

The Dark Cloak

Where Mentalism Meets Illusion

Discovering a chosen word, name or number that a spectator writes is a cute mental trick, but it's NOT what strong mentalism is about.

In this feature presentation, three participants are instructed to write a random single thought, such as a number, a word or a name on the back of a business card. But that's where any similarities to previous mental tricks end.

Without being torn, glimpsed or switched, the folded cards are burned in front of the audience. The performer dons a magickal cloak that enables him to BECOME each of the participants!



Without ever having met the participants before, he is able to share their personal information. He knocks the audience and guests off their chairs by revealing where the guests were born, when they were born, what day of the week they were born, a particular gift they received, the name of their mother and gives personal information about the mother! This information ISN'T COLDREADING! It's factual.

All of this information comes from the simple data written. For example, the first guest writes ONLY a four digit number, yet the mentalist knows where he was born, where he grew up, etc.

This routine can be performed on stage with the cloak and fire bowl or in an intimate setting without any props! There's even a version where the mentalist floats over the heads of the guests and disappears!

This new method of ascertaining information from apparently random bits of data can be utilized in many effects.

You'll learn a half dozen techniques that can be used as separate effects, but combined they become one of the strongest feature performance pieces a mentalist can demonstrate.

If you do only one mental piece — do THIS one!

The Dark Cloak

Has these important features:

- ✦ Information that's NOT written is revealed
- ✦ Absolutely NO preshow work
- ✦ No switching of billets
- ✦ No tearing or peeking of information
- ✦ No carbons or impression devices
- ✦ No covert research is necessary
- ✦ No pumping, the guests are never asked anything
- ✦ No assistants needed; it's a one-man operation
- ✦ No sleight of hand required
- ✦ Everything is easy to do
- ✦ A new way of revealing information is fully explained
- ✦ This feature piece is fully scripted
- ✦ Every verbal deception is explained
- ✦ What to say and why you say it is explained
- ✦ Three different presentations are outlined
- ★ Plans for a complete illusion version with a levitation and vanish are included
- ✦ How to construct inexpensive portable lighting
- ✦ How to create a small stage set that packs flat
- ★ A home version where no props are used
- ✦ Professionally tested before paying audiences

Whether you want to perform mentalism, illusions or both, The Dark Cloak will deliver a stunning performance!

The Dark Cloak

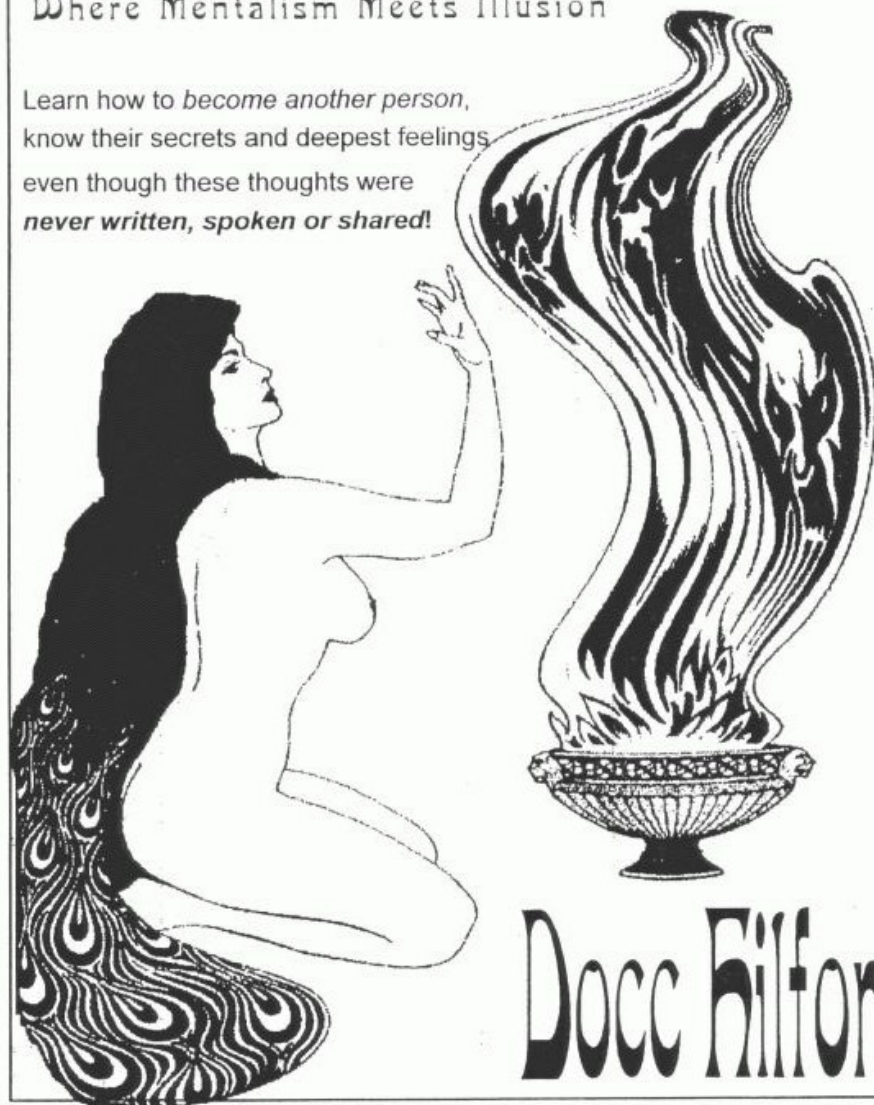
Only... **\$ 25**



the Dark Cloak

Where Mentalism Meets Illusion

Learn how to *become another person*, know their secrets and deepest feelings even though these thoughts were *never written, spoken or shared!*



Docc Hilford

The Dark Cloak

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Introduction

Mentalism is tricky to present correctly. Much of it seems to the audience to be revelation after revelation. It just isn't enough to puzzle your audience if you want to truly entertain them. Most so-called mentalists prefer a presentation that is clean and direct. To them the psychic revelation of a random number, a date and a name written on small pieces of paper meets their requirements for entertaining mentalism. But imagine if the mentalist was able to reveal much more personal information than that which was written, such as the location of someone's birth, or their favorite childhood toy, or even their mother's first name. That would be astounding! Presented within a framework of theatrics, the trick would become an emotional event rather than a simple demonstration. It's like the difference between the clean directness of a slice of melted American cheese on white bread and imported brie on a toasted baguette. They're both grilled cheese sandwiches, but one is an experience.

The following effect is an extremely strong presentation of pseudo telepathy. Don't let the use of the property of the cloak or the necessary lighting tricks discourage you from the use of this routine. The psychology involved can be applied to the simplest psychic reading. The verbal deceptions are worth intense study. If you take the time to really learn this routine and why it works, you'll have a feature piece that will guarantee your reputation as a miracle man.

