "Eight Card Brainwave," you'll see immediately how they work very well together. Toss in some colored tokens and a bit of PATEO, and you can even make it into a three-phase board game plot like I've done.

Play with these ideas a bit and a force will probably never seem the same to you.

STP: Short Term Psi



As another example of a ranging force in action, here's a complete piece, which also uses the one-ahead principle to up the ante a bit. It's essentially self-working, although a certain amount of subtlety is required during its performance. Needed are a Zener pack and eight chips numbered 1 through 8. You can easily make an attractive set of these yourself from white poker chips to which you have affixed vinyl press-on numbers,

available from arts and crafts stores.

What the audience sees is that a participant freely selects one of the chips purely on a whim. Next, the Zener cards are shuffled and eight of them are laid out in a row. The participant, using his chip like a board game token, counts over the number of cards corresponding to his chip and turns that card face up. When the prediction you jotted down earlier is read, it is found that you have accurately predicted both the number and the symbol.

As an overview, the number chip truly is selected at random while the symbol card is forced. However, using the one-ahead principle, the order in which your predictions are recorded is reversed.

The setup is simple. The four stars are on the top of the pack, and the remaining one is on the face. Also needed are the eight number chips, notepad and pen. Naturally, you won't want to perform this the way I do, but I've included my complete script. Along the way I also

explain some of the psychological subtleties and motivations, and these are perhaps what you'll get the most from.

"If I claimed I could predict something way in the future, like the outcome of an election or the winning Powerball number, you'd no doubt be skeptical. But what if I said I could anticipate something about your behavior, something that'll happen only minutes in the future; would you be more likely to believe? Well, why don't we try an experiment like that? In fact, I'm going to have you do two separate things, one by choice and one by chance and we'll see if I can accurately foretell the outcome in both cases.

"I've got some number chips here. Why don't you shake them around and spill them out in front of you. Arrange them in any order you'd like; it's your decision entirely.

"However, I don't want you to concentrate on any particular number just yet, or you might accuse me of simply reading your mind. Likewise, I don't want to give you any hints, so let me write a private prediction of a decision I think you're about to make."

Hold the notepad so the participant can't see exactly what you're writing. Near the top write: "You will choose the number " leaving a blank at the end.

"Hmmm...That's a pretty strong impression."

With your fingers covering most but not all of the writing (including the blank spot), turn the pad around and set it face down on the table.⁽³⁴⁾ This is executed as an "unintentional flash," simply to drive home that you've written something across the top of the page. But don't emphasize this either in word or deed.

"Okay, let's call this Part A of the experiment. We'll leave my prediction right here in full view at all times. Since I'm committed now, go ahead and push the one number chip that most appeals to you away from the rest."

When he does so, gather up the remaining chips and set them aside.

"Good job. Please note that you made your decision entirely by choice. Now let's try something by chance. We can use an ESP testing pack for this."

Bring the Zener pack forward and uncase it. Fan it open to show the symbols, but do not spread the last four completely (the four duplicate stars). A star is seen on the face as an incidental convincer and this helps defuse the fact that no other stars will be seen in the spread until you get to the face of the last four. For a similar reason, that's why you mention the star first in the next patter line.

"I'm sure you've seen these before; we have stars, crosses, circles, wavy lines and squares at our disposal."

Gather up the pack and nonchalantly Overhand Shuffle it as you continue to chat. Do not comment on this; it should simply appear that you are idly shuffling as you prattle on. But the shuffle is important. In particular, start with a slip shuffle, then run at least three cards, and complete the Overhand Shuffle normally. All five stars will now be on the bottom.

"Perhaps you've even used them to test your own psychic abilities at one time or another. In any event, let me attempt to predict something even **you** couldn't have known beforehand."

Set the pack down. Time misdirection now kicks in and your preset will fade from memory. Take the pad and pen and write the message "You will land on the star" immediately below the first message. At the same time, fill in the missing number in the message above. You will want to practice this so you can get good at filling in the missing number as though it were part of the current sentence and without the top of the pencil telegraphing anything untoward. But whatever you do, don't rush and don't act guilty; the participants have no idea what you're writing anyway.

