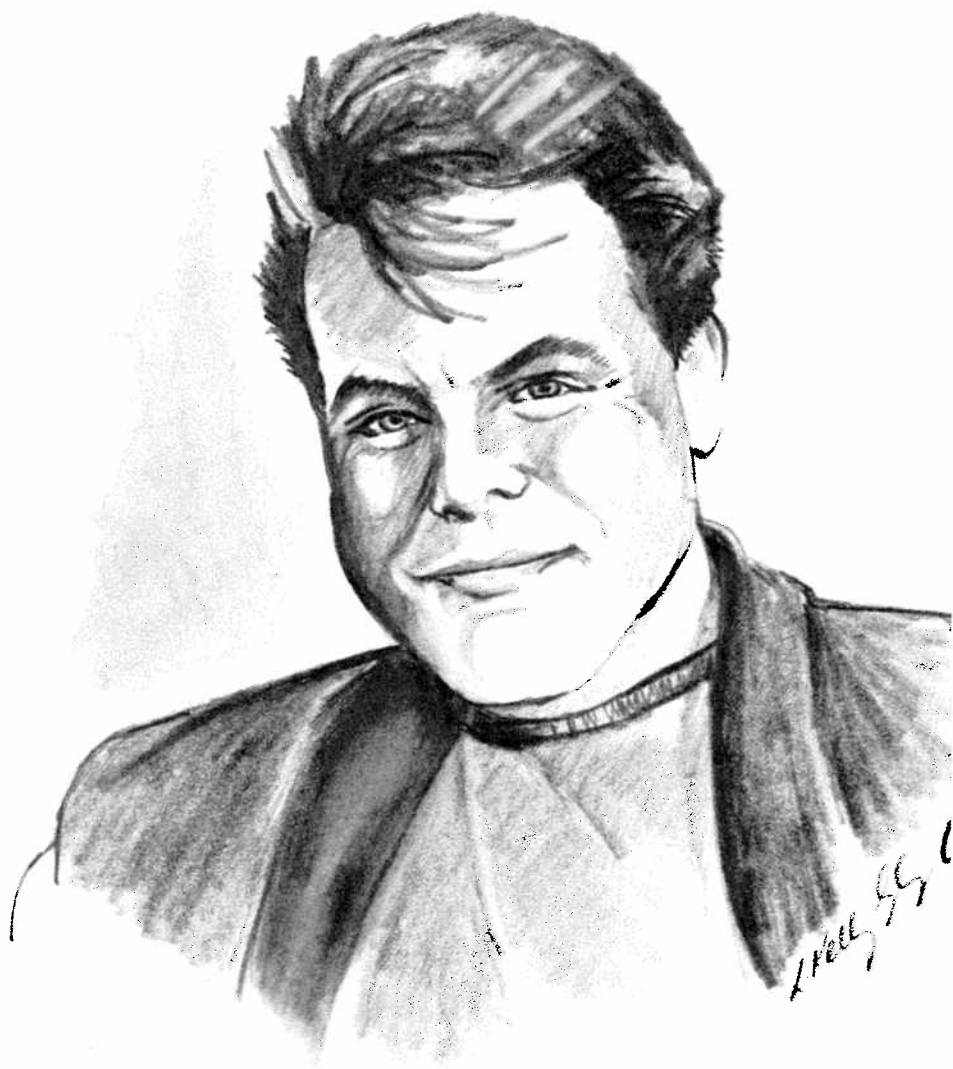


CARNEYCOPIA



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Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the many people who have contributed to the completion of this book. It is obvious that I owe a great deal to Stephen Minch for his engaging approach to technical description, a medium that is too often a dry one. He has managed to draw meaning from the simplest ideas and explore a deeper understanding of magic's real secrets. The art in magic is much greater for Stephen's contributions. I am most fortunate to have acquired his talents in presenting the volume before you.

My heartfelt appreciation goes also to James Patton. The pre-illustrative photographer is often a forgotten champion, working countless hours with intense concentration for little reward. Jim's professional approach and attention to detail have resulted in a precise schematic for proper illustrations. I have every respect for Jim's knowledge of magic and his solidity of character.

Kelly Lyles' illustrations and artwork are of exceptional quality. She has surpassed functional technical requirements and presented the material with great artistry. The result is a precise representation that is also aesthetically pleasing; a rare combination of form and function.

I am flattered and delighted that Louis Falanga has displayed confidence in handling this project. Louis is a professional in every sense of the word, and is inexhaustible in his efforts to produce products of high quality, in form and content. His respect and consideration have made this project a pleasure.

Ideas are not created strictly from thin air, as everything is based, at least in part, on the contributions of others to the pool of knowledge. I offer my gratitude to the many friends who have shared their insights for my edification, stimulating my own progress. This includes the written works of past masters whose work has laid the foundation for my studies.

Most notable among this group is Dai Vernon. His contributions to magic are prodigious, and his contribution to my life, inestimable. He has displayed great patience with this young man's raw talent, and has graciously nurtured it over the years. His influence and friendship will be carried with me throughout my life.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Jack and Rose Carney, for their understanding and encouragement in my odd choice of careers. They are remarkable parents, and are quite literally the most important contributors to my life. Through their example and instruction I have been provided a blueprint for character and moral responsibility. To them, and to the rest of my family — Karen, Craig and Susan — I owe my gratitude and in return offer my deep love and respect.

John Carney

FIRST EDITION

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INTRODUCTORY ENCOMIA

Michael Skinner—I am extremely glad to have the opportunity now of doing what I have always wanted to do: write an introduction to a book containing the magic of my dear friend, John Carney. I regard John as one of the finest of magicians. His original and subtle methods, combined with his crisp, neat handling of props, make his effects exceptionally entertaining and baffling.

I first met John at an early Desert Magic Seminar in Las Vegas. I must say that I had never met anyone as clever or polished. I was that impressed with his work. His handling of cards and coins was immaculate and he fooled me over and over with his various original effects.

Much of John's reputation is due to his practical thinking in selecting the right approach and solution for each routine that he performs. Because of his vast knowledge of methods in magic, he has an ingenious capability for revitalizing old methods and devising new ones.

I really enjoy John's lighthearted approach to presentation. He has learned through experience that we can create bewilderment with strong effects, but the presentation is greatly improved when we provoke smiles and some laughter. All the while we must maintain our dignity and the dignity of our assistants from the audience.

This book is packed with information, terrific routines and effects; and I offer John my sincere thanks for enabling us all to share his particular brand of magic.

Las Vegas, 1991

Mike Caveney—When asked to write an introduction to a friend's book, it is hoped and assumed that you will paint a glossy portrait of a person possessing the soul of an artist, the mind of a scientist, the heart of a fighter, and sufficient ability and fortitude to qualify him for sainthood, popedom, or at the very least a MacArthur "genius" Award. I will do my best.

First let's talk about raw skill. I'm talking hard-core, inner-circle, middle of the night, hotel-room floor, magicians only, knuckle-busting sleight-of-hand. My money is squarely on Carney's hands. He has spent the necessary hours, weeks and years practicing, studying, analyzing, refining and tailoring a vast arsenal of skills to fit his own style. At this early stage in his career John has more than enough dexterity to ensure him a long and amazing life. But a magician with skill is like a seamstress with a sewing machine. Both of them need material.

John's material rarely comes from the latest book of pop close-up magic. He prefers effects gleaned from classic books. You know the ones: books that everyone owns because they look good on the shelf, but nobody really studies because the writing is so old-fashioned. He figures that if Max Malini is remembered for a trick with a block of ice, and John Ramsay for a trick with a stack of coins, there must be a reason why. The effects are straightforward and easy to follow. The methods employed provide the most direct means for getting from Point A to Point B. The presentation is extracted from, and inter-twined with, the performer's unique personality, making the two, ultimately, inseparable. John Carney's magic is based on these principles.

Some of John's effects are difficult to perform, while others are quite simple; but the methods to both types of tricks are arrived at by asking the same question: which method is the best? If a simple, self-working handling is clearly the right answer, then that's what is used. Other times, the perfect solution demands that a difficult move be employed. Many magicians would substitute a lesser method and hope to "get by with it". John chooses to devote whatever time is necessary to master the superior, albeit more difficult move.

So, are all these skills and all these theories what make John Carney a great magician? No. How about all those awards he has won? Is that what makes him great? No. I know many great magicians who have never won an award, and plenty of ridiculous magicians who have a wall full of them. The only way you can be a great magician is by performing, and that doesn't mean just successfully completing a trick. It means combining the dexterity, the thought, the timing and a pleasing personality effortlessly together to create a finished performance. I have watched John in many situations: performing one-on-one, surrounded by a small group, and working the stage of a large theater; and in all these circumstances he never failed to blend superb technique, clever writing and years of experience into a thoroughly entertaining performance. If the definition of a

commercial act is one that bears watching *again*, then a performance by Carney is money in the bank.