I originated this effect in 1995. The breakthrough linguistic deception so excited me that I called a well known mentalist, whom I considered a close friend, and shared the intimate details involved. Within a few months, this "friend" released a version of my trick utilizing a rough form of the verbal techniques with little trick wallets. Sadly, he had forgotten from where he got the idea. That inferior trick has been forgotten by most because it failed to have all the elements contained in the original effect. The essential points of the original routine were omitted by the

usurper. He thought the method of gaining the information was the most important part of the trick he was selling. The information was simply, to him, another way to sell a magical prop. He missed the entire idea! You, however, now have all the information needed to perform a stunning display of apparent telepathy.

The reason for relating the above facts is so that you will understand that the true glory of this routine lies in three areas: first, that you reveal several pieces of personal information about the participants that were never written. Second, the way the information is revealed is as the writer, NOT as the mentalist. This ploy can be applied to many other mentalistic routines and will pay off handsomely if applied correctly. And last, the overall theatrics of the performance brings this routine to a level undiscovered by most pseudo "mind readers".

There is a magnificent alternate ending at the conclusion of this book. It brings mentalism and illusion into the same genre. With less effort and help than required to perform a sub trunk, you can become someone who the public reveres, rather than a puzzle man.

Don't skip any of the details included in this book. They have been worked out over years and are necessary for complete control over the participants.

The effect portion of this drama is written the infamous style of a pulp novel, utilized by myself and perhaps best by Masklyn ye Mage in **The New Invocation** magazine.

It's my pleasure to reveal every detail of this strange and powerful performance piece. Fear will prevent most from attempting to perform it. But to those who will, success is at your command.

Docc Hilford

August, 2004

he Dark Cloak

Arkham Country Club is a modern facility housed in a two hundred fifty year old building. Professor Carter asked me to perform for the faculty of Miskatonic University. It was certain they would appreciate what they were about to witness.

On the evening of the performance, the room was filled with believers, skeptics and the merely curious. On stage were three chairs and a small, three legged table. Something on the table was covered by a black cloth.

After a zealous introduction explaining the esoteric experiments to come, I walked calmly on stage. Three audience members were asked to come forward and take a seat in the chairs. After they were seated, each one was asked his or her name, and introduced to the audience. Then I began the tale of the dark cloak.

"I'm in possession of a strange artifact; a dark cloak. The cloak possesses some extraordinary properties. It belonged to a male witch who was hanged in Salem Village in 1693. It was claimed the witch was able to change into other people when wearing this cloak." Addressing the three volunteers, "Tonight, we'll test these claims. I need the three of you to focus on a simple thought. You must write these thoughts down, as ritual demands. Here's one of my business cards. It's unique. See this word at the top?" I showed the front row one of my cards; a white business card printed on one side. "It reads FANTASY. Watch how easily Fantasy becomes REALITY." Turning the card over, the word seemed to change. "It's as if the card changed, isn't it? Perhaps, it possesses some of the talents of the famed cloak."

I drew a line across the back of one of the business cards. It, along with the pencil, was handed to the first guest. I repeated the actions with two more cards and two more pencils for the remaining guests. "Look at the back of the business card. Very

simple thoughts will come to mind. They may be as minimal as a four digit number, a date, or just someone's name. Imagine your thoughts as if they were written on the lines I've just drawn. Get the image firmly in your mind. See the letters on the card. Once you have the appropriate thoughts in mind, please write them on the lines. The word or number will enable me to enter your subconscious and I will see infinitely more about you than the random idea you have in mind. If the dark cloak is as powerful as we believe, I should be able to become you!"

The group looked at their cards and wrote a word or number on the back. When finished, they were instructed, "Now, fold the card once each way with the word on the inside." I used another card to demonstrate. From the small table I took a wand with a steel clip affixed to its end. The folded cards were collected and secured in the teeth of the clip. One of the guests held the wand and displayed the folded cards above his head.

I stood near the table and gently lifted the corner of the black cloth. "Samba necto gabbatha!" I cried and pulled the cloth aside to reveal a stone bowl filled with fire. I took the wand and waved it over the flames three times, then held the cards in the fire where they were completely incinerated.

"The fire has consumed your ideas, leaving nothing but ash. Continue to concentrate on your word and I will get the infamous dark cloak"

Behind the seated guests was another table where the cloak was neatly folded. I set the wand down and retrieved the artifact.

"I will don this old cloak and, believe it or not, temporarily become each of the people here on stage. I need only an open mind. Whether it is mine or yours, is up to you."

I put on the cloak and drew the hood over my head. The spotlight changed to a soft light. My body was illuminated by a single light from directly overhead. When I stood on a hidden step behind the first person's chair, my face vanished in the shadow of the hood. The audience could see only my faceless, black, ominous form almost hovering over the participant. The

faces of the volunteers were illuminated by the golden glow of the spotlight.

In the few moments that followed, a silent transformation took place. "I am Tom," began the dark specter who was me only moments ago. The words sounded smooth and slow. "I am a man with interesting views and ideas. I am not easily persuaded by the opinions of others. I acquired this trait while still a young boy. I'm a young child now, playing in the open spaces of the Southwest. The weather is very different there than it is here. I am playing in the state of Nevada. Was I born here? I have not written or told anyone here about my childhood in Nevada. I'm in a wonderful memory, known only to me, but that is not the thought I have in my mind now. I am only thinking of a number; nothing else. It is a four digit number. The number of which I am thinking is five, three, zero, one."

The reaction on Tom's face indicated that the information told to the audience by the specter was correct. He was, in fact thinking of 5301, yet the specter also knew where he had been born - Nevada!

The specter glided behind the second person and hovered over her. "I am Julie. I'm standing alone at a crossroad. My heart is torn with indecision. I have not shared this fact with others. The path I take will cause some change. I want to make the change in my career. I know, in my heart, I will make this change eventually, but I'm resistant. Should I turn left or right or continue? I feel cannot go forward any longer. I must use my talent to visualize the future and imagine how my life will be after the change. I see new opportunities for me ahead. Being a Gemini gives me this insight naturally.

"I was born on a beautiful summer day. It's a Saturday. It's said that, 'Saturday's child works hard for a living' and I am no exception. I am ambitious, enjoy work, and like to accomplish things. I usually know what I want. The rain washes the windows this afternoon. My mother cries after my birth, I'm not certain how this fact is revealed to me, for it's not in my conscious memory, but it is a certainty. Years later, I receive a birthday

present that I will never forget. It has remained my secret favorite gift. I will always cherish my beautiful rocking horse. I wish I could go home and play with it right now.

"I am thinking of a few numbers. However these numbers have a specific meaning to me. They represent a date. Something special happened on this day. The month is June. The day is the fifth. The year is 1973. June 5, 1973. It's an important date to me; because it is the day I was born."

Julie's look of shock reflected how accurate the specter had been. How had he known the numbers she wrote were a date? And even more amazing, how had he known the date was her birthday?

