



SAMLETTER 181

The next Assembly 181 meeting is **Thursday, January 11, 2018**, (rescheduled from our regular meeting night due to inclement weather) when **Dennis "Coco" James**, will lead an exciting workshop on the **Impossible**. Several card tricks and silk vanishes will be taught and every attending member will get a free Coco "goody bag" containing the necessary gaffs and gimmicks to perform the demonstrated effects.



Dennis has a long career in magic. He was hired by Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus as a circus clown. Dennis performed and traveled with America's premier circus for two years and still does clowning as Coco

Dennis also performs magic and balloon twisting in fundraising events for the VFW, the Knights of Columbus and his local church. His versatility is amazing and you can see that he is having fun every time he performs.

Following the workshop, we will open the stage to others to perform in our "No Judgment Zone", so bring something to share.

Society of American Magicians Assembly 181 of Hightstown meets the first Thursday of every month, September thru June at the **First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520**. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Meetings start at 7:30 PM.

From the President



As the echoes of "chestnuts roasting on an open fire" start to fade away and the faint polyphony of "Auld Lang Syne"¹ begins to increase in volume, I say to myself "What A Wonderful World"² ... err, I mean "Where did the time go"? Another year has gone by and I find that once again, there is so much magic, but yet so little time. Does anyone else have this problem? Does anyone else suffer from "not seeing the forest because of the trees"? I, like so many other magicians, suffer from an overabundance of choice. Too many books, too many tricks, and too many styles to watch and study. It's like walking into a cave only to find, not hundreds, but thousands of gemstones laying about where each one is more alluring than the next. You pick one up, gaze at it and truly desire it. Suddenly, another catches your eye, so you quickly drop the first and pick up the second only to see a third, a fourth, a fifth and so on. Which stone do you pick, how do you decide?

As 2017 comes to a close and 2018 begins, I would like to wish each and every one of you a happy and healthy new year. I also would like to wish for all of you who suffer from not being able to decide which gemstone to pick, a way out of that cave with the gemstone that finally makes you happy, the gemstone that will make you all the magicians I know you wish to be. The reality is, it may not really matter which gemstone you pick but to find happiness in having "a gem" and share that gem with others who aren't as fortunate as we.

¹ "Auld Lang Syne" is a Scots poem written by Robert Burns in 1788 and set to the tune of a traditional folk song.

² "What a Wonderful World" is a pop ballad written by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss. It was first recorded by Louis Armstrong and released in 1967 as a single.

As magicians, we are the merchants of dreams, the purveyors of wonders and the creators of memories. We all have an opportunity to make a difference in the world. Make 2018 the year you carry your magic with you, physically and internally. Go and make a child smile and an older person feel young again. Bring joy and wonder wherever you go. We are magicians, we are the merchants of dreams, the purveyors of wonders and the creators of memories, go forth and create magic.

Magic at the Little Beavers Preschool



For as long as I can remember, members of Assembly 181 have been volunteering to perform a magic show for the children at the Little Beavers Preschool before Christmas.

This year, Randy Butters and Robert Francis both volunteered to do the Thursday morning magic show. The First United Methodist Church has been a kind host to Assembly 181 and it is nice to see our members pay it forward. Maybe next year it will be your chance.

To Randy and Rob, we own a special thanks for volunteering and performing magic for the children on our behalf. We all appreciate it.

IMPOSSIBLE LOCATIONS



"See magic, learn magic, and perform magic", is the refrain of Assembly 181. There are no business meetings here. Our November meeting was a workshop on card to impossible location, a premise long associated with card and coin magic.

Way back at the end of the 19th century, an Englishman, Angelo John Lewis used a pen name, Professor Hoffman when he wrote the classic magic book, Modern Magic. He used a pen name

because he feared his professional reputation as a lawyer would be compromised if his clients knew of his conjuring skills. Ever since magicians have been contemplating better ways to reveal a chosen card.