"Let's call this Part B."

Turn the pad over and set it down. Pick up the pack again.

"Okay, I've written what I think will happen in the future. Now we should make sure the ESP symbols are completely mixed, so let's try it like this."

Thumb off about six cards and set them down to your far right (participant's left).

"We'll split the pack into groups just to make things really random. Go ahead and mix these cards any old way you want."

Point to the packet on the table. As the participant picks it up, thumb off another clump of about six cards and set it down to the left of where the first packet was.

"When you're done with those, mix these up."

Thumb off another clump, making sure you leave exactly five cards behind in your left hand. Set these down, again working leftward. Then set the last packet (containing the five stars) down to your far left.

"And then do these (set the third packet down) and these (set the last packet down)."⁽³⁵⁾

All of this shuffling activity provides wonderful misdirection. You'll be able to split the cards so the last packet contains exactly five without anyone noticing you may be paying a little more attention than usual. When the participant concludes the mixing, with both hands grasp the two outer packets and simultaneously set them on top of their two inner neighbors, resulting in two talons.

"Now, let's make two piles. And to be completely fair, you can have a free choice of either packet – take whichever you prefer. Then I get the other one."

This really is a free choice, so make the most of it. In the next sequence you will take turns alternately dealing cards to form a single row of eight. The important thing to note is that the cards will be dealt from the participant's left to right,

which will be consistent with how he moves his token in a few moments. This has nothing to do with the method in the long run, but simply comes across as a courtesy to his viewpoint, making both the dealing and token moving seem more natural.

Now to determine who deals first, note who has the stack and whether the participant's chosen number is odd or even, according to:

You have the stack	He has the stack
Odd You're first	He's first
Even He's first	You're first

"But let's take this one step further."

If you go first, say, "I'll deal a card face-down right here."

Deal your card to the participant's far left.

"Then I want you to deal a card next to it."

Point to show where his card should be dealt, slightly to the left of the first (now from your viewpoint).

But if the participant goes first, say, "I want you to deal a card face-down right here."

Point to show he will deal the card down, again to his far left.

"Then I'll deal a card next to it."

Then put yours down, again slightly to the left (now from your viewpoint).

"Let's keep alternating until we make a complete row."

Give any additional instructions required so that you and the participant have alternately dealt eight cards total, in a single row. Note that a standard close-up pad will handle exactly eight cards in a row, meaning you won't have to chatter much about placement. It'll be obvious how the cards should be dealt to fill the width.

"Okay, the only reason we've gone through this rather thorough process is to guarantee neither of us will have any idea which is which and where the symbols lie; that's called a double-blind and is important to keep in mind, for as I said,

Part B depends upon you selecting something completely by chance.”

Pick up the participant's chip and set it to his far left of the row of cards. If you've followed the above scheme carefully, then a star lies at the correct position to be counted to from his left. This is subtle, but important. There's no change in how the participant acts; on any given night he will be counting from his left, the most natural way to do things (at least in most Western cultures). Moreover, notice how neatly the ranging force has come into play here. Every other card is a star, which greatly simplifies the work required to get the participant to land on one of them.

“Now I want you to imagine this is a token from a board game. You chose the number (say the number on the chip). Count over that many spaces and plop the token down.”

Wait for the participant to do so. Then gather up the remaining cards and set them aside. Don't even dream of proving the card's neighbors are non-stars (even though they are!) ⁽³⁶⁾ The pack has already been shuffled into oblivion by the participant, so there's nothing to prove. And by the way, employing a chip as a token as well as a number provides good motivation for combining the two tests. This not only takes the heat off of the one-ahead principle used, but also makes the count-

ing force seem more reasonable; most everybody is familiar with moving tokens on a board game.