The ominous form floated over the back of the last guest. The cool voice stated, "I am Norman. I have always been a unique individual. I am at peace when alone. I am my own best friend, as well as my worst enemy. I know a lot of people, but have only a few close friends. My hobbies are important to me. As a teenager, I often felt as if I was an 'outsider' looking in. Trust and loyalty are important to me.

"I am thinking of a group of letters, but it is more than just a word. It's a name. Not the name of a place or thing. It's the name of a person. This person is a woman. She's no longer a girl, no, she's a mature woman. The name in my mind is -- Muriel. This is the name of someone I know, someone important to me. Someone to whom I owe a great deal. This is the name of my blessed mother!

"My mother is a giver. She's someone who gives more than she receives. She feels unappreciated, but she is truly loved. I find myself thinking of my mother often. I need to know about her future. She's gone through some stress recently. Problems are weighing heavily on her mind. Her fights with depression are wearing her out. She correctly sought help from a physician. She must continue to follow his recommendations, but this has been difficult for her lately. I can now see my mother's future. It's much brighter than her recent past. A voice is telling me, 'Muriel, will be fine.' I am glad."

Norman was visibly touched. On came the front spotlight. I walked down stage and removed the cloak. "Ladies and gentlemen, tonight you have seen into the private lives of three people. They have been terrific participants. Please show your appreciation with your applause."

I spoke to each volunteer for a few moments, touching on the experience and verifying that the information revealed by the cloak was correct. I shook their hands and directed them back to their seats. Standing center stage, I addressed the audience, "So the next time you don't feel like yourself, remember, you may be someone else! Goodnight."

Arcanum:

The obvious strong points to this routine are that simple thoughts, i.e., a number, a date and a name, become doorways to very personal information about each guest. What is revealed by the mentalist is much more poignant than what was written. There's a built-in reason for demonstrating the mentalist's talent other than presenting a puzzle. This is all excellent, yet the soul of this routine lies elsewhere.

A New Revelation

What's the difference between the statements, "You're a very smart girl," and "I have spoke with one that in her sex, her years, profession, wisdom, and constancy hath amaz'd me more than I dare blame my weakness,"? Both say the same thing, but one is articulately penned by the Bard. Shakespeare presented simple ideas with eloquent theatrics. So too, should mentalistic tricks be presented.

To capture an audience's psyche, the performance needs to be emotional. What the secreted information is and why it's revealed is integral to a strong mentalistic performance. Once

these two parts are calculated to be important to the audience, obtaining the information should be secondary to the theater of the revelations. However, most mentalists seem to be preoccupied with method. Although the following method(s) of obtaining additional (apparently) unwritten information from each participant is clever, the revelations of the facts are the soul of the performance.

In this routine the performer is not a thought reader or fortune teller, but apparently *becomes* the spirit of the sitter. Giving information in the first person is a powerful linguistic tool. An original idea of Kenton Knepper, he suggested I try performing my **Pseudo Psychometry** routine using this concept. The result was astounding. The audience believed everything revealed as the sitter. No longer do I say, "I see that you are a person who appreciates beauty," now I say, "I am a person who appreciates beauty." I become the sitter and reveal *my* inner secrets. This is a zenith of mentalistic presentation and can be used in various routines and readings.

The stratagem makes the simple revelations of information extremely personal to the participant. Mentalists have been instructed for years to make their performances more particularized by asking for information that reflects the participant, such as a phone number, a friend's name, their birthday, etc., but little has been discussed about making the revelation personal to the participant. This tactic achieves that goal.

Another benefit to this strategy is that the attention is on the sitter and not the performer. This may sound as if it goes against what we're taught as performers, but it's been my experience that when the glory is given to the participant the performer is better liked by the audience. Many of my current performances use this approach.

Acting 101

In this particular routine, you become the sitters by putting on a magical cloak. You must use some basic acting techniques, but it's not as difficult as it may seem. Simply make believe that you're in a dream. You're not yourself, so you try to describe who you are. You don't try to actually become the specific guest, merely portray who you think you are. The audience is spellbound by your "soft" transformation.

To rehearse, write down a few bits of information (similar to what might be written on the cards in performance) and stand before a mirror. Turn down the lights and hold a flashlight under your chin. Describe who you think you are by slowly revealing the information in bits. Don't attempt to change your voice into theirs. This sounds extremely silly when changing genders. Adopt a smooth, low voice, like that of a spiritual form. A strong method of acting is to try to experience the subject's past. Feel their feelings, think their thoughts, stand in their shoes, so-to-speak. Study the routine above and practice likewise. Once you try becoming someone else a few times in rehearsal, you'll discover how easy it is to be convincing.

The Information

This routine is constructed around a subtlety that allows you to know much more than what was apparently written by the participants. Part of the subtlety lies in the cards and part in the verbal deceptions used to instruct the guests.

Although the audience believes that the participants are writing a single word or number, you have secretly instructed them to write specific information on each card. The most a participant will write is two facts about themselves, yet you're able to use some advanced techniques to stretch the information into full length readings. The amount of personal information revealed seems to outweigh the pair of words written. Add the fact that the audience is unaware of these requests, and you have a deadly weapon.

The Writing

Prepare three business cards by writing requests for questions on them. The first card reads: *Please write the first four digits of your Social Security number.* There's a line above your request and in the center of the card. (See Fig. 1) The instructions restrict the guest from writing anywhere other than on the line.

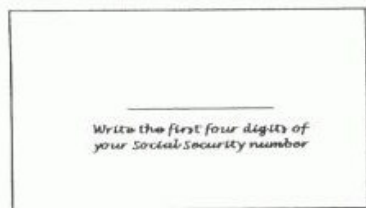


Fig. 1

Using the first four digits of his Social Security number gets the first participant to believe you are merely asking for a four digit number, one that's unique to the participant.

The second card reads: *Please write your birth date, AND a favorite birthday gift you might have received.* A line is again above your request and in the center of

the card. (See Fig. 2)

The third card reads: *Please write your mother's name, AND a question about HER future.* The request is below the center line on the back of the card. (See Fig. 3)

The requests on the second and third cards are linked by the magic word, *AND*. Kenton Knepper refers to this ploy in **Wonder Words I**. Secretly using it in written form will enable you to get more information.

The duel requests are related to each other and the audience assumes that a single fact is written on the card. The word *AND* links the two requests and they become a single thought. So

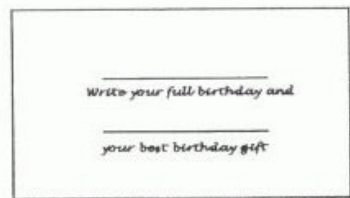


Fig. 2

when you talk about the single thought the second sitter has in mind, she believes you are talking about the date *and* gift. The audience will think you are referring to the date alone. The revelation of the gift comes as a complete surprise to them.

We'll cover the psychology of this "AND Link" in depth when we discuss the verbal deceptions.