The first impossible location demonstrated by Jeff was a signed coin to a big ball of yarn. A ball of yarn can make a small trick into a large effect as the ball of yarn is unraveled and it spans the room. Cards and coins need to be signed to eliminate the thought of a duplicate in the mind of the audience. "Making the object disappear is just as important as making it reappear" Jeff reminds us.

Magicians need to keep in mind the Latin phrase "omne trium perfectum" (everything that comes in threes is perfect) when sending items to impossible locations. The rule of three is a long

known writing principle that suggests that events or characters introduced in threes are more humorous, satisfying, and effective in engaging the reader.

eBay and the dollar stores are great places to find a low-cost nests of boxes. One member found a nest of three coffins at a dollar store just in time to place them into his Halloween show. The impossible location is not to be hidden. The best effect is achieved when the impossible location is on display to the audience in advance.

For the close-up performer, the classic bill tube is a great impossible location. A signed and vanished bill reappears in a brass tube that has a threaded top that is padlocked closed. The night ended with the exclamation that should end every workshop on objects to impossible locations, "That's impossible!"



Psycho Path - Magic for the Mentalist



As in all forms of magic, there are different approaches. It is the diversity of ideas which I find most appealing about magic. Mentalism is no different. There is mentalism which relies very heavily on props and then there is the kind, which I find more attractive, which is almost devoid of props. This branch of propless mentalism has grown dramatically over the last few years with new techniques and insights on how people think and respond. Names such as Kenton Knepper, Peter Turner, Marc Elsdon, and Fraser Parker are just a few of the more well-known creators in this field. Because propless mentalism is one of my interests, I am always searching for well thought out and believable premises to use.

I recently discovered a DVD set which is a propless mentalist's gold mine. *Zero Elements* by Juan Esteban Varela is a two DVD set produced by Vernet of South America. To be honest, I can see why there has not been much talk about this set. The DVD set is described as "magic with no elements". First of all, it is really mentalism and not magic and secondly, it should have said props and not elements. Basically, it is propless mentalism. In addition, the DVD set is in Spanish and overdubbed with English. Watching the trailer reminded me of watching an old Godzilla movie. The whole presentation just was not appealing. If I did not get this DVD set at a super discount, I probably would have never considered it. However, now that I watched it I have to say I am duly impressed. There are about a dozen completely propless mentalism routines, of which most of them are very usable and entertaining. The presentations range from divining a thought of card from three

different individuals to revealing a precious stone only imagined by the spectator.

So what is not to like? As I said before, the DVD is dubbed over. I sincerely believe if this was put out by an English speaking performer it would have been more appealing. It is difficult to follow along with the English translation running over the Spanish. However, the biggest obstacle is the memory work. I personally enjoy toiling over algorithms and remembering hundreds of word associations and lists, but most people do not. If you were to perform any of these routines, count on weeks of memory work for each one. On top of memorizing the routines, the card routines (although all verbal) require the knowledge of the Mnemonica stack as well. Lastly, although the most minor issue, there is a routine (which was one of my favorites) that requires you to memorize multiple list based on some Spanish words, because the English equivalents will not work. If you can look past these obstacles you may find value in *Zero Elements*.

To watch the trailer on *Zero Elements* click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHuluyH2reg>

Rabbits Against Magic



Tricks are for Kids - Magic for the children's performer



Are you a box magician? Would you like to try to climb out of that box? Perhaps you would you like to try your hand at pantomime or acting? If you are thinking about expanding your horizons a bit, take a look at *Squeak Technique* by Jeff McBride. *Squeak Technique* is a DVD of routines based on using a mouth squeaker. This may not sound impressive but reserve

judgment until you watch the performances on *Squeak Technique*. The use of sound like a squeaker in public performance has been since renaissance Italy and Jeff McBride updated this to appeal to modern audiences.