I have always enjoyed watching John take an idea and, over a number of months, develop it into a new piece of “A” material. It is also refreshing to find a magician of his stature who accepts advice as willingly as he gives it. John is as much a student as he is a teacher.

In this limited space it is difficult to make a strong case for John being called to sainthood, so I will simply remind you that John Carney has much to say and no one can say it better than Stephen Minch. And even if neither of them becomes Pope, we’ll always be friends.

Pasadena, 1991

Stephen Minch — Mr. Skinner and Mr. Caveney have left little to add on the subject of John Carney the performer, neatly reducing the necessity for any comments of my own on that subject. I will, therefore, limit myself to two observations. I, like the gentlemen above, have long been a ardent admirer of the Carney magic, recognizing a rare blend of high entertainment and consummate skill. There was, however, a side to Mr. Carney’s magic that I had never fully appreciated until I began work on this book: his meticulous attention to misdirection. One of the qualities of John’s magic is the seemingly effortless way he performs it, even when the hidden methods are technically quite demanding. Most of us credited this mainly to John’s exceptional skill. But there is more to it than that. John incorporates misdirection into every trick he does. This is not to distract from faulty sleight-of-hand, but to distract from skill that is second to none. The result is that one doesn’t have any sense of “Gosh, I didn’t see that.” Instead one has a sense that nothing at all has been done. And this factor makes the difference between a skilled trickster and a real magician. In these pages John has stripped bare his magic to reveal to the reader all of the carefully crafted thinking that he has put into each moment of each trick and routine.

My second, and final, comment has to do with the material in this volume. John has chosen what he considers to be his very best material for this, his first major book. Roughly half of the tricks in these pages have seen print elsewhere in one form or another. If the reader is a devoted collector or Carneyphile, this news might dismay him. But it shouldn’t, because every one of those items has never been fully described, with all the important details of handling and nuances of presentation; and many

of them have been changed and refined since their initial appearances. With this considered, along with the large quantity of new material John has provided, everyone should have enough to keep him content. As a whole, this body of work represents the carefully polished tools of an artist and entertainer, founded on sound theoretical and aesthetic decisions.

In a moment I'll let John, himself, explain those decisions and considerations to you. First, though, I wish to express my gratitude to Milton Kort and David Michael Evans for their invaluable help in researching certain historical points. The latter gentleman also painstakingly proofread this volume from beginning to end, along with Albert Perrino, bringing to light numerous slips that I'm convinced have a supernatural explanation. I am profoundly indebted to these three men.

Now, before you turn to the tricks, I strongly recommend that you read John's penetrating views on magic and its performance as an art. Only then can you fully appreciate the material he is offering you.

Seattle, 1991

SECRET PHILOSOPHY

PROGRESS WELL BEGUN

A Description of the Operator.

- 1. He must be one of a bold and undaunted Resolution, so as to set a good face upon the Matter.*
- 2. He must have strange Terms, and emphatical Words, to grace and adorn his Actions; and the more to amaze and astonish the Beholders.*
- 3. And Lastly, He must use such Gestures of Body, as may take off the Spectators Eyes, from a strict and diligent beholding your Manner of Performance.*

These are the prerequisites of a conjurer, put forth in 1722 by Henry Dean in *The Whole Art of Legerdemain*. Though terse, they do cover quite a bit of ground.

In this chapter it is my intention to provide personal insight on some psychological principles, and their practical application in the craft of conjuring. With regard to these principles, the word “guideline” is more appropriate than “rule”. A wide variety of style and purpose renders any dogma meaningless. These guidelines may be stretched when the situation requires it, but only after a thorough understanding of their meaning, and then only when there is a logical reason why necessity requires the overthrow of precedent.

What I offer in these pages is my approach to the performance of magic, and how I have applied the ideas and advice that it has been my good fortune to receive. In this introduction I offer a capsulization of the books that have inspired me and the advice of artists whom I greatly admire.

This might be considered a book of choices or opinions. Opinions, by nature, are almost always free and are usually worth every cent. But, for the sake of discussion, I must assume that mine might be of interest to you; unless, of course, this book is being used to hold open a door or prop up your television.

There are thousands of magicians throughout the world, and as many different reasons why they chose magic as their vehicle of expression. Each reason has its own merit and degree of gratification. Even the amateur, who need not excel for the sake of his livelihood, would derive more pleasure and satisfaction from greater accomplishment. If greatness, or at least improvement, is not aspired to, then what is the point of participation?

This, then, may be the one great secret that keeps the uninitiated out of the "inner circle", and those "in the know" secure in their art: *the ability to care.*

Thomas Carlyle has described genius as the "capacity for taking infinite pains". This would imply a certain dissatisfaction with things as they are. The insensitive will never appreciate subtle nuance, nor do they invest the research and practice required to achieve a greater result. "Good enough" and "it gets by" are the hymns of the mediocre.

In the landmark book, *Sleight-of-Hand*, Edwin Sachs suggests that the neophyte begin by procuring a wand, with which to dress up his performance. But even before this, the aspirant should acquire the resolve to explore and expand his talents to the best of his ability. The rewards of setting a personal ideal, with artistic integrity, far outweigh destructive criticism, and the hollow validation of awards and competitions. With a thorough commitment to quality comes a sense of accomplishment and unique satisfaction.

APPROACHES TO ARTIFICE

I have had the rare pleasure of spending time with Dai Vernon, certainly one of our century's finest magical minds. During the course of our association I have seen him approached by hundreds of aspiring conjurers, eager for his counsel and advice. The vast majority never had specific questions, yet expected to receive some great secret.

"Always use hand cream to palm more efficiently," they might imagine him saying. "Remember to use only red-backed playing cards." "Here is the move that's going to put you over the top!" They might have walked away a little disappointed, not understanding that there is not one great secret, but a great many little ones. "The Professor" holds Leonardo da Vinci in the greatest veneration. He is fond of a quote attributed to Leonardo: "Details make for perfection, but perfection is no detail." As I understand it, his meaning was that seemingly insignificant details contribute to a greater whole. It is the combination and arrangement of

these details that separate the conjurer from the bumbling amateur. Leonardo also warns us not to let technique overshadow content. The emphasis should be placed on the message or idea, and its conveyance.

Zen philosophers believe that the beginning of all knowledge is to admit that you know nothing. A popular story tells of a man seeking enlightenment, who visits the home of a Zen master. In his hospitality the master offers him a full cup of tea. Without having taken a sip, the master began to refill the student's cup with more tea which, exceeding the capacity of the cup, spilled out and onto the floor. The master then said, "Before you can receive more, you must empty your cup." The student went away, humbler and closer to enlightenment.

Art cannot be taught: it must be studied, put into practice, and experienced. To become a great writer, you must write. To master the violin or paint with depth and feeling, you must throw yourself into it, and do it extensively. In magic, the more shows you do, formal or informal, the more confidence is developed — and confidence is essential; and if mistakes are corrected after each performance, your ability will naturally improve.

Desire and perseverance are fundamental ingredients in your training. I often hear people say, "I don't learn well from books. Won't you just show me," or "Can you recommend a good video?" In our fast-paced video-microwave culture, we want it, and we want it now! The vacuous results are disposable music, fast-food art, and paint-by-number magic.

Communications professor Neil Postman argues in his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, that what we gain from video instruction is essentially only convenience and entertainment. What is lost is the more complete comprehension provided by contemplation of the printed word. The discoveries in the course of the lesson are as important as the lesson itself. As the Chinese say, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for life." Videos may assist in learning, but by no means should they be your primary resource. They provide only a model for imitation, and require little interpretation or imagination from the student. The consequence of this lack of discipline is a merely superficial insight, and a decreased capacity for improvement and adaptation to individual style. Imitations are reproductions that are always paler than the original.

Truly, some things are better left to the imagination, which is capable of applications and combinations in infinite variety. This information is then processed by personality and need, resulting in creative thought.

I have found that there are basically two modes of practice, involving different sides of the brain. First comes analytic practice. In this, the information is studied, and physical adjustments are made. What if the cards are held tighter or looser, higher or lower? What are the finger positions? Why doesn't it work every time? What's the variable? How do I cover the action, misdirect attention, or present it in a dramatic manner?

Next comes mechanical practice, which is basically repetition and the acquisition of "motor memory": the same actions are repeated until they are unconscious responses to conscious demands. The mind wills, and the hands perform without thought, much like breathing, walking, or brushing our teeth.

There must be a constant fluctuation between these two modes of practice. Adjustments are made, based on reason; then the nervous system is conditioned to respond without awkward pause. Only after going through this process are we ready to present a new item to an audience. New lessons are learned from this public trial, and the process is repeated. With ruthless honesty and adaptability, we progress from one plateau to the next.