“I doubt there's any way you could have anticipated the symbol you'd arrive at. But as I said earlier, when it comes to predicting short term events based upon a person's behavior, I'm usually pretty accurate.”

Slide the chip off and turn the card face up.

“It looks like your symbol is the star. Now remember, in Part A, you made a decision based entirely upon choice. And yet I could see the number you would decide upon, clearly in my mind's eye. In Part B, however, the fact you thoroughly randomized the symbols guaranteed you'd be acting entirely by chance. But again, I had a pretty strong impression what would happen. Are you ready for this? Turn the notepad over and see what I wrote.”

Wait for a response, then close.

“By choice or by chance, it really does seem possible to predict something slightly in the future!”

And if it isn't obvious, “STP” could be done with a nail writer. But instead, we use the subtleties of boldly filling in the one-ahead result in tandem with a little finger-obscuring to dispense with the prop altogether. Why open a can of beans with a stick of dynamite!

hunch works out, you've got a miracle. When it doesn't, well there's a big difference between failing to read a particular participant's mind and dropping a billiard ball shell (as long as the whole act doesn't consist of failures!)

I am not, of course, recommending that a mentalist recklessly court hazard. But it does seem to me that there is a methodical way to play your hunches. I

call this forcing serendipity. You literally create pleasant scenarios that you can take advantage of, generally for convancers, not the main effect. Let me give you a couple examples.

There are a number of psychological forces kicking around which mentalists have used for years. For example, the incredible Banachek has reported how to force a flower, vegetable, a room in a house, a number, etc., all by verbal techniques. ⁽³⁷⁾ Obviously, these are somewhat “iffy” and may fail occasionally. Hang in there; it won't matter in what follows.

Some twenty-five years ago George B. Anderson shared a wonderful telepathy presentation using a Si Stebbins stack, entitled “Subliminal Parapsychology.” ⁽³⁸⁾ More recently, a similar rendition appeared uncredited in Dan Harlan's “Psy Stebbins,” with which he closed the mental act of his entertaining video series. ⁽³⁹⁾ The general theme is that you ask the participant a series of test questions, and based upon subliminal responses, you are able to divine the card she selected earlier. The questions are pure bluff and are selected to sound interesting. And more importantly, the answers you're given are meaningless, too. You know the participant's card because of the Si Stebbins stack. But you can really go to town dramatizing the questions and answers, as though they matter—it's a wonderful piece of theater.

But why not combine these? How about phrasing your questions to be psychological forces? For example, “Would you name a (blank)?” where you fill in the blank with a vegetable, flower, number between 1 and 5, room in the house, etc. Repeat these for whatever other items you wish to force.

The general attack would be to jot each prediction down on a tablet first, ask the question, and show your result. If you're right, great...you just accomplished a little bit of telepathy leading up

to the smash conclusion of divining the participant's card. If you're wrong, well, you're no worse off than in George's presentation – the question was merely intended to give you subliminal information about the participant, and there's no need to show what you had previously written.

Have I made this clear? You're going to be asking questions in any event. Instead of completely meaningless ones, why not phrase them as psychological forces and exploit the results if you get them right. In any event, there's absolutely no call for a red face!

Don't blow off this effect because it's “too simple.” This is a powerful and direct piece of mentalism with dramatic appeal way out of proportion to the simple method used.

If you really want to experiment with forcing serendipity, try this. I'll confess it's a wild idea in some ways (but then again, Edgar Cayce, Jeanne Dixon, Criswell and dozens of others earned way more than any of us ever will using something similar).

To understand this, consider an analogy from card magic. We all know that the best way to master the Classic Force is by using it *any time* a participant needs to select a card from a fanned deck, whether a forced one is required or not.

Can a similar approach be used in mentalism for the headline prediction?

How about this? In Dan Harlan's “Time Capsule,” which appeared in the videotape mentioned above, a blank billet is used along the way. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ But instead of a blank one, what if you made a serious attempt to predict the headline, writing it down on the billet. If it doesn't hit, so what; carry on with Dan's method to a successful conclusion anyway. But if it does hit-well, think how truly hands-off that would be! Go get the video and try to imagine how it would look if you somehow got the headline right legitimately and didn't have to touch *anything* at all.

