



# Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community  
January 2009

Volume 4, Issue 5

## December's meeting

With the Christmas season in full swing, it's tough to get a decent crowd to a magic meeting! And that was the case this night, when only a handful of members (and a couple eager guests!) made their way to the December meeting.

Mike Fisher set up an impressive display of his many Cups & Balls set, including sets by P & L, Morrisey, Ross Bertrum, and a beautiful special edition Phoenix cup set.

After a quick election of officers for the rest of the year (see below), it was time for some impromptu magic (the theme for the night). Mark Hogan was able to ascertain the side of a covered coin that was mixed by a spectator; determined the location of a coin under a set of cups, and floated a borrowed bill. Mike Fisher showed a neat spelling card trick using only 9 cards. Then he predicted a coin selected by a spectator inside a set of cups. Mike also performed his excellent table-hopping cups & balls routine using only 2 cups!

Steve Seguin used his amazing mental powers to identify which name on a page of names was first written! Devon Elliott performed a Stewart James-inspired card effect on everyone at the same time, where a selected card mixed in a packet appears between 2 cards with add to 7!

Next Meeting(s):

Wednesday, January 14 7:30PM

Topic: ILLUSION MAGIC!!

Beal Secondary School  
255 Dundas Street, London  
T-253

Our guests weren't shy, as Gord Giza showed us how to use a Triumph effect to find the four aces! And Steve Jackson demonstrated his card techniques which several routines, including: having a selected card found

reversed in a packet in the spectator's hands; a torn & restored effect called Believe; and a very visual Cards Across. He also slowed his heartbeat down to nothing – with Ron Keller counting the beats!

Many thanks to all those who came out on during a busy Christmas season to share their magic!

Mark Hogan

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## January's Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, January 14  
TIME: 7:30 PM  
PLACE: Beal Secondary School  
T-253

Topic: ILLUSION MAGIC!

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Most of our meetings involve close-up and parlor magic, and those that perform well for a small audience. But next month, we bring in the big stuff!

Mike Fisher has graciously volunteered to bring in several larger illusions (eg. head choppers, etc.) for us to analyze, try out, and even perform. Many of us don't the opportunity to see and try out some of the larger effects – now is your opportunity!

If you have any effects that "play big" because they are big, then bring them along – we'll love to see them!

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!  
Please send any original reviews, magic  
tricks or routines to:  
[magic\\_london@yahoo.ca](mailto:magic_london@yahoo.ca)

## 2008-2009 Executive

Congratulations to the London Magicians Guild executive for 2008-2009. Please offer your support to this year's executive:

President:	Ron Keller
Vice President:	Mike Fisher
Secretary/Treasurer:	Mark Hogan
Sergeant at Arms:	Jason Williams

# News Of Interest



## Collector seeks rare Houdini handcuffs

(by Roberto Acosta, The Saginaw News)

A rare pair of Saginaw-made handcuffs that famed escape artist Harry Houdini used more than 80 years ago have long since pulled a disappearing act, but a Minnesota collector hopes a Saginaw News reader holds the key.

John W. Bushey, 46, of Duluth owns about 200 pairs of handcuffs. Houdini used some of them, while others are replicas of restraints from his act. A Saginaw-made set "is one of the few pairs I can't get that he used during his lifetime," Bushey said.

The Wisner & Hoyt model is "extremely rare," said Stan Willis of Cincinnati, Ohio, listed in the Guinness World Records as owning the most pairs of handcuffs at 1,450.

"The last pair I know about sold three years ago for \$4,000," Willis said.

Houdini, born Erich Weisz on March 24, 1874, in Budapest, Hungary, gained fame for several acts, including escapes while shackled and handcuffed underwater, and illusions, once making an elephant disappear from New York's Hippodrome.

Yet Houdini "was not just an escape artist," said Bushey, himself a magician before he became a teacher. "He was the first person to ever successfully fly a plane over Australia, and he was a silent film star." After a ruptured appendix -- suffered when the escapologist told a university student he could withstand any blow to the abdomen and was pummeled while unprepared -- Houdini died in a Detroit hospital Oct. 31, 1926.

Bushey will continue trying to find the old handcuffs and is willing to spend \$2,000 to \$3,000 for a pair.

## Chris Angel upset at Las Vegas media

(from an article by Richard Ouzounian, The Star)

Chris Angel has been feuding with the local Las Vegas media, feeling that they've got an agenda against him and maybe they do, considering the reviews that later appeared.

Too often, the press have wanted to concentrate on his latest romantic entanglement with Hugh Hefner's former gal-pal, Holly Madison, or to question the authenticity of some of the illusions in his new Cirque du Soliel show, Chris Angel BeLIEve.

"The first is none of their business," says Angel, with the nasal Long Island twang he still carries from his childhood there, "but the second gets me mad.

"I've taken a lot of chances in my career and I've got the scars to prove it," he asserts. "I've hung from four fishhooks stuck in my back from a helicopter in the past," he rages, voice rising higher.

"And this show is insanely dangerous. I'm dealing with a wall of fire 30 feet wide and 15 feet high only 6 feet away from me. I could kill myself at every performance."



### Magic and the Brain.

(from Virginia Prescott, New Hampshire Public Radio)

Spoiler alert! You know all those times you watched a magician saw his beautiful assistant in half, then put her back together again?! Well, turns out – she wasn't sawed in half at all!

It was just a trick. The magician was actually manipulating our attention and exploiting our tendency to get distracted while he pulled a fast one on us.

I know, I know. I can hardly believe it myself. But it turns out that neuroscientists can learn a lot about how our brains work by studying the way magicians trick us. The basic trick of the magician: use some sort of gimmick to mask the real action while making something appear to change or dematerialize. It turns out that magicians not only use "visual illusions," but also something called "cognitive illusions." For example, the video below originated from two Harvard researchers. The goal is for viewers to count how many times a team of basketball players pass a ball around:

(See the video at <http://www.nhpr.org/node/19594>)

It's an example of "covert blindness" called "inattention blindness". But there's another kind of "covert blindness" called "change blindness." Here's a video example, a "color changing card trick":

(See the video at <http://www.nhpr.org/node/19594>)

Magicians rely on misdirection – get the audience to focus their eyes somewhere else while the magician tricks them with slight of hand. But studies show that it doesn't matter where the audience is looking – you can still trick the eye, even if it stays focused on the action. How? Two investigators measured the eye movements of observers while scientist/magician made a cigarette "disappear" by dropping it below a table. The results were clear: it made no difference where they were looking.

Some scientists even hope that investigating the techniques of magic could lead to new diagnostics and treatments for patients suffering from attention deficit disorders, Alzheimer's disease, or brain trauma. These studies also reveal a lot about the power of expectation in the human brain. More specifically, our desire to apply causation to actions unrelated to one another. A magician may pour water on a ball, then the ball disappears. We assume it's because of the water, but of course it's not.

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The Shell Game is a free newsletter sent to members of the London Magicians Guild and other people in the community interested in magic.

Opinions expressed do not reflect the views of the London Magicians Guild.

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