The performances on *Squeak Technique* range from a sponge ball routine with bowls to a series of pantomime acts using the squeaker. I have had the pleasure of watching Jeff McBride in person performing the routines from this DVD and it was hilarious. Although originally used in street magic performances there is no reason this can not be a quick routine in a home, out on the street or part of your regular magic set. Also given are tips on how to add sounds like the squeaker in performing your regular set to add more dimension to your props. Included with the DVD are two standard squeakers to practice and perform with. There is not much more to say about this one except I found Jeff McBride's performances incredibly funny, creative and appealing. Definitely, give this one a look, it is highly recommended.

To watch the trailer for *Squeak Technique* click here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oriy_7FBXg0

Do you believe in magic? - Magic for the general magician



You are with a group of people and somehow they find out that you perform magic. Of course you are asked to perform something but as usual, you did not bring anything with you. You stammer and stutter realizing that you are not prepared. But wait, you just remembered you have that photo you placed in your wallet just in case and the day is saved. Housed in a dark corner of

your wallet, and taking up zero pocket space you can perform at a moments notice if you had with you a photo using *Torn 2 Pieces* by Shawn Farquhar. *Torn 2 Pieces* is a torn photo restoration routine with a kicker ending.

The effect is that you take out a photo of your dog, kids, car, whatever and show it to the spectator(s) and you then proceed to tear it into pieces. Miraculously you then restore the torn photo whole again but not quite as perfect as the original. You restore the photo, but accidentally the four pieces get all mixed up. You shrug your shoulders and give them the photo admitting that you may need a little more practice. The spectator is left with an impossible object and a memento of your presentation.

This clever approach to the torn and restored card routine is marketed by the infinitely talented Shawn Farquhar. Although not overly prolific in commercial releases, every one of his effects released to the magic consumer is a winner and *Torn 2 Pieces* is no exception. Everything you need is included with the DVD. The instruction is thorough and concise. A special program is included which allows you to customize the photo to one that you

want to use. The necessary adjustments to the photo are all done for you which and for computer illiterates like myself that is a benefit. Once your photo is printed all you have to do is some folding and trimming to prepare it for performance.

There is very little to be desired from this effect. It takes up no room, in fact, you may even forget you have it on you since you can stick it anywhere in your wallet. The handling is easy but you will have to remember which way to turn the photo to position it for the tearing. The restored photo which ultimately becomes somewhat disarranged can be given away. The dirty work is palmed away and a person even with the smallest of hands can perform this. For me, *Torn 2 Pieces* is a great impromptu trick. P.S. the photo you print out is only 2" wide x 2.5" high.

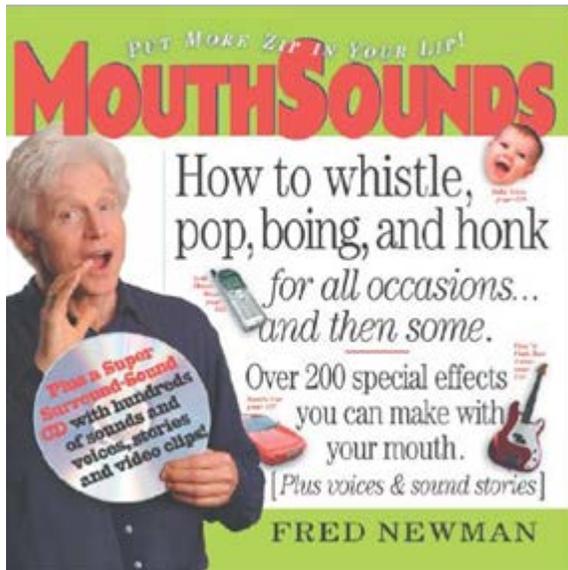
To watch his performance on *Ellen* click here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_w1VKqpFVzs



Members watching another exciting Workshop at S.A.M. 181

The Magic Library - A Book Review



This month instead of reviewing a magic book, I am going to review a book that almost anyone can use if they are remotely engaged in performing. I think that in any performing art, the more dimension you can add to the presentation the more entertaining it is. In my review on children's magic, I spoke of the *Squeak Technique* by Jeff McBride. The DVD covers the use of a squeaker to add more interest to

the magic. What if you wanted a multitude of sounds in your performance but it does not warrant the time and effort to record them on a MP3 player. Or, perhaps you want something more natural and basic or more spontaneous and pre-recorded sounds would detract from your performance. Or, maybe you just want to enhance a story you are telling your children or grandchildren before they go to bed.