BEYOND CRAFT

One might well ask, Is magic really an art at all? This is open to argument. However, I do feel there is art *in* magic. By this I mean that there is evidence of it in the work of exceptional magicians. There are magicians who have made it their duty to be artists, with all the responsibilities that commitment entails.

First, how do we go about defining art? An excellent source regarding art and its relationship to magic is Maskelyne and Devant's classic book, *Our Magic*. Here we learn that art is the imitation of something that exists, or might exist. It is thoughtful work that communicates ideas and inspires imagination.

Maskelyne has divided art into three categories. There is False Art, work that imitates other art, such as a sketch of the original Mona Lisa. Imitation without interpretation.

There is Natural Art, which uses familiar means to attain special results. These can include an original combination of methods, an original or novel effect, or original presentation. This might be a simple painting of a bowl of fruit, but could also communicate environment, mood, time of day, and countless other provocative details. The majority of art falls into this category.

Finally, there is the illusive High Art. This is inspired work that has no precedent. The concept and method are completely original. This would constitute an exceptional achievement. Even works of the masters, in all arts, are influenced to some extent by other artists, and by common experience and information. There is rarely anything that is *completely new* "under the sun".

Craft, on the other hand, is the learning of a trade to produce a consistent product. This product is then duplicated without further change or development, for the purpose of selling for a profit. Art, on the other hand, exists for its own sake. This is not to imply, of course, that art cannot achieve popular success.

So how should one go about elevating the craft of magic to the level of art? What sort of changes need to be made? What are the elements that distinguish art from craft?

In considering the foregoing, we understand that art must communicate something of potential interest. People are mainly interested in, first, themselves; second, other people; and third, things — in that order. Tricks communicate little and are inherently meaningless, but with imagination they may be instilled with meaning.

The average card trick is pointless and ultimately unsatisfying. To discover the identity of a chosen card is, to say the least, not a particularly profound mystery. Life contains a plethora of worthier ponderables.

Exceptional in this regard is Bro. John Hamman's famous "Twins" trick. Instead of changing the cards in a packet from, say, jokers to aces, he uses kings and queens. The cards assume personalities as he refers to them as "twin brothers", "twin sisters" and "redheaded ladies".

As the audience is astounded by the startling changes effected with the cards, they are captivated by the comic drama and the affairs of the characters. This is something they can relate to better than puzzles and pasteboard.

One of my favorite magicians in the world is Dr. Hiroshi Sawa. His plots are novel and his methods ingenious. His beautiful tricks are inspired by nature and his daily life. Where others use a plastic paddle to make spots disappear, Sawa, adapting the same principle, uses the branch of a tree to make lady bugs appear on its leaves. The result is poetry composed from a laundry list.

The average magician makes coins appear and disappear without provocation. Sawa describes an experience in Las Vegas, substituting his hand

for a slot machine. When he loses, the deposited coins are shown gone. When he wins, a large quantity of coins appears from nowhere.

The audience is amazed, but more importantly, they are drawn in to experience, vicariously, the exhilaration of risk, and a jackpot reward. Through this involvement they develop an empathy for the performer. Emotion has entered the equation.

Sometimes all that is needed is to look at something from a different angle. Robert-Houdin illustrated this in his famous experience with the superstitious natives of Algeria. By his ingenuity, a trick of marginal interest, was fashioned into an inspired illusion. The principle of electromagnetism, then relatively unknown, was the method by which a small metal box could not be lifted from the floor. But Robert-Houdin was not satisfied with the obvious and pedestrian presentation of a box that could not be lifted. How much greater was the effect on the Algerian public when he claimed he could take away a man's strength! He would be unable to lift the box — unless, of course, Robert-Houdin chose to "restore his strength" through an interruption in the secret electromagnetic current.

Robert-Houdin knew that the effect was what he chose it to be. He understood theater and how to exploit his knowledge of human nature — their wants, needs and interests.

Those wishing to rise above the level of craft would do well to study the examples these men have set. However, inspiration is not always found in the most obvious places. Seek it out in all art forms. Find out how creative artists and musicians, working with the same theme, can produce entirely different interpretations.

THE MAGICAL MUSE

The spirit of art is creativity, and discovering the full potential of your own unique abilities. This involves working with what you already possess, using these gifts and talents to transcend the mediocre, to communicate through magic those things that exist, or those things that might exist.

The creative source is in your own unique human experience, your frame of reference. Some people have more talents than others, some exercise them more; but no person is without creativity. Differences in physique, intelligence, appearance, environment and personality ensure that everyone has potential in some area. Regrettably, many people never explore their potential, because of a fear of failure, or a lack of persistence. Sad indeed are those who go to their grave with "their music still in them".

All humans possess a creative muscle which, if not flexed occasionally, will atrophy. These muscles may even be exercised in the common acts of everyday life. The simple acts of planning a party or vacation, cooking a meal or going for a hike, all entail a certain amount of thought and decision, therefore constituting creative acts.

To apply this gift more specifically to your field, you must first decide exactly what it is you wish to accomplish. This done (and it is no small chore), you must surrender to faith, adopt an adventurous spirit and invest the appropriate time, work and research.

Roger von Oech, creativity expert and author of the excellent *Whack on the Side of the Head*, reveals that people often resist the urge to be creative, being terrified that they may have to admit that they are capable of having a bad idea. They are influenced by the risk rather than by the reward.

Von Oech offers a brilliant experiment. When working on a particular problem, sit down and list ten *bad* ideas. Make them whopping bad ideas, the worst you can think of. Relieved of any responsibility for the “right” answer, the creative flow is unrestricted.

In checking over your list, you may discover that some of the ideas are not so far-fetched after all. You may think a giant yo-yo is a pretty silly solution for a rocket to Mars, but satellites use this principle of centrifugal force to swing around planets and accelerate into new orbits.

Children are much more creative than adults. They have not lost their capacity for wonder, so they explore the most common things with a ruthless curiosity. Ignorant of the consequences, they overcome fear and complacency for the greater reward of discovery. They don’t sit for the rest of their lives; they soon stand up alone and, a step at a time, they learn to walk.

Creativity is essentially a matter of making fresh combinations. Since your experience is unique, you bring a different point of view to everything you approach. This is why it is immoral to steal another person’s idea. A part of the creator’s identity is stolen and, not insignificantly, a piece of the thief’s self is sacrificed through a callous denial of his own potential and worth.

Edison described genius as “one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration”. He went through eighteen hundred “failures” before he came across the “right” solution to the light bulb. Each of these brought him closer to the solution, as he discovered which ways would *not* work.

The work routine of Edison should be of interest to the reader. He only slept a few hours each night, but took several naps during the day. These naps did not necessarily take the form of the passive resignation we associate with sleep. After a full session of research and experimentation, trying different materials and looking at the subject from different angles, he would clear off his work bench and lie down for a fifteen minute nap. In his hand he held a steel ball. Should he slip into a deep sleep, his grip would relax, the ball would drop and the resultant clatter would awaken him.

He wasn't seeking a profound sleep but, rather, nirvana: the lapse just after consciousness. In this nebulous world, he would spin around the recently acquired data and allow his subconscious mind to create its own odd combinations, independent of the restrictions of logic. He would then bring himself back to full consciousness, eagerly fabricate prototypes and resume his research and experimentation. When he hit a dead end, he would take another nap and continue this cycle throughout the day. Through his meditations, he had found a direct path to the subconscious, where imagination resides.

From inception to completion, most good ideas are a matter of a thousand tiny increments, a process of problem solving. It is rare, indeed, for ideas complete and whole in every detail to come to a person. The tedious process of trial and error, along with a deep commitment, is the more pragmatic approach.

Director and comic Woody Allen claims to reject nineteen of every twenty jokes he writes. They may be funny enough for other writers, but he is looking for that unique angle, the perfect focus, to make his comic point clear. He lets his muse ride, passing on inferior, more accessible choices for the greater reward.

He first decides what, exactly, the joke is about. He then finds the place in our psyche most vulnerable to it, and looks for the quickest route there. This method is at once brilliant and simple; perfection by detail.

As a boy, I could not fathom any practical purpose for algebra. Now I know that it teaches logic and problem solving skills by rearranging information into patterns. Consistencies and variables are duly noted. Theories are tested. If proven practical, they are applied. This occurs in everything from medicine to architecture.

My good friend, comedian-inventor-philosopher Joel Hodgson, is truly a creative genius. He believes that the principle difference between the creative person and the hack is the number of aesthetic decisions made

along the way. The creative individual must put an original idea through a process of relentless refinement to reach the most lucid presentation. No detail is too insignificant, since ideas are communicated on many different levels.