Noting something interesting on your business card is the first step of hiding the action of the spectators reading your secret requests. The guests have a reason to be looking at your card. The audience may see them reading the cards, but will assume they are reading the front of your card. I used a special graphic on my business cards for years. I kept it jealously guarded, but I'm sharing it with you now. It seems to read, "FANTASY". (See Fig. 4) But when turned upside-down, it reads, "REALITY". If you do not have a particularly clever business card, you can direct attention to your phone number. A statement such as, "And after you witness this miracle, you can hire me by calling..." will suffice. This terrific ploy is one of Phantini's, A.K.A., Gene Grant.

Another benefit of using this ploy early on is that some spectators need reading glasses to read what you've put on the cards. Pointing out something they need to read on the front of your card gives those people who need it to time to get their glasses. If they were to stop to put on glasses at the wrong moment, it could telegraph the fact that there's something

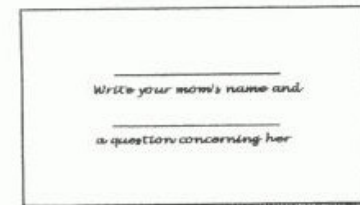


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

written on the supposedly blank cards. Selecting participants already wearing glasses is a good preventative measure, but the Phantini idea safeguards you all the way around.

When handling the card you show to the audience, use one that has no writing on the back. Casually flash both sides of the unprepared card. The audience is subliminally controlled into believing that all of the cards are equally unprepared. Why should they think otherwise?

Verbal Deceptions

Every word said in the instructions to the guests is specifically scripted. They do many things at the same time.

Instruct the participants to *"Look at the back of the business card."* This statement directs them to look at the instructions you've written on the cards.

"Very simple thoughts will come to mind." This statement informs them that their thoughts should be as directed on the card.

"They may be as minimal as a four digit number, a date, or just someone's name." Here, they're told to write what you've requested they write; specifically a number, a date and a name. The audience, however, hears examples of *any* random bits of information.

"Imagine your thoughts as if they were written on the lines I've just drawn. Get the image firmly in your mind. See the letters on the card." This command gets them to read the requests and covers the fact that they're reading your secret directions.

The words, *"...your thoughts..."* mean two different things. To the guests it means *"...YOUR thoughts..."*. To the audience it means, *"your THOUGHTS"*. It may seem inconsequential, but subtleties such as this are like oil to a machine – they make everything run smoothly.

The words, *"...on the lines I've just drawn..."* indicate that

the cards were blank before you handed them out. Be certain to apparently draw a line on each prepared card before you hand it to a participant.

Even the word *"...lines..."* is important. To the audience there is only one line drawn on each card – nothing else. Of course, on the second and third card there are two lines, one for each thought. Changing the singular to the plural covers this fact. You indicate the *"lines"* on the cards. The audience believes you're talking about the three lines on the three cards, the second and third guests believe you're talking about the two lines on their cards.

This ruse is used often with other commands. When the word *"thoughts"* is used instead of *"thought"* it covers the fact that the second and third guests have two thoughts to write. The audience believes you mean the thoughts collectively of the group. If you say *"your thought"* you run the risk of a misunderstanding. You don't want one of the participants to misinterpret your instructions and ask, *"Do you want me to write both things down, or just one of them."*

"Once you have the appropriate thoughts in mind," means to the participants that they need to write the specific information as requested, not just a number, date or name. It has to be appropriate. The words *"...in mind..."* help the audience to forget about the act of writing. Remember, they don't have to forget, but we're aiming for the best illusion possible. God is in the details.

"The word or number..." minimizes the importance of what was written. The audience understands that anything could have been written on the cards. It also reinforces the belief that only a single thought is on each card. This is the illusion that makes this routine an apparent miracle!

The verbal deceptions also persuade the audience to trust that what was written on the cards has little to do with the astounding facts you reveal about the volunteers. This is very important. By using the carefully scripted instructions the

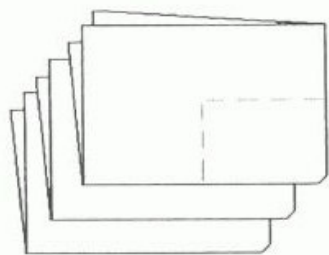


Fig. 5

the inside." You've indicated that there's only a single word written on the cards. The guests can't be confused now because they've already finished writing.

Remember that even if you openly instructed the guests to write the first four digits of their Social Security number, their birth date and their mother's first name, revealing this information would make for a great mentalistic trick. By hiding this fact, you're building a reputation as a miracle worker. The participants are NOT instant stooges! They'll be truly amazed at your ability to know what they wrote as well as give some personality traits through cold reading.

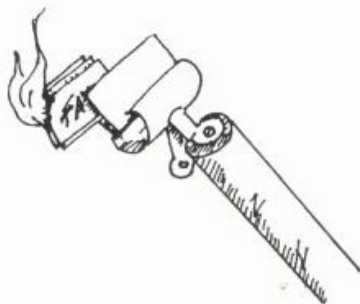


Fig. 6

Gaining the Written Information

Over the years of performing this routine, I've tried various methods of obtaining the written information. I have used billet switches, slit envelopes and switches of the envelopes. The method used to gain the insight is secondary to the routine.



Fig. 7

Although there are countless ways to know what three people wrote on three business cards, my preferred method is simple, direct and easy to execute. When they're filled in, each business card is folded in quarters. Collect them and clip them in a modified Bulldog clip. The cards must be oriented in a special manner. All folded cards face the same way. (See Fig. 5) The corners of the cards are secured in the Bulldog clip. (See Fig. 6) The cards are lit on fire and burned. The ashes fall into a flat bowl or brazier. When the cards are lit on fire, the area held by the clip doesn't burn. (See Fig. 7) The unburned corners are kept in the clip. This is like doing a center tear with all three cards at the same time.

The clip is casually set on the table behind the chairs where the cloak resides. After you put on the cloak, return to the table. When you're behind the chairs and under cover of the cloak, you remove the unburned centers of the business cards from the clip. They're in the same order in which you collected them. It's now an easy matter to secretly read them under cover of the chairs, the darkness and the cloak. You discard them one at a time after you've read them.

The Bulldog clip is modified by bending one of the thumb tabs at a right angel. This is secured to the end of a dowel with a screw. (See Fig. 8). The dowel is 1" in diameter and about a foot long. Decorate it to look mystical, but not so much as to draw attention to it. You don't want the rod to be so mundane it stands out, but not so decorated it stands out either. It should look like a simple wand. A little dark wood stain and

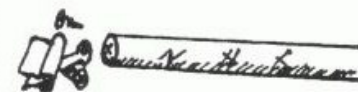


Fig. 8

a few runes drawn with brown paint is perfect.

A specially constructed pair of tongs can be used, but I wanted you to be able to perform this without having to search for unusual props.