If you want to enhance any performance, why not learn how to make sounds yourself, with your own mouth. *Mouth Sounds* by Fred Newman is a book on how to produce sounds using your mouth and hands. Fred Newman has created dozens of voices and sounds for movies, television, and radio. His book teaches you how to make over 200 different sounds. The sounds you will learn to create range from various pops, clicks, horns, and honks to animal sounds, instruments, whistles, vehicles and dozens others. In addition to the sounds, there are stories which incorporate sounds as the main vehicle of telling the story. If that is not enough, also

included is a DVD of hundreds of sounds, voices, stories and video clips.

Does this sound interesting? Well, here is the best part, I purchased this as a used book on Amazon for about \$6 delivered. A small investment for so much potential. Just being able to tell a story with self-made sounds to enhance the delivery is well worth such a small investment. If you perform in any way, whether it is telling jokes to your buddies, stories to children or performing magic, I'm sure *Mouth Sounds* will help you deliver it with more pizzazz.



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MAGIC CALENDAR

	<p>THUR JAN 4</p>	<p>S.A.M. Assembly 181 meeting will be on Thursday, January 4, 2018, at the First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Dennis “Coco” James, will lead an exciting workshop on the <i>Impossible</i>. Every attending member will get a free Coco “goody bag” containing the necessary gaffs and gimmicks to perform the demonstrated effects. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Workshop at 7:30 PM. http://magicsam181.com</p>
	<p>MON JAN 8</p>	<p>I.B.M. Ring 165 on Monday, January 8, 2018, at the First United Methodist Church, 704 Garden Street, Haddon Heights, NJ 08035</p>
	<p>MON JAN 8</p>	<p>I.B.M Ring 6, The Delaware Valley Conjurers Club regularly meets every 2nd Monday of the month. Meeting on Monday, January 8, 2018, at the Hancock United Methodist Church, 542 Wesley Road, Springfield, PA 19064.</p>
	<p>MON JAN 8</p>	<p>S.A.M. Assembly 161 meets on the second Monday of each month at the Stoney Brook Grille, 1285 Easton Turnpike in Branchburg, NJ 08876. SAM 161 is primarily a lecture based group https://www.facebook.com/groups/SAM161CALENDAR/about/</p>
	<p>TUE JAN 16</p>	<p>I.B.M. Ring 200 meets on Tuesday, January 16, 2018, 7:00 PM at the Stelton Community Center, 328 Plainfield Ave, Edison, NJ 08817.</p>
	<p>THU JAN 18</p>	<p>S.A.M. Assembly 4 will be meeting on Thursday, January 18, 2018, at the Polish Home, 9150 Academy Road, Philadelphia, PA 19114, usual time; 7:00 PM. http://www.sam4.org/</p>
	<p>WED JAN 24</p>	<p>I.B.M. Ring 123 will be meeting on Wednesday, January 24, 2018, at the King of Kings Lutheran Church, 250 Harmony Road, Middletown, NJ 07748 starting at 7 PM</p>
	<p>THU FEB 1</p>	<p>S.A.M. Assembly 181 meeting will be on Thursday, February 1, 2018. Society of American Magicians Assembly 181 of Hightstown meets the first Thursday of every month, September thru June at the First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Doors open at 7:00 PM. Meetings start at 7:30 PM. http://magicsam181.com</p>

Visit the Magic Calendar on our SAM 181 website at http://magicsam181.com/?page_id=95