Forcing Serendipity

I've come to the conclusion that the best mentalists never blush. Here's what I mean. Most magicians have a horror of failing (at least, I hope they do!) Rather than risk a spreading double-lift, they practice thousands of hours until separation becomes a virtual impossibility. But in mentalism we might often take gambles, knowing full well that the gods can be fickle from time to time. When a

So, the question is: can a person truly predict the headlines? I refer you to two sources that suggest it might be possible, and not by supernatural means either. The first is a technique called "Hurling the Headlines," by David Hoy.⁽⁴¹⁾ And be sure to see what George B. Anderson has to say on the subject for some additional practical tips.⁽⁴²⁾ Both men claim to have attained good results through practice and observation. In a way, what they're suggesting is a form of a stock cold reading; headlines are apparently not as random as we all suppose, at least over the long haul.

Anyway, the point is a performer's got nothing to lose here. Since Dan Harlan's effect is guaranteed to come to a successful conclusion in any event, why not put that formerly blank billet to good use—just in case you really can force serendipity!

But, back to the original premise: Magicians doing a billiard ball routine need to be 100% "correct," but a mentalist can be only 90% accurate and come across as more "real." So, in Dan's effect mentioned above, will it look like mere conjuring if the headline prediction is word-for-word accurate? Might it not appear more like true precognition if the

sense of the headline is correct but some of the words/numbers are off just a bit (synonyms, transposed digits, etc.)? And this brings us back to the Hoy/Anderson idea. Perhaps a "real" prediction, even if it misses a bit here or there, might have more of a legitimate feel.

Have you seen those initialed charm bracelets that teens wear occasionally? I'm thinking of having a special one made with the letters: "WWDD" or just W-squared/D-squared. Get it? "What would Dunninger do?" I bet he'd take a chance on truly predicting a headline, especially with his wonderful patter line of claiming only to be 90% accurate—the best patter line in all of mentalism I think.

That's it for now! Over the years I've learned that there is only one absolute in mentalism, and that's that there are no absolutes. Very likely any number of the opinions expressed—perhaps all!—are subject to dispute. I would be most happy to hear your comments, and especially to learn of any corrections to the attributions. You can contact me at:

Thomas Henry
831 Belgrade Avenue
N. Mankato, MN 56003
Email: thomas.henry@magician.org

Footnotes

1. T. A. Waters, *Mind, Myth & Magick*, (Seattle: Hermetic Press, Inc., 1993), p. 50. 2. A possible exception: headline predictions, in which the prediction was sent to a dignitary earlier on, or else is on view from the start of the act, hanging from a string and clip on stage. This kind of prediction doesn't need to be personalized; the emphasis is on the performer's mystic abilities only (not an interaction with other people).
3. Phil Goldstein, "Designated Thinker," (New York: Magico, 1995).
4. Max Maven, VideoMind, Phase Two, (Tahoma, California: L&L Publishing, 1997).
5. Jon Tremaine, *Close-Up Mental Act*, (Tahoma, California: L&L Publishing, 2000).
6. Doug Dymant, *Mindsights*, (no place: self-published, 2002), pp. 19-26
7. Kenton Knepper, *Wonder Words, Volume One*, (Phoenix, Arizona: self-published, no date), Cassette 2b.
8. Bruce Bernstein, *Twenty Effects for Psychic Entertainers*, (Chicago: Magic Inc., 1981), pp. 27-29.
9. Jerry MacGregor, *Real World Magic*, (no place: no publisher, 1999), pp. 239-241.
10. marketed by Magiceffex.
11. Michael Sibbersen, "ESPieces," One-Man Parade, *The Linking Ring*, November 1999, pp. 109-112.