The great Al Baker echoed this sentiment when he complained that “Magicians stop thinking too soon.” They consider the purchase of props and books a licence to entertain, when in fact they could scarcely entertain a notion. They don’t attempt anything beyond the hackneyed. Things are always “good enough”.

I think it is essential to keep a notebook to record your ideas and research. Include everything that might relate to your field of interest: undeveloped concepts, suggestions from experts and friends alike, magazine articles, even some striking illustration or photo. If you think about your craft consistently, you cannot be expected to retain all the information in full detail for instant recall. Someday you may come across a solution to a problem. If the original idea is not fresh in your mind, or is inaccessible, you won’t be able to make the connection, and the solution to the problem may slip by you and be lost forever.

Let me assure the timid among my readers that if you have read this far into the essay, the battle is half won. You are looking for answers to your questions. You have questions; the deficiency is in having none. Challenge yourself with challenging ideas. If you want to put your creativity into action, put a few simple rules into effect. Empty your cup. Invest your ego and time. Take risks. Concentrate your thought. Finally, respect your own latent ability. Use it — or lose it.

PERSPECTIVE ON OUR PERSONAL PLANETS

Allow me to relate a revealing anecdote. A friend of mine recently attended a magic convention, bringing along a “layman” friend for the experience. After a frenzy of dealer shows, performances, exhibitions and socializing, they left this fairy-tale land, and re-entered the real world. The outsider pulled my friend aside and, in the most heartfelt tone, pleaded, “As a friend, I’m telling you, don’t spend any more time with these magicians. It’s not healthy. Leave these people now!”

This may sound a bit extreme, but it goes far to illustrate the blinders we place on ourselves when we enter the “world” of magic: a world with more than its share of dilettantes who corrupt the cause of art from the inside.

In advancing the cause of magic, few have been more instrumental than Robert-Houdin. In his day, most magicians still performed with long robes, gigantic sleeves and conical hats. Their tables were large enough to accommodate a hidden assistant, through which a great many trickeries were effected. Robert-Houdin took magic off the street and brought it into polite society. His performing parlor was tasteful, and his props and tables were familiar looking and evoked no suspicion.

How ironic that the gentleman's tail coat, adopted by Robert-Houdin to match the ordinary evening dress of patrons of his day, is still clung to by magicians nearly a century after having passed out of fashion. Outside of weddings or an audience with royalty, the tail coat is considered as out of place as brown shoes with a tuxedo. Magicians embrace this garment for the extra pockets and hiding space it provides, with little thought for keeping pace with contemporary society. Few have the theatrical gift for developing a character or staging a "period piece" that would justify these antiquated elements.

In their inferior imitation of a dandy sophisticate, I have witnessed more than a few performers light candles in a candelabra, using disposable plastic lighters. They aspire to be Noel Coward, but are more likened to Chaplin's tramp, pathetically trying to keep up appearances.

Affectation has found root in magical paraphernalia as well. If we study the props illustrated in the older books on magic, we must concede that a mutation of original design has taken place, to accommodate the merchandising of magic, and this practice has subsequently destroyed the outward innocence of the props intended by their inventors.

Take, for example, the popular dove pan. Originally it was designed to resemble a cooking pan with its customary handle. Ingredients were placed into it and it was covered, to smother a flame or further the cooking. When the cover was lifted, birds or other livestock had magically taken the place of the foodstuffs. The modern appliance that magicians use has no resemblance to a modern cooking utensil, or anything else found outside the magic shop.

The Ball and Vase trick was originally designed with an egg rather than a ball. The prop resembled an egg cup, which most of that period's residents had often seen at their breakfasts.

The Card Box was once designed to represent a cigarette case. The Paddle Trick was first likely done with an ordinary table knife. Worse still, most magic props don't even pretend to look familiar, as they raise

suspicion with their bright colors, dragon decals and chrome. Magicians are attracted like crows to these bright, shiny objects.

These props and old books are proudly on display in their homes, but now have little purpose aside from being “collectable”. They join stamps, thimbles and spoons as objects for private accumulation — the subject of a passive hobby that ignores the practical function that they once served. While such collections preserve a portion of magic’s history, the act of collecting has nothing to do with the art in magic.

There also exist collectors of secrets who hoard information, which is never put to use for either bettering their lives, or the edification or amusement of others. When one of the hoarder’s secrets is exposed, he feels as though his home has been burglarized, *his* possessions ravaged. General outrage erupts, petitions are signed in magic societies, and the offending “traitor” is ostracized. The truth is, more secrets are revealed through incompetence and insensitivity than through flagrant exposure.

Magic conventions and lectures, as we know them, did not exist prior to the 1950s. There were only informal gatherings for the exchange of information and ideas. There was no registration fee, and merchandising was conspicuously absent. The modern convention is a three-day dealer show, broken up only by meals and recess, for the purchase of novelties and items demonstrated during the day’s presentations.

Lecture circuits are also a recent phenomenon, an artificially produced market in response to magicians’ wants, not their needs. The immediately accessible is valued over substance.

Disappointed, indeed, are the patrons of a lecture who have no purchase available at the conclusion of the “instruction”. They long for books to fill their shelves and toys to carry home, which in short order, all amusement exhausted, find their way to the bottom of a drawer.

Magicians seem to be more interested in what is new and novel than in what is good. They are resigned to cleverness for its own sake, independent of purpose.

This applies equally to sleight-of-hand magic. Technique has made rapid and prodigious progress in recent times. Effects, on the other hand, have become more confused, to the point of being incomprehensible. Nothing is communicated. Perhaps this is the type of thing Albert Einstein alluded to when he said, “Mankind’s greatest problem is a perfection of means and a confusion of ends.”

You would think, with all this information being bandied about, that magicians’ acts would abound in originality. This is not so, however, as

the majority are doing the same few hackneyed tricks. For example, in the early part of the century, vaudeville houses all over the country had signs constructed specifically for their magic acts: "No EGG BAGS". This testified to the exhaustion of that particular trick.

In lieu of creativity and industry, some magicians elect to plunder what they are unwilling to earn. Occasionally, someone exceptional will step forward from the crowd with a new idea or presentation. These originations are eventually taken by others and, in an act of creative memory, are made "their own". When the originator then performs his creation, magicians, having only seen the imitators, label his work as "stock", which therefore becomes common property, ripe for the picking.

The estimable performer and author, Ricky Jay, relates the story of a magician who took a "piece" from his act, complete in every detail. When confronted with his crime, the thief told Ricky, "You've already taken all the *good* tricks!" In fact, Ricky had sought out unexplored territory, and through his work and creativity, had transformed it into something *good*.

There is a wealth of concepts and ideas in print that awaits the conscientious, industrious performer — that performer who can recognize them and reap their hidden worth.

THE SHAPE OF CUT CLOTH

Magic is a subculture that is composed of many smaller subcultures. Specialists abound in card magic, coin magic, gambling exposés, puzzles, close-up magic, illusions and dove magic. I wouldn't be surprised if there were a few comedy kid-show gospel mentalists out there.

Taking into consideration the many different aims of the performer, I can only relate my personal viewpoint in the area of close-up sleight-of-hand magic.

It has been argued that people of this day and age do not believe in magic. Nothing could be further from the truth. They only offer resistance to outdated myths; but new ones are constantly assimilated.

Magical results from cosmetics and countless other products are paraded across our television screens, at enormous profit, testifying to our willingness, if not our need, to believe. Organized religions perpetuate myths, and promise absolute answers. Astrologers, psychics and spoon benders successfully feed on the public's appetite for the unexplained.

In the case of magic, the conviction need only last until the conclusion of the performance — much in the way we suspend our disbelief

when watching a film. We involve ourselves in the characters' actions, and in their consequences, and we empathize. We temporarily surrender our judgment to lose ourselves in the entertainment.

Once again, we have cause to repeat Robert-Houdin's famous declaration that the conjurer should be an actor playing the part of a magician. This definition would preclude any action or practice out of character for a genuine magician. The possibility of artifice should be ruled out, if no evidence is given to the contrary.

For example, one might perform at break-neck speed, including self-satisfying flourishes in the act, and thus relegate magic to a matter of juggling. The audience may react favorably to these gymnastics, for the skill they imagine required, but confusion is not magic. As Shakespeare wrote, "Though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve."

Maskelyne stated that exceptional magic is intellectual in nature. If analyzed merely as a matter of mechanics, it is decidedly inferior to other crafts. It is the embellishment of the different dodges and maneuvers, with nuance and imagination, that elevates magic to a more respectable plane. The action of a shift with cards, or some acquitment with a coin, requires only a tiny fraction of the skill required to juggle or to play a guitar, even at the most elementary level.

As a master of sleight-of-hand, Dai Vernon's skill has few equals. Yet he spends most of his practice time contriving ways to *eliminate* sleights. His principle chore is to simplify the method and capitalize on the effect. His concern is not for the easiest method or the most difficult, but rather for the most direct, expedient approach. Einstein would approve, having said, "Things should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler."