The Readings

The audience has been told that the written thoughts are simple facts not concerning the guests. They're written because the thought of a single word can allow the mentalist (with the aide of the dark cloak) to enter deep into the guests' subconscious mind. Notice that each revelation of the written fact is prefaced by a cold reading. This builds the illusion that you know endless facts about the participants.

WARNING: As in all my books that deal with cold reading, I must warn you that revealing apparent personal information can be powerful. And within any power danger lurks. Be well read on the prudent use of cold reading. If you stick with the script above, you'll do fine. But if you write your own words, please imagine what you might feel if these statements were made to you.

Guest Number One

The first card has only four numbers written on it, yet you know where the person lived as a boy. The first guest doesn't need to write two pieces of information because the second revelation is contained in the number itself. It is not well known that the first three digits of one's Social Security number indicate the state where he received the card. It doesn't indicate where the participant was born. (See Appendix A) If the first guest is young, the chances are great that he was born in the state indicated by the S.S. number, as over the years the age for application has moved from before working age (16) to that of birth.

You can find this list of numbers at the end of this book. (See Appendix A) This list can be copied and taped to the back of the first chair for reference. The fourth digit, as far as we're concerned, is unimportant. It's merely a red herring to disguise the fact that the first three digits communicate additional information to you.

It's very important that you drive home the point that the only thing written was a four digit number. This erroneous fact is carried to the other cards. The fact that two questions are on the other cards is disguised by the example of the first card. When you state (as the first participant), "*I am only thinking of a number; nothing else,*" you are reinforcing the fact that only a number was written. Don't mention that it *was* written, make it a thought. The specter isn't revealing what was written, he's sharing his own personal thoughts. Let everyone forget about the writing.

You shouldn't blurt out the fact that he received his S.S. card in Nevada. You must let it out in pieces so it becomes many revelations. Noting that the weather is different from where he now lives, is a clever tip by Ron Martin. Asking yourself (as the first guest), "*Was I born there?*" can be interpreted as a statement of fact if he *was* born in the state you mentioned. If he wasn't, the question remains insignificant.

Guest Number Two

The second card has two strong bits of information: her birthday AND her favorite gift. You begin revealing the information long before you seem to get to what she's thinking. The cold reading about a career change is cautiously scripted. If her employer is present, as in a company banquet, you would do well to choose an alternate subject. Many times co-workers are friends and attend performances together off work time. The statements made to the second guest indicate that, "*I see new opportunities for me ahead,*" whether she continues ahead or turns to either side. This means that even if she's happy at her

present job, things can get better. You don't want her co-workers or employer to think that she's unhappy and ready to quit. You could cause her to lose her job!

The cold reading is culminated with a revelation of a fact the audience believes wasn't written; her astrological sign. Knowing her birthday gives you her Sun Sign. You will, of course, need to learn what dates correspond to the different Zodiac signs.

Knowing the day of the week she was born on is a stunning bit of mentalism. For years the trick has been presented as an oddity. Here, it takes on a deeper life. What's so exceptionally cool is that most people don't know for certain on what day they were born. When the participant returns home, she can look it up or calculate it out to find that you were correct! This blows their mind days after the performance, and that makes you unbelievably amazing.

There is a simple method for mentally calculating the day of the week at the end of the book. (See Appendix B)

You're free to claim anything about the day of the guest's birth, but be reasonable. "*It was raining that afternoon,*" is a safe bet if she was born in the spring, summer or fall. But don't mention snow if she's a winter baby. She may have been born in Phoenix, Arizona! "*It was unseasonably cold (or warm),*" is always safe for any season or location.

I like being bold in my readings. Claiming that, "*Your mother cried...*" seems like a very bold statement, but it isn't. First, the second guest wasn't old enough to remember whether her mother cried or not. If her parents are at the show, they may not remember. If something tragic happened such as her mother passed away in childbirth or the guest was given up for adoption, the statement still applies. If her mother was overcome with joy, she might have cried with happiness. At any rate, this should illustrate how dangerous it can be stirring up people's personal memories. A good rule about bold cold reading is, "If in doubt, leave it out."

Adding a reference to a classic bit of poetry takes any sting

out of the preceding statement. The full poem regarding children born on the different days of the week is:

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works hard for a living.
But child born on the Sabbath day,
Is witty and wise and good and gay.

Of course, non-Christians (as well as Seventh Day Adventists) may not agree with Sunday being the Sabbath, a comment that the poem is a rhyme from Mother Goose and originally stated that, "A child that is born on the Sabbath day, is bonny and blithe and good and gay," will turn attention to the reading and away from theological beliefs. This is only mentioned for those born on a Sunday.

Here are some commonly held beliefs about people's traits:

Monday's child is fair of face.

You are good-looking, especially when you smile. You are beautiful inside and out.

Tuesday's child is full of grace.

You have many talents, and are fun to be around. You dance through life.

Wednesday's child is full of woe.

You are a serious person, and try to change things that seem unfair. You make the world a better place.

Thursday's child has far to go.

You have many ideas, and you want to do them all. You will go far in life.

Friday's child is loving and giving.

You are caring and sharing. You are kind, you love people, and

people love you.

Saturday's child works hard for a living.

You are ambitious, enjoy work, and like to accomplish things.

You know what you want.

But the child born on the Sabbath day,

Is fair and wise and good and gay.

You are sunny, fun, and loving. You bring much joy to other people.

Orally make the audience think that there was only a date written on the card. The audience should believe that knowledge of what the date denotes is unknown to you. Reveal the facts in bits, eventually coming to the realization that the "random" date is her birthday. Begin with the fact being a number, then see that it's a date.

A few people won't put the year of their birth on the card. It makes little difference in the presentation. You're revealing enough information to stun the audience and entertain the guests.

The revelation of a favorite present is an idea from Larry Becker. But I discovered that many people can't recall their favorite gift. So by wording the request as, *a favorite birthday gift you might have received*, you allow the participant to fill in the blank with an imaginary gift if necessary. Also, requesting "*a*" and not "*the*" favorite gift allows for some mental latitude. You don't want to make it difficult for the second guest to fill in the card.

"I wish I could go home and play with it right now," covers the possibility that the gift was lost years ago. If she still has the gift, your statement still fits. These little points make your statements seem precise. When the second guest thinks about what was revealed, she'll be amazed that you knew the gift AND that she still had it at home; or had lost it years ago and wishes she still had it, as the case may be. Little touches make miracles!

It's OK if the audience thinks you took a guess at the date being her birthday. You amaze them by even knowing the date.

But they must believe, however, that the identity of the gift was not written.

The Third Guest

The third card gives you a lot of ammunition. The illusion is that all that was written by the volunteer was a random name. It's a bonus knowing the name's gender, that the person is close to the participant and whose name it is. But even that is held back until a brief reading is given for the third guest. And it must be brief because you want to give a reading for the guest's mother. It strengthens the audience's belief that you don't know what was written by claiming that you (the third guest) are thinking of letters. A moment later you realize that the thought is more than just a word, it's a name. Then you see it's a woman's name, that she's mature and that it's his mother's name.