12. One-Man Parade, *The Linking Ring*, October 1989, pp. 93, 94, and VideoMind, Phase One, (Tahoma, California: L&L Publishing, 1997.)
13. *Time*, May 21, 2001, p. 64.
14. Larry Becker, *Larry Becker's World of Super Mentalism*, (Brooklyn: D. Robbins & Company, 1978), pp. 1-4.
15. Henning Nelms, *Magic and Showmanship: A Handbook for Conjurers*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), pp. 221-251.
16. Richard Mark, *Mind Warp: The Subtle Secrets of Richard Mark*, (Phoenix: Syzygy Press, 2000), pp. 146, 147.
17. See note 1, p. 351.
18. See note 1, pp. 353-358.
19. David Hoy, *The Bold And Subtle Miracles Of Dr. Faust*, (Chicago: Magic, Inc., 1963), pp. 25-29.
20. David Jelinek, "Wordophile," *Magic*, February 2002, pp. 70, 71.
21. See note 1, p. 55.
22. Phil Goldstein, *Thavant*, (Seattle: Hermetic Press, 1991), pp. 3-28.
23. See note 1, pp. 739, 740. For a description of the Mental Masterpiece case, nowadays it's easiest to find it in Jean Hugard's *Encyclopedia of Card Tricks*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), p. 304.
24. After failing as a commercial effect (!), "Miraskill" appeared in *The Jinx*, #24, September 1936, pp. 147, 151. It is one of the more reprinted card items ever, having later shown up in works by Jean Hugard, John Scarne, Karl Fulves, Jerry Mentzer, Bob Longe, and others. But the definitive treatment with variations is to be found in Allan Slaight's *The James File, Volume Two*, (Seattle: Hermetic Press, Inc., 2000), pp. 1883-1918.
25. Phil Goldstein, *Verbal Control: A Treatise on the Under-Explored Art of Equivoque; Technique and Applications*, (Boston: self-published, 1976).
26. David Eldridge, *Mind Control: A Study of Equivoque or the Magician's Choice Force*, (no place: Brad Burt's Magic Shop, 2001), and *Mind Control: The Video*, (San Diego: Brad Burt's Magic Shop, 2001).
27. For "Autome," see Max Maven's VideoMind, Phase One, (Tahoma, California: L&L Publishing, 1997). For "Bell, Book and Candle," see Larry Becker's *The Best of Book Two: Larry Becker's World of Super-Mentalism*, (New York: Magico Magazine, 1989), pp. 112-117.
28. Christopher Faria, "Walk of Fame," One-Man Parade, *The Linking Ring*, March 2002, pp. 82, 83.
29. Theo. Annemann, "The Mystery of the Blackboard," *The Jinx*, #1, October 1934, p. 4.
30. *Official Scrabble Players Dictionary* third edition, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1995).
31. This is not unlike the finger-obscuring move employed by Larry Becker in his "Some Total Stage," *Standing Ovation*, (Rancho Cordova, California: A-I Multimedia, 1995). For another take on this under-appreciated technique, see Bob Cassidy's "Fourth Dimensional Telepathy," *Mental Miracles*, (no place: Meir Yedid, 1997). Both of these are video tapes.
32. See note 24, pp. 13, 14.
33. Nick Trost, *The Card Magic of Nick Trost*, (Tahoma, California: L&L Publishing, 1997), pp. 199-201.
34. See note 30.
35. This diabolical idea of having the participant shuffle a packet consisting of all the same cards (stars in this case) comes from J. C. Wagner's, "J. C.'s Super Closer," *The Commercial Magic of J. C. Wagner*, (Tahoma, California: L&L Publishing, 1987), pp. 23-26. I have since seen it used in Larry Becker's "Mind Blaster." See note 29, pp. 39-43.
36. See the Principle of Conservation in my *Axiomata*, below. Along these lines, note too that I haven't gotten into the typically banal business of "marking" used in many one-ahead mysteries. See note 1, p. 49.
37. Banachek, *Psychological Subtleties*, (Houston: Magic Inspirations, 1998).