The best magic involves a combination of skill, judicious use of gimmicks, and a thorough understanding of the impression you wish to create. The real magical artist has done his greatest work in thoughtful preparation. Personal limitations realized, they are compensated for, and emphasis is placed on personal strengths.

Sleights and gimmicks are the tools used to create the illusion. Too often the tools dictate the project, showcasing cleverness and sacrificing theater.

Erdsnase, in *The Expert at the Card Table*, suggested that, if unable to overcome the urge to do flourishes, one should save them for the end of the performance, so that the preceding illusions are not hampered by a loss of conviction. Henry Christ, a remarkably skillful card magician,

would conclude a performance of unquestionable fairness by walking from the room as he made his closing remarks, performing triple cuts in each hand.

The idea of being natural applies not only to covert actions, but to the personality and manner of the performer as well. Lance Burton is unquestionably one of the finest magicians living today. His unique style, confidence and exceptional ability were accomplished through years of effort. Yet, instead of being inspired by his brilliance, magicians the world over mimic his manner, dress, music and personality, even down to his distinctive gestures. It fits them about as well as Mr. Burton's clothes and shoes.

Many, in attempting to imitate him, mistake his authority and audacity for arrogance and insolence. They adopt a cleverer-than-thou attitude, both unjustifiable and ridiculous. After all, the Nobel prize has yet to be awarded for card tricks.

Strive toward an earnest, vulnerable likability. People appreciate skill, but are intimidated by it. They are more sympathetic to humans than to gods. Nate Leipzig put it best when he said, "They like to think they've been fooled by a gentleman."

MISDIRECTION

Years ago I believed that technique was everything, and that misdirection was merely insurance against "flashing" or inadequate technique. I now believe just the opposite. Distracting the eye and the critical judgment of the spectator is most important. Technique, which should be developed to the best of the performer's ability, provides the insurance that is essential, should the misdirection not take its full effect.

Regardless of the degree of perfection attained in a sleight, the conjurer should never entertain the notion of executing it without misdirection. Even though the sleight may be "invisible", by the nature of its deception it cannot match the genuine article in every detail. To paraphrase Erdnase, the action should not be suspected, let alone detected. The slightest provocation excites curiosity and critical judgment, thus destroying the illusion of genuine magic.

The back-palming of cards, as performed by the majority of manipulators, is hollow illusion at best. The "dirty" hand is put on display, as various gyrations are executed to conceal the transfer of the cards, while both sides of the hand are "proven" empty.

The intelligence of the audience is greatly underestimated. They know that the cards are there, but they may admire the skill it must take to keep them hidden. Ideally, they should believe the cards are gone, and have no clues to the method of their departure.

Just as commonly misunderstood is the fake transfer of a coin from one hand to another, used to effect a vanish. Any number of incongruous actions occur in the feint, and when the coin is shown gone from one hand, the magician never dreams the audience might suspect the other hand. If ignorance is bliss, magicians have received their heaven on earth.

As a teenager I was anxious to learn everything I could lay my hands on. I heard of a trick by a fellow named John Ramsay, called "The Cylinder and Coins". I heard that it was quite difficult, and figured that if I could master it, nothing would be beyond me. Upon examination of the manuscript, I recall a sense of disappointment. I thought surely there must be some revolutionary technique and formidable moves to conquer. Even though the routine required a certain delicacy, there was nothing particularly prohibitive. The real secret, I was soon to discover, was Ramsay's subtle use of misdirection. He deceived even magicians, not so much with his skill, but with a look and a smile.

An example of Ramsay's powerful misdirection is well illustrated in an anecdote told by Dai Vernon. Ramsay's reputation reached the States well before he himself did. Vernon asked his friend, Jean Hugard, just what did this Ramsay fellow do that warranted his great reputation.

"He makes coins disappear," was Hugard's reply. Vernon continued, "Well, Jean, what sort of method did he use?" Hugard shook his head and replied, "They just disappear." Vernon grew more impatient. "You can tell me. I'm a magician. Does he sleeve the coins, lap them, use a pull?" Hugard grew more intense and, addressing Vernon, he emphatically said, "He holds up the coin *and it melts away!*"

Considering that the key to the whole trick was the fake transfer of a coin — something familiar to every magician and schoolboy — Ramsay must have had something else, something exceptional, to make this impression on such a knowledgeable man. That *something* was an applied understanding of human nature, coupled with precision timing. It was misdirection.

When Ramsay was proofreading the original manuscript for "The Cylinder and Coins", written by Victor Farelli, he felt the most essential elements were excluded from the description. Ramsay would complain,

"You forgot to write 'Look at the audience.'" Farelli argued that this was a moot point, so long as the finger positions and sleights were properly described. But Ramsay insisted, "It's *the* most important part! Put it in capital letters, 'LOOK AT THE AUDIENCE!'"

No study of magic is complete without an understanding of the principles set forth by Ramsay. The basic theorem comes down to this: *If you want the audience to look at something, look at it yourself. If you want someone to look at you, look at them.* These ideas are more complex than they at first appear.

Ramsay explains that we cannot misdirect a spectator's attention until we have first focused it. By looking at and drawing attention to something yourself, you control the location of the spectators' gaze. The shift of focus comes a second before the sleight, by *looking them squarely in the face*. If you have first acquired control of the spectators' attention, this shift of gaze is very compelling.

There is a certain amount of mental misdirection, which takes place on a more subtle level. The action of transferring an object to the other hand is a trivial one, which should be viewed as incidental to the demonstration, registering only on the mental periphery. This is where "retention of vision" vanishes from us. In performing them we put a secret maneuver on display, drawing attention to something that should be taken for granted.

The ruse should draw no unnecessary attention. Should this ordinarily innocuous action be highlighted by the performer's misplaced emphasis, in manner or action, an impression is made in the memory. The spectator may recall this at will, when searching for clues, and the solution is not far off. At best, the effect will be quickly explained away: "The magician flicked it somehow, but he's awfully clever." Dramatically speaking, the wires supporting Peter Pan's flight are shimmering in the light, the audience's suspension of disbelief is disrupted.

To illustrate this idea, let's dissect the elements involved in the simple vanish of a coin. I will break the vanish into steps for the purpose of discussion. In practice, of course, an even and unhurried tempo and flow are essential, there should be no obvious stops or starts, and the actions should not appear mechanical or premeditated.

1. *Look at the coin* as you comment on it, focusing attention there.
2. *Motivate* the approaching action of the transfer, before curiosity is aroused. Anticipated action is viewed with less suspicion. A simple

“Now I will need my magic wand” will suffice. This is pronounced as you *initiate the action*, one hand approaching the other, to take the coin. The transfer has been justified to accommodate the grasp of the wand.

3. *Sharply shift your gaze* to the spectator’s face as you *address him* verbally. It is a conditioned, civil response for him to look up, acknowledging your attention. The attention of the other spectators present should shift to the person addressed; and your physical deportment should reinforce this inclination, your shoulders and feet pointing in his direction.

4. *Execute the sleight* in a non-demonstrative manner. This dictum would effectively eliminate the majority of moves in print. The sleight you choose should involve as little extraneous motion as possible, while giving a completely natural appearance. Avoid wide sweeps of the arms and any sharp, furtive dancing of digits. Strive to duplicate the genuine action as closely as possible. Observe how others move, and try to catch yourself off guard as you perform these types of actions in your everyday life. Notice how inconspicuous and unremarkable such actions are to you and those around you.

5. *Grasp the wand* without looking at it. It should be conveniently placed under your arm or on the table to facilitate this.

6. *Shift your gaze to the receiving hand* as you mime the action of holding a coin, or of adjusting it into the fist. Move the receiving hand away, “out of frame”, using its motion to draw attention away from the other hand.

7. *Effect the vanish of the coin* by waving the wand over the closed fist. Besides being good theater, this also applies time misdirection: putting space between the method and its effect. This touch also provides what Michael Skinner calls a “magic moment”, the theatrical point when the magic is supposed to have occurred. This can be the waving of a wand, a snap of the fingers or the utterance of some cabalistic phrase. No demonstration of magic is complete without this touch.

8. *Reveal the effect* by opening the fist and showing the coin gone. Without appearing anxious, you should move directly onto the next phase of your trick or routine to prevent further analysis by the spectator. In this way, the audience’s critical faculties are sidetracked until long after the deception has taken place. Concentration is resumed when you reveal the vanish. The lapse in information assures an incomplete equation and a flawed evaluation of reality.

Data is constantly being considered and discarded. Your covert actions should not be deemed important enough for consideration. Performed correctly, the transfer of the coin should not even be remembered, nor should it register that they have looked away from your hands.