Dissect the question regarding her future and feed it back to the volunteer. In the example, Norman wrote, "*Will my mother be cured of her depression?*" This indicates all of the facts you will reveal in the performance. The word *cured* indicates that she's sought help from a professional for her problem. The word *depression*, obviously, tells you the problem. Give as much detail as possible about these two words.

If Norman had asked, "*Will my mother move to Mexico?*" you concentrate your reading on the words *move* and *Mexico*. For example, you would say something about a change; perhaps changing residence. Speak of the discomfort of having to pack everything and the fear of relocating. Mention a distant place. Then reveal that it was a foreign country (unless you're in Mexico!). Then, describe the country, finally revealing the specific country as Mexico. Start with a very simple bit and get more specific as you go along. Imagine *why* they wrote the question and reveal these hidden thoughts and feelings.

You can work in that "My son is concerned about my..." and give a little reading about the third guest's feelings. After all,

he wrote the question and will reveal his feelings and fears within its make-up.

It's a good idea to talk to the sitters a little bit after you've finished with them and before you return them to their seats. Although the expressions on their faces often verify your revelations, asking them for verification to the facts is an important detail.

The Theater of it All

Make the hooded cloak from a soft, open-weave, brown burlap type material. Patterns are available from any sewing shop. The hood should enclose your entire head and the cloak should drag on the ground a bit. If you're not handy at the Singer machine, a few dollars spent with a professional seamstress will procure a nice costume. Although the routine can be performed without the costume, you gain so much with the use of the cloak its cost and minor transportation hassles are insignificant.

If performing on a stage of some sort (either at a night club, comedy club, banquet, college or any stage riser), make three steps from $\frac{1}{2}$ " plywood that fold flat. (See Fig. 13.) If you're in a bind you can use wooden bottle cases or cinder blocks. The folding steps are painted black so they remain unseen by the audience. Before the performance, these are placed behind each of the three chairs on stage.

The lighting is the most important theatrical factor. It should illuminate the cloak, but not your entire face. There also needs to be adequate lighting for the audience to see the faces of the volunteers. By not seeing your face, it almost appears that your voice is coming from the volunteer's subconscious. This is very important. If working where there are professional lights, an overhead spot slightly forward will illuminate the right amount of

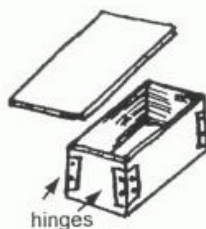


Fig. 13

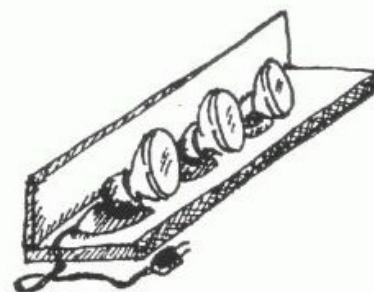


Fig. 14

your face. A soft gelled light on the three guests is preferable.

If you're working under less desirable conditions, as most of us do, a strip of footlights is easily constructed. Three yellow flood lights are mounted to a piece of $\frac{1}{2}$ " plywood, 3' long. A second 3' piece of plywood is attached to the back of the strip. (See Fig.

14.) The wood is painted black outside and in. The strips are set in front of the chairs before the show. Be certain that it's down stage enough to leave room for the guests and that they're focused on the faces of the guests. (See Fig. 16)

To create the proper lighting for the dark cloak without an overhead spot, you'll hold a light under your chin. A flashlight won't be strong enough. You'll need a handheld boat light with a million candle capacity. (See Fig. 15) Boat lights are battery powered which makes performance easier. Cover the front of the light with a professional lighting gel, or use a thin piece of white silk. This defuses the light so it isn't too harsh. When illuminated from the bottom, the hood should be down so your eyes are hidden. The upward light should light up only your chin and mouth.



Fig. 15

Both the light and the folded cloak are placed on a small table or stand behind the chairs. (See Fig. 16)

The Fire Bowl

The bowl described in the effect is constructed by using Wil Golden's Perfect Strike Match Pull. A match is secured to the bottom of a bowl. The pull is attached to the cloth by a length of fish line. When the cloth is pulled away, the match is ignited and lights a pad soaked in lighter fluid.

Of course any match pull can be used, but the Sure Shot pulls work every time. The entire set-up with the bowl, as well as how to make the pulls, is explained in Wil's book available from wilsgoldin@aol.com.

You can simply light the bowl by hand, but the appearance of the fire is wonderful theatrics.



Fig. 16

The Home Version

Because this routine is so strong, it would be a shame to restrict its presentation to the stage. A simpler staging is possible for smaller venues, such as a living room, a library or around a campfire.

In this lighter version, you'll eliminate the use of the cloak, the special light, the fire bowl and the steps. The information from the cards is obtained by using **The Dance of Shiva™**. It's my original technique for reading the information on the back of a business card right in front of the spectator while holding it visibly closed. This is the cleanest method I know of impromptu billet reading. The instructions to the participant are written on the lower half of the card and the information supplied by the participant is written on the upper half of the card.

(The Dance of Shiva™ is available for \$45 postpaid from Docc Hilford – P.O. Box 546022 – Bal Harbour, FL - 33154).

The procedure for this routine is a little different from the stage version. The guests can be seated around the room. After some preliminary instructions (as explained above), each guest holds his or her folded card. You take a card, secretly read and remember the different details on the card, and give it back to the participant to hold in his or her fist. Stand behind the person and become them, revealing the personal information. After the each revelation, open the card and read aloud the single piece of information you want the audience to believe is the only thing written. Tear the card in half and pocket the pieces. Repeat this procedure for each guest.

The key to working an intimate setting is to be certain that the participants are situated so no one else can see what's secretly already written on the card. Obviously, a participant can't be sitting next to a non-participant. Reminding the guests to keep what they write hidden from everyone present, helps keep what you wrote secret.

The opening patter is nearly the same as the stage version. Just drop the reference to a cloak and make the power of

becoming someone else an ancient secret to which you are privy.

The intimate setting opens itself to combinations of the complex stage version and the simplex version. You may wish to have a sitter hold a flashlight pointed at his or her face. The splash back will illuminate your face as you stand behind the participant. You can either use the brazier and the clip or **The Dance of Shiva™ method**. It's all up to you.

SPECIAL BONUS:

Here is a special bonus presentation. A professional mentalist wanted something that would stop the show for a special live theater appearance. I designed this alternate handling of **The Dark Cloak** for him.

Everything described in the original stage effect was used. In addition, there was a duplicate cloak on a wire form of a head and shoulders. The duplicate was held to the form by three pins. (See Fig. 17.) The form was connected to a line that ran straight up overhead. The end of the line went to an assistant off stage.