These same theories apply, whether performing a top change, a pass or a dove steal.

At the heart of every deception are assumptions, made through our frame of reference. Familiar actions, patterns and experience fill in the blanks, obscuring unobserved inconsistencies. They are correct in their assumption that two plus two still equal four, but their data is incomplete, as behind the smoke and mirrors are a three, a seven and perhaps a twelve.

The analytical spectator takes it upon himself to notice as many of these hidden clues as possible, in an attempt not to be deceived. Therefore, it is unwise to tempt fate by adopting a challenging tone to your performance.

Ironically, effects are sometimes diminished if all inconsistencies are removed. Dr. Jacob Daley used to say that every good trick has a discrepancy. It is almost impossible to remove it without sacrificing some of its effect. This is an example of the "Too Perfect Theory", postulated by the Professor, Dai Vernon, and brilliantly argued by Rick Johnsson in his insightful essay on the subject. The gist of the theory is that the results should, in some way, be conceivably possible, though unexplainable.

Take, for instance, the popular Cigarette Through Quarter trick. The illusion of the quarter being penetrated by the cigarette is so perfect, the spectators have no other path to follow but the correct one, that the coin is ingeniously gimmicked and it was substituted for the borrowed quarter.

The very clever John Cornelius has solved the problem. In his preparation, a hole is drilled through the center of the gimmicked coin, as well as through the ordinary quarter. This hole is smaller than the diameter of the cigarette. The routine is then performed as usual, switching in the gimmicked coin after the genuine coin has been examined. The effect of a cigarette fitting through a hole too small to accommodate it still seems impossible, but it is somehow more plausible than the penetration of a solid coin.

John Kennedy, an extremely clever magical inventor, shows considerable restraint and sound judgment in the performance of his floating bill routine. The bill only rises a few inches, and then only briefly, so that the audience isn't sure if they should trust their own eyes. "What did I *really*

see?" Avenues of thought are left open to them. John's is the best routine of its kind. Others who have tried to improve on it have failed to understand his wisdom when they let the bill literally *hang* in the air before them. After studying the bill in mid-air, most people correctly conclude that a thread is used that is too fine to be seen. The performer presents no other possibilities for consideration.

Threads should be only one solution out of many considered. When the trick is performed properly, threads will be ruled out with other possible explanations. Clever arrangements of the thread are irrelevant if the thread theory is not eliminated, or at least passed over, as the answer.

IN CONCLUSION

The guidelines presented here only scratch the surface of the psychological aspects of magic. I hope to encourage the reader to carry his study past the popular pedestrian path.

If nothing else, I hope I have adequately expressed that good magic amounts to more than having filled the allotted time with a minimum of mechanical error. Exceptional sleight-of-hand starts before the audience has arrived, with thoughtful preparation, with attention to detail and with a proper understanding of the rudimentary elements inherent in the effect.

Rules and guidelines are broken by innovators every day. However, they do so only after having exhausted conventional approaches, and with understanding and logic underpinning their digressions.

In the construction of the tricks that follow, I have endeavored to illustrate some of the foregoing principles. Further applications of these principles may be found in tricks of every description.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to Stephen Minch for his lucid description of my routines. I have the greatest admiration for his talent, and for Stephen himself as a gentleman.

Also, my thanks to the reader, for granting his kind attention, as well as his cash, check or money order.

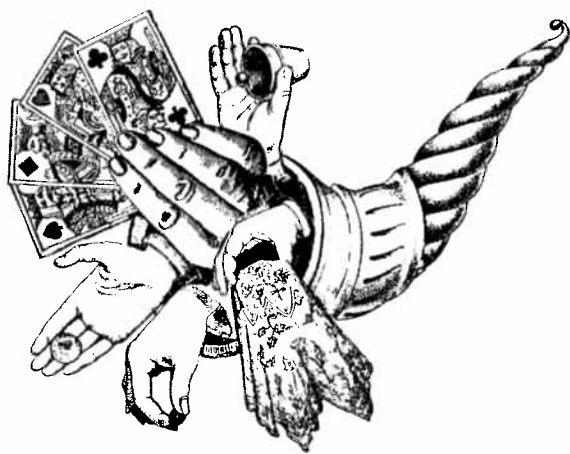
John Carney
Los Angeles, 1991

Dedication

*With love to Lucinda,
For the spirit and breath of life.*

John

CARNEYCOPIA



CURRENT CLASSIC

Effect: “A fancy name for a few, practical, sponge ball moves,” is John’s description of this first item. These moves, however, are more than just practical: they are extremely deceptive and highly visual. Consequently, their effectiveness is one or several levels above many sleights commonly used with sponges. In addition, John has cast his three original moves into a complete routine, which begins with a surprising production of a ball, its immediate vanish and recovery from the performer’s pocket, an instant splitting of the one ball into two, the magical transportation of a ball from hand to hand, and a repetition of this effect in which the ball travels to the spectator’s hand. This bald description follows the pattern of the classic sponge ball effect, but the visual impression created by John’s sleights distinguishes this routine from its lineage.

John has structured the routine for those conditions most often encountered at cocktail parties and other professional venues in which a table is not available or may not be practical to perform at. It is, by the way, an excellent opening item, so it is no coincidence that it serves that function in this collection. ♪

Method: John uses one inch or one and a quarter inch sponge balls, and balls about this size will be the most convenient for most performers. Two are required. Place one ball in your left trousers pocket and, when ready to perform, palm the other ball in your left hand. John uses a thumb palm here, but the ball can be concealed in finger palm if you prefer.

“Can I borrow that?” you ask a spectator standing or seated in front of you. As you make this request, with your right hand make a vague gesture toward the person, letting the hand be seen empty. Since there has been no preface to this request, the spectator and those around him will wonder just what it is you wish to appropriate. As he collects his thoughts to respond, swing both your hands casually behind your back, in the stance commonly used for polite waiting. The left hand, which has hung relaxed at your side as you posed your question, now briefly meets

your right hand behind your back, and you transfer the palmed sponge ball from the left hand to the right. Gather a generous portion of the ball between the tips of your right forefinger and thumb, and pinch it firmly, so that no part of the sponge will be visible from the front of the fingers. Let whatever portion of the ball that is not compressed between the thumb and finger protrude on the inner side of the hand (Figure 1).

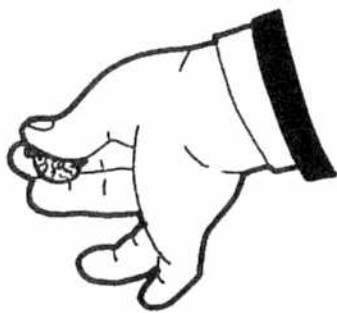


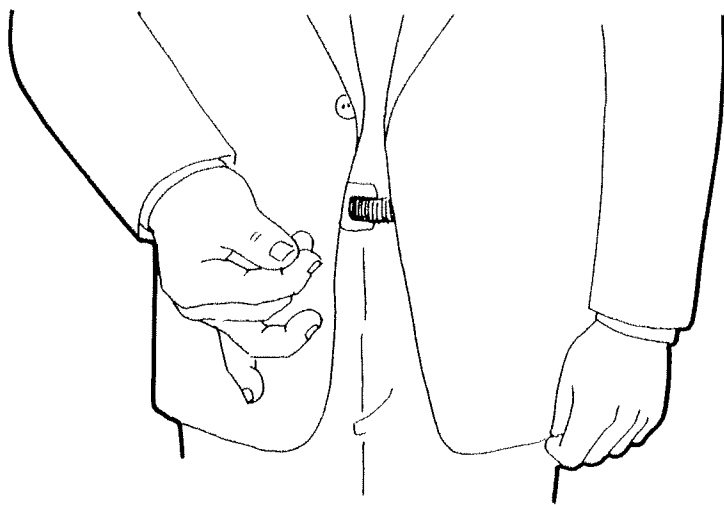
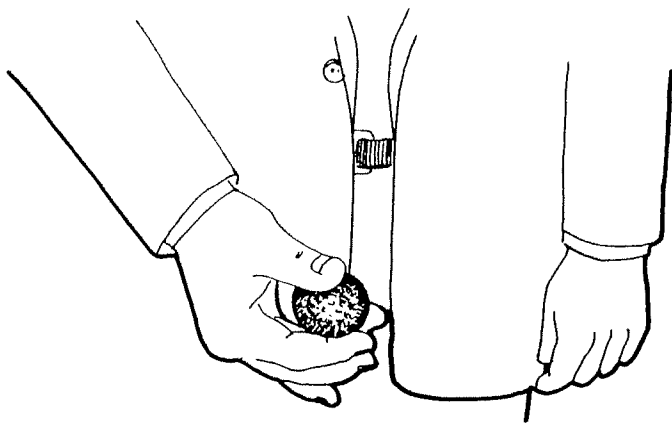
figure 1

The hands are behind your back for only a moment. As soon as the spectator begins to express his puzzlement at your request, bring the left hand forward as you say, "Well, this right here. It's a little difficult to see." Reach out with the left hand and pretend to pinch something out of the air just in front of him, or from his sleeve. Hold up your hand, with the thumb and forefinger pressed together as if you are gripping something. As you do this, it should be obvious to the audience, without your having to emphasize it, that the hand holds nothing. Within the space of a few seconds you have casually allowed both hands to be seen empty.

"I don't know if you can see that." Turn your left hand palm-down, tips of the fingers directed toward the audience, in a gesture of display. Then turn the hand palm-up again. At this moment bring the right hand up from your hip, where it has remained, swinging it in a natural arc up to the left hand, near stomach level. Touch the tips of the forefingers and thumbs together, as if you were transferring the left hand's invisible object to the right fingers. Timing here is critical. Both hands must move toward each other until they meet — otherwise the rigid posture of the right thumb and forefinger will look unnatural. However, if the hands move as explained, the action appears perfectly normal.

Immediately separate the hands, now focusing attention on the right hand while you relax the left fingers and lower the hand to waist level. Hold the right hand palm-up, fingers pointed to your left (Figure 2).

Turn the right hand briefly palm-down, fingertips pointed toward the audience, then resume the previous position. This display action is identical to that performed a moment earlier by the left hand. These actions show the hands apparently empty in an ingenuous and convincing manner, while keeping the sponge ball hidden in the right hand.

*figure 2**figure 3*

“Is that any better?” Using this line as a cue, you now produce the ball in a surprising fashion. The method of production is childishly simple: just separate your right thumb and forefinger, allowing the ball to expand rapidly between them (Figure 3). The instant you do this, snap your left fingers loudly. It is a curious fact, but this sound is vital to the effectiveness of the production. If the snap is omitted, the appearance of the ball loses much of its mystery. It looks as if the ball is merely expanding as you separate the finger and thumb, which of course it is. But when the snap

is added to the production, there is a dramatic difference in how the appearance is perceived: the ball seems to pop instantly into sight from nowhere. The importance of sound and visual in combination cannot be overly stressed. The two together make the illusion. This snapping of the fingers is also an excellent example of how one creates the “magic moment” (as Michael Skinner calls it), that instant when the magic happens.

Pause briefly to let the appearance of the ball register with the audience. Then, look up from the ball to the same spectator and say, “Now, I want you to hold onto it very tightly.” As you use your words and shift of gaze to misdirect attention from your hands, apparently transfer the ball from your right hand to your left, but secretly hold it back in the right hand. This is done with a minimum of motion. The ball lies between the right thumb and second finger. Open your left hand, palm-up, to receive the ball; and bring the right hand to it, turning this hand palm-down. In this action, let the ball roll into the right hand a short distance, until you can hold it in the arch formed by the thumb and second finger (Figure 4). Actually contact the left palm lightly with the tips of the right thumb and middle fingers, in a deliberate placing action. Then close the left fingers into a fist as you casually move the right

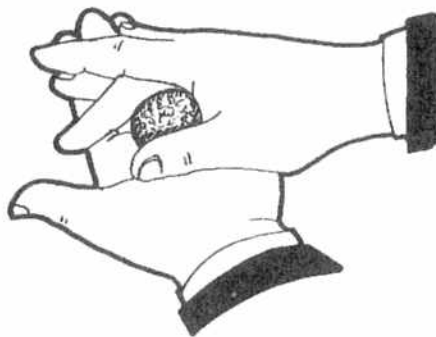


figure 4

hand away with the ball concealed behind the fingers. As the right hand leaves the left, relax the right wrist a bit, letting the hand drop slightly. This “breaking” at the wrist is a technical refinement that Dai Vernon recommends. It is a natural action, done automatically, when one places an object in the opposite hand. Therefore it should be present if a false transfer is to be fully convincing. You may now curl the right fingers loosely inward, holding the ball in a gentle finger palm. (This false transfer exhibits the qualities John believes such a sleight should possess: it is simple and unaffected in style, drawing no undue attention to itself.)

Extend your closed left hand about a foot toward the spectator, following the hand with your eyes. Then snap your left fingers loudly and say, “Oops!” as you open the hand, showing the ball is gone. Once again,

the finger snap here is more than an expendable nuance. It defines the moment of the vanish, making it real for the spectators.

"That's all right. I've got another one over here, just in case." With your left hand, reach into your left trousers pocket and bring forth the second ball. Hold this ball at the tips of the left fingers, and bring the hands together to take the ball in the right hand. As the right hand moves to meet the left, use the right thumb to roll the concealed ball toward the tips of the right fingers, but time this so that the ball does not come into view until the left hand's ball is at the right fingertips to conceal it. The right fingers accept the left hand's ball, but in a particular manner: the left fingers push their ball *into* the right hand's ball, while the right fingers press their ball closed around the second ball. If I might hazard a forced simile, the right hand's ball is folded around the left's like a slice of bread around a meatball. Only the bottom half of the left hand's ball is pinched



figure 5

within the right hand's ball. The right thumb and first two fingers hold the two balls squeezed together, with the upper half of the left hand's ball clearly in view (Figure 5). The right fingers should not contact any part of this ball. This transfer of the left hand's ball to the right fingertips, takes only a moment and is done as you again misdirect away from the hands with your gaze and words: "But you see, now I'm one short."

Release the left hand's hold on its ball, and move this hand about a foot to the left. Now turn your eyes to the visible ball in the right hand as you say, "Well, I'll just split this one in two." This pulls the audience's gaze to the ball just as you relax the right thumb and fingers, letting the upper ball pop into the air in a high arc, traveling toward the left hand. The natural spring of the compressed sponges should make this almost automatic. However, if you find the ball does not fly high enough, the right hand can help foster the flight with the shortest possible upward toss. The second ball is retained at the right fingertips.

At the instant you shoot the ball into the air, snap the left fingers to enhance the magical effect. Then catch the ball in the left hand. Display the two balls, one in each hand.

“Will you help me by holding out both hands, palms up?” When the spectator obliges, set a ball on each of his palms. Then, with your right hand, take the ball from his left hand and pretend to place it in your right hand. Actually do another false transfer, like that explained for the previous vanish, retaining the ball secretly in your left hand. Addressing a spectator on your left, say, “Whatever you do, don’t take your eyes off the left hand for even a second.” Raise your closed left hand slightly in an indicatory gesture meant to capture his attention.

With your right hand, pick up the ball on the spectator’s right palm, adding the palmed ball to it and compressing the two so that they look like one. Give the audience a brief glimpse of the sponge in the right hand as you say to someone on your right, “And you watch the right hand.” Close your right fingers into a fist around the balls. “The rest of you can watch both.” Pause for a moment, to build a bit of suspense; then snap your left fingers and open them, showing the ball gone. Pause briefly, then snap your right fingers and open them to disclose the two balls there.

Give the audience a few moments to react to this translocation. There will be a strong reaction, no matter how prosaic the effect might seem to us as magicians. John has found that having one person watch each of his hands greatly augments the magic of this effect in the eyes of a lay audience.

Hold a ball in each hand, between the tips of each thumb and forefinger, and direct your attention once more to the person in front of you. “Now hold this in your hand.” Here you indicate the ball in your right hand and begin to place it into his hand. But then stop short. “Oh, wait a minute. This is mine. This is the cute one.” Since you are working without benefit of a table, you place the right hand’s ball into your left hand, so that you can take the other ball into the right hand. That is, at least, the unspoken logic underlying your next actions. Actually, this bit of by-play is cunningly designed to create a mild diversion, and to throw the spectator slightly off balance. Your purpose in this is to provide light misdirection for a false transfer. The right hand makes the motion of placing its ball into the left hand, but the ball is actually palmed in the right hand. The details are these:

Move the right hand toward the left hand, turning it palm-down. In this action, roll the right hand’s ball off the forefinger and onto the two middle fingers. Separate these two fingers slightly and nip a small portion of the ball between them. By now the right hand should have reached the palm-up left hand. Place the right hand’s ball at the base of the left second,

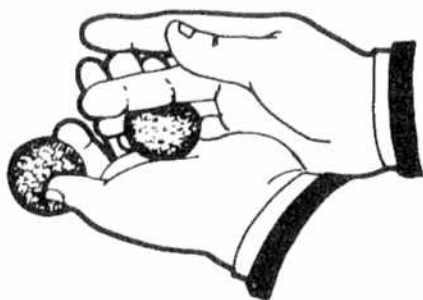


figure 6



figure 7

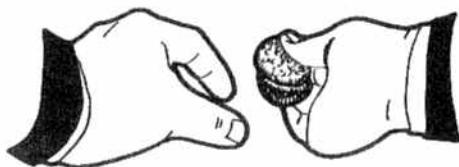


figure 8

third and fourth fingers, and close these fingers around it (Figure 6). However, you do not leave the ball in the left fingers. Instead, you retain it, clipped between the right middle fingers.