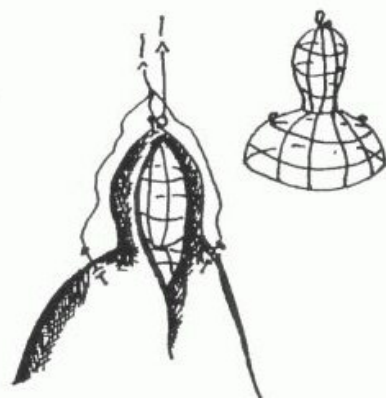


Fig. 17

The line of chairs was on a riser and the hidden steps were twice as high. Both cloaks were lined with black velvet. Between each reading, the performer stepped off the hidden step and sunk below eyelevel of the audience. Once hidden by the row of guests, he was free to switch the dummy specter for himself. This he did between the second and third reading.

After the second reading, the performer

ducked down and the dummy was raised via the invisible line. The assistant brought the dummy form to the same height as the performer had stood, only this time the form was behind the third sitter.

The performer secretly and silently turned the cloak he was wearing inside out and it became a velvet shield. All the while giving the third reading through his clip-on mic. About half way through the reading, he crawled upstage and off. No one noticed because the stage was dark, he was covered in black velvet and everyone's attention was on the dummy figure.

The mentalist casually dropped the cloak backstage and walked along the outer hall to the front of the theater, still giving his reading which was heard through the P.A. system. At the conclusion of the third reading, the assistant drew the line pulling the dummy form up and above the heads of the guests. It appeared as if he was levitating. With a final howl from the floating mentalist, the assistant pulled the pins via a second line, and the cloak fell to the stage. At the same time, the wire form was pulled up into the catwalks. This is, of course, is a vertical

version of Asrah.

A moment later, the mentalist appeared at the back of the audience. Everything was clean; the cloak on the floor could be checked. The audience went mad.



For an enterprising performer, this could be the illusion that makes him world famous. It has only been seen once. It could be yours now.

The Keys to Success:

One of the keys to success in this routine is creating the belief that only a number, a date, or a name was written. I know I've stated this time and time again, but it is extremely important. The volunteers will be as amazed as the audience. They will have no idea what the others wrote. They will not know how you knew the cold reading details. They will also be perplexed about your method of knowing what was written, but what makes the routine so strong is that you give information that was apparently NOT written!

Notice how each piece of written information segues into the next. The first thought is a number. You also reveal a birthplace. The second thought is a birthday and gift. You also reveal something about a mother. The third thought is a mother's name and you also give a reading for the mother! That's near perfect routining. It builds and builds in extraordinary excitement.

This routine may seem like a lot of work to perform a simple mental trick, but that's the point, it's not a simple trick. This is powerful mentalism. It's strong theater. Remember that this is a feature piece. If you perform a few introductory effects, you can use the chairs for the guests on stage without anyone knowing what's coming as the finale'. This piece alone can make your reputation and increase your fees dramatically.

Whether you use the stage version, the home version or the full stage illusion, perform this piece once and you'll use it regularly. Save it for the gigs where you want to really impress your audience. It can make a reputation for you as a true miracle man.

The range of effects in mentalistic magic is broad. There are tricks extending from discovering which of three colored rods are

placed in a tube, to revealing the name of a person that "crossed over". Some are light-hearted and comical in their presentation and others can be seriously dark. Many mentalistic tricks touch on personal facts about the participant, whether through something written or through simple cold reading. Various props and techniques are employed in good mentalistic entertainment.

Regarding mentalism, Ted Annemann said that, "...this part of the illusion game is more sought after by thinking audiences than any other." Magic of the mind is finally breaking free of the label of "magic's evil stepchild". For many years there was an "us against them" mentality between magicians and mentalists.

I have always believed that mentalistic effects are based on a clear understanding of the theatrics of magic. Having studied with Mike Skinner (among others) for years, my background is well founded in sleight of hand. When I perform a billet switch, it's infinitely easier than a one-handed diagonal side steal. Yet today, I see a multitude of amateur performers turning to mentalism because they find sleight of hand too strenuous. One well-informed author refers to this new breed as, "wounded magicians". They hate magic, believe that mentalism must remain "pure" (whatever that means) and adamantly refuse to see any connection between standard magical productions and mentalism. As a result of this distorted thinking they hate the use of playing cards, shy away from props of any kind and adopt a solemn and dry persona.

Because they have run away from home and left magic behind, they are forever lost. They have assumed the role of the battered, not evil, stepchild and add to the division of the allied magical arts. Without the knowledge of basic magical techniques, they flounder in their understandings of method. Many have left magic before knowing about deck stacks or basic misdirection. They're constantly looking over their shoulders for those who may catch them in their deceptions. They run, although not being chased, and proclaim that all their random procedures are fair, fearing they may possibly be perceived as a lowly magician!

Don't fear the magical aspects of mentalism. Remember that

this is all show business. A professional entertainer shared with me his surprise at how little contemporary magicians know about past showmen; whether in mentalism or magic. Knowing how to entertain is more important than knowing the latest mental trick. Understanding *why* Stanley Jaks used beautiful miniature props or *why* Dunninger used playing cards can be of immense help to a mental performer.

A self-destructive struggle lies in the additional fact that this breed also hates those who claim actual psychic abilities. They want to be believed by their audiences, only not too much. Ethics, they claim, is what separates them from the rest of the pack.

In my opinion, the ethical presentation of mentalism is no different from the ethical presentation of magic. It concerns, not whether or not to claim authenticity, but to take a position of seeing through the eyes of your audience.

A performer should be extremely thoughtful when revealing stock personality traits as personal facts, just as one would be careful while juggling flaming torches. Without the proper education in fire safety those burning clubs could be lethal. The same holds true for cold reading statements. The mishandling of words can be as painful to a spectator as a third degree burn!

If you're new to the mentalism game, please do adequate study on the subject of cold reading and applied psychology. Say only what you would want to hear, or better, what you would want your mate or child to be told. Emotionally put yourself in the participant's chair.

The preceding routine uses magical techniques, stage props, theatrical settings and strong psychological procedures. It will, no doubt, anger the new breed. But for those who perform this piece of performance art, it will usher them into a different class. And education at this new level will pay off handsomely.

Do what you like, and like what you do.

Enjoy.

APPENDIX A

Social Security Numbers

In the United States, the nine-digit SSN is composed of three parts:

- The first set of three digits is called the **Area Number**
- The second set of two digits is called the **Group Number**
- The final set of four digits is the **Serial Number**

Area Number

The Area Number is what we're interested in. It's assigned by the geographical region. Prior to 1972, cards were issued in local Social Security offices around the country and the Area Number represented the State in which the card was issued. This didn't necessarily have to be the State where the applicant lived, since a person could apply for their card in any Social Security office.

Since 1972, when SSA began assigning SSNs and issuing cards centrally from Baltimore, the area number assigned has been based on the ZIP code in the mailing address provided on the application for the original Social Security card. The applicant's mailing address does not have to be the same as their place of residence. Thus, the Area Number does not necessarily represent the State of residence of the applicant, either prior to 1972 or since, so word your revelation as outlined.