As the left fingers finish closing over the right hand's ball, rotate the left hand palm-down over the right hand. The right hand remains momentarily stationary as the left hand turns, but then it rotates palm-up under the left wrist (Figure 7). The stolen ball is concealed by the left wrist and hand. In a continuing action you now smoothly move the right hand forward to take the visible ball from between the left thumb and forefinger. This steal has been broken into steps for teaching purposes, but in performance it is one smooth sequence.

"You can have this one over here," you say, as your right thumb contacts the left hand's ball and squeezes it down against the second

ball in the right fingers (Figure 8). Without hesitation, continue to move the right hand outward with the balls, and away from the left hand. Curl in the left forefinger to join the other closed fingers. The audience should believe that this hand still holds the "cute" ball. Briefly display as one the two compressed balls in your right hand; then press the balls into the

spectator's extended hand and have him close his fingers. "Hold it tight so that I can't sneak anything out of your hand..." It is also wise to exercise the standard precaution of turning the spectator's fist over — that is, back up — to guard against his opening it unexpectedly.

"...or up my sleeves." Here you perform a short pantomime sequence: You first pretend to pass the sponge ball believed to be in your left hand to your right hand. Then, with an obviously empty left hand, push up your right sleeve. Pretend to retake the ball into your left hand, while with your empty right hand you push up your left sleeve. Do this quickly and casually. Don't exaggerate the actions. You want them to be perceived as incidental; yet they serve to put a brief interval between the handing of the ball to the spectator and the vanish of the second ball from your hand. If done convincingly, this little bit of physical acting adds significantly to the effectiveness of the vanish and the magical transference of the ball.

All you now need do is snap your left fingers, then open them, effecting the vanish of the ball from your hand. Conclude by having the spectator open his hand slowly to discover that he holds both sponges.

John often combines this routine with Roger Klause's excellent "Sponge Ball Up Sleeve" (ref. Ammar's *Encore 3*, pp. 73-78). After producing the first sponge ball as explained, he performs the Klause trick, using a thumb tip to vanish the ball, then to reproduce it from a spectator's sleeve. Following this, he begins to pocket the ball, secretly discarding the thumb tip in the action. However, he immediately brings the ball out again, saying, "Here's one more thing." With this he continues the above routine as taught, vanishing the ball once more from his hand, bringing the second ball from his pocket, and so on. From this skeleton description, those familiar with Mr. Klause's trick will understand how it is incorporated into John's routine.

Do not be tempted to expand the routine by introducing more balls. For laymen, the flight of the ball to the spectator's hand is thoroughly astonishing. Any repetition of the effect will lose the impact of surprise and become anticlimactic. The only conceivable effect that could successfully follow the routine as described would be something like Dr. Jaks' production of many little balls from the spectator's hand.

One last tip: when both balls have been found in the spectator's hand, immediately put them away. If you should leave the sponges with the spectators, it is natural that they will play with them; and in doing so they will soon discover just how compressible the balls are, which in turn can lead to the secret behind much of what they have just seen. ☺

PREDICTABLE SURPRISE

Effect: In this trick, John expands on the classic card prediction plot by adding a surprising magical kicker. The performer writes a prediction on a cocktail napkin and leaves the napkin, writing-side down, on the table. Someone now chooses a card from the pack. After it has been noted by the spectators, the card is left protruding from the center of the deck. The performer then turns over the napkin to show that he has written the name of the chosen card — his prediction has proven a success.

He now carefully squares the selection into the pack and gives the cards a brief shuffle. Pointing the deck toward the napkin on the table, he riffles the cards, upon which the napkin flutters. When the person who made the selection lifts the napkin, under it she finds her chosen card. ♡

Method: This trick is an updating of “The Card and Hat”, a centuries-old effect that John learned from Erdnase’s *The Expert at the Card Table*. Since hats have become less common in recent decades, a cocktail napkin replaces the hat; and John employs the napkin in a manner that provides a logical reason for its use.

You will need a cocktail napkin, folded in quarters as they come from the package, a pen (a broad-tipped marker is best) and a pack of cards. Before beginning the effect, secretly glimpse the bottom card of the pack. Then, while holding the deck in left-hand dealing position, give it a simple cut, moving the glimpsed card to the center. As you complete the cut,

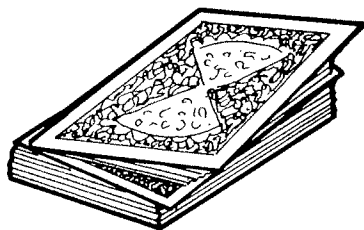


figure 9

with the left fingertips, contact the face of the glimpsed card and jog it slightly to the right. Immediately grasp the deck by its ends in the palm-down right hand, bevel the cards slightly to the right and set the pack onto the table, with the left side angled toward the audience. The swayed condition of the deck conceals the jogged card (Figure 9).

Take out your pen and explain that you will make a prediction. While guarding your writing from the audience's sight, write the name of the glimpsed card on the napkin and turn it writing-side down. In doing so, position the napkin somewhat to your right and close to the near edge of the table.

With your right hand, pick up the deck by its ends, taking care not to disturb the jogged card, and place the pack into left-hand dealing grip. As you square the cards, press upward with the tip of the left fourth finger on the corner of the jogged card, forming a break beneath it. (This subtle tactic for delaying the formation of a break was a favorite stratagem of Max Malini's.)

Ask someone to choose a card by calling stop as you dribble the cards from the face of the deck. Demonstrate what you mean by lifting just the cards above the break and dribbling them casually back into the left hand. That is, press the right forefinger firmly down on the back of the packet, mildly bowing the cards, and let them spring off the tips of the fingers and thumb in a soft steady stream. Do this once or twice, catching a flesh break with the left fourth finger under the known card each time you let them fall. When the spectator understands what is expected of her, grasp the entire deck by its ends in the palm-down right hand, transferring the break to the right thumb. You will now perform the standard dribble force:

Dribble the cards into a pile on the table, releasing all those below the break just as the spectator calls stop. Watch the spectator's lips as you let the cards fall. Their first movement to form the word is your cue to release the cards remaining below the break. This force is not difficult and can be learned within a dozen trials. It should be appreciated that the setting of the deck on the table before the force, and the casual demonstrations of how the cards are dribbled, are actions calculated to deter thoughts of breaks and forces, even in the minds of knowledgeable magicians.

Having stopped at the spectator's command, raise your right hand, exposing the face of the packet to the audience. You do not yourself look at the card (which you already know in any case), but point to it with the left second finger and ask that everyone note it.

Now lower the packet a short distance, returning it to a face-down position, and in this action secretly push the bottom card to the right. The left second finger accomplishes this. As just mentioned, when indicating the chosen card, you tap it with the tip of the left second finger. As the right hand then swings the packet to a horizontal position, the left second

finger maintains contact with the bottom card and holds it in place as the right hand shifts the packet leftward. Note that the left hand does not push the card to the right; this action would be perceived. Instead the packet is moved subtly to the left as it is lowered, and the smaller action is hidden by the larger. The inner end of the card is slid about five-eighths of an inch to the right, and is concealed by the right hand.

Without hesitation or extra motion, slide the left second finger to the left, contacting the exposed surface of the card above the selection, and draw it from the packet. In other words, you execute a side glide. Without flashing the face of this card, lay it face-down and outjogged for half its length on the tabled pile of cards.

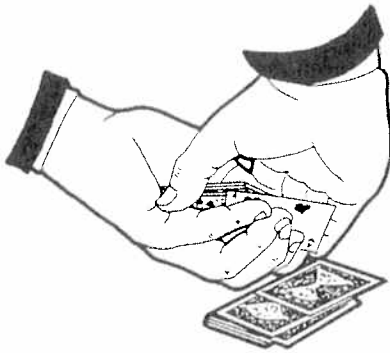


figure 10

“I’ll put your card right here where we can all see it.” As you say this, reinforcing the focus of attention on the card, return the left hand to the right hand’s packet and grasp it briefly, pushing the inner end of the bottom card farther to the right, so that the card lies parallel to the right palm (Figure 10). Then move the packet leftward slightly, just far enough to disengage its outer right corner from between the

bottom card and the right fingers. This allows the selection to spring fully into right-hand classic palm. The instant this is achieved, retake the packet by its ends in the right hand and set it squarely onto the tabled portion.

Now move your right hand back to the cocktail napkin. In picking up the napkin, first lay the hand flat onto it, then draw it over the edge of the table far enough to permit you to grip the napkin in the fork of the thumb. In