Generally, numbers were assigned beginning in the northeast and moving westward. So people on the east coast have the lowest numbers and those on the west coast have the highest numbers. Thus, you can instantly know what area of the US the first participant was in when he received his SSN even before you check the hidden chart.

Group Number

Within each area, the group number (middle two (2) digits) range from 01 to 99 but are not assigned in consecutive order. For administrative reasons, group numbers issued first consist of the ODD numbers from 01 through 09 and then EVEN numbers from 10 through 98, within each area number allocated to a State. After all numbers in group 98 of a particular area have been issued, the EVEN Groups 02 through 08 are used, followed by ODD Groups 11 through 99.

Group numbers are assigned as follows:

ODD - 01, 03, 05, 07, 09-----EVEN - 10 to 98
EVEN - 02, 04, 06, 08-----ODD - 11 to 99

Apparently due to the fact that the middle digits of the SSN are referred to as the "group number," some people have misconstrued this to mean that the "group number" refers to racial groupings. So a myth goes around from time-to-time that encoded in a person's SSN is a key to their race. This simply is not true.

As should be clear from the explanation of the SSN numbering scheme, the "group number" refers only to the numerical groups 01-99. For filing purposes, the "area numbers" are broken down into these numerical subgroups. So, for example, for area numbers starting with 527 there would be 98 subgroups, one for every number starting with 527-01, and one for every number starting with 527-02, and so on. The group number can give you some general information about when the guest got his SS card. This may be helpful in another routine, but I have yet to find a reason for its use in this effect.

So the "group number" has nothing whatever to do with race.

Footnote: It is true that the application form for an SSN asks for identifying information, such as date of birth, place of birth, parents' names, and (optionally) the applicant's race. But none of

this identifying information is encoded in the SSN itself--not the person's date of birth, place of birth, or race.

Serial Number

Within each group, the serial numbers (last four (4) digits) run consecutively from 0001 through 9999.

The Secret Chart

The following chart shows the first 3 digits of the social security numbers assigned throughout the United States and its possessions. See the note at bottom of page referring to numbers 700-728.

New Hampshire 001-003	Pennsylvania 159-211	South Carolina 247-251 654-658
Maine 004-007	Maryland 212-220	Georgia 252-260 667-675
Vermont 008-009	Delaware 221-222	Florida 261-267 589-595 766-772
Massachusetts 010-034	Virginia 223-231 691-699*	Ohio 268-302
Rhode Island 035-039	West Virginia 232-236	Indiana 303-317
Connecticut 040-049	North Carolina 232 237-246 681-690	Illinois 318-361
New York 050-134		
New Jersey 135-158		

Michigan 362-386	Minnesota 468-477	Arizona 526-527
	Iowa 478-485	600-601
Wisconsin 387-399		764-765
	Missouri 486-500	Utah 528-529
Kentucky 400-407		646-647
	North Dakota 501-502	Nevada 530
Tennessee 408-415		680
756-763*	South Dakota 503-504	Washington 531-539
Alabama 416-424	Nebraska 505-508	Oregon 540-544
	Kansas 509-515	California 545-573
Mississippi 425-428		602-626
587-588	Montana 516-517	Alaska 574
752-755*		Hawaii 575-576
Arkansas 429-432	Idaho 518-519	750-751*
676-679	Wyoming 520	
Louisiana 433-439	Colorado 521-524	District of Columbia 577-579
659-665		Virgin Islands 580
Oklahoma 440-448	650-653	
Texas 449-467	New Mexico 525,585	
627-645	648-649	

Puerto Rico 580-584	American Samoa 586	Enumeration at Entry 729-733
596-599		
Guam 586	Philippine Islands 586	* = New areas allocated, but not yet issued

700-728

Issuance of these numbers to railroad employees was discontinued July 1, 1963.

This can allow you to recognize an old railroad worker by the number on his card. Reveal his previous job, not the state he grew up in as a child.

APPENDIX B

Any Day of the Week

Calculating the day of the week on which a particular date falls is based on a simple formula. There have been different methods published during the past century, some more difficult than others, but all accomplish the same task.

For this simple method, you'll need to know how to divide by 4 and 7 (although there are short-cuts), as well as twelve key numbers for the months. They are:

January	0	July	6
February	3	August	2
March	3	September	5
April	6	October	0
May	1	November	3
June	4	December	5

These key numbers are easily memorized. For example, remember that a May pole, which looks like a 1. Or that Christmas Day ends with a 5. It takes about fifteen minutes to memorize the key numbers.

In the story above, the example was June 5, 1973. You will mentally calculate by following this simple procedure: year, month, day, divided by 7.

First, the year. Discard the 19 and divide 73 by 4 and disregard any remainder.

Short-cut: This can be easily done by halving the number twice. Since we don't care about any remainders at this point, discard them. Half of 70 is 35. Half of 3 is $1\frac{1}{2}$, so we discard the $\frac{1}{2}$. Add the 35 and the 1 for 36. Repeat the procedure. Half of 36 is 18. This can be a quick way of dividing by 4.

So 73 divided by 4 is 18 without the remainder of 1. The number for the year 1973 is 18.

Now add the year number to the year. $18 + 73 = 81$.

To the running total, add the month key number. $81 + 4$ (June's key number) = 85.

Add the date to the running total. $85 + 5 = 90$.

Merely divide the total by 7. The remainder will give you the day of the week.

Short-cut: Because we're interested only in the remainder, we can discard any multiple of 7 as we calculate. This makes the process much easier as there's nothing to remember. For example, 70 is an obvious multiple of 7, so we subtract 70 from 90. The remaining 20 is easy to divide by 7. Subtract 14 for a remainder of 6.

The remainder is the day of the week that June 5, 1973 fell on. The remainder is 6 and the 6th day is Saturday. Here is the day of the week list:

Sunday	0
Monday	1
Tuesday	2
Wednesday	3
Thursday	4
Friday	5
Saturday	6

You really don't have to memorize anything here, just know that Monday is the first day and Sunday is 0 (a remainder of 0 is the same as a remainder of 7).

This can be expressed in an easy to read formula:

$$\frac{(\text{year} \div 4) + \text{year} + \text{month key} + \text{day}}{7}$$

After some practice, the calculations take only about 30 seconds. A pause between participants gives the necessary time to calculate the day. You've finished being Tom and pause before being Julie. You have Julie's birth date on the card center to check. In 30 seconds you have the day of the week on which she was born. Start in with your reading and throw in the day information. The pause looks good theatrically and you get the benefit of adding something that no "magician" could have known.

Because many people aren't aware of the day they were born, when they figure it out, or look it up at home, they'll be shocked! Those who do know this information will be stunned that you know it. They never figure that it could be calculated mathematically in your head. Don't overlook this excellent piece of business. I can't stress how much it adds for the participant and your audience.

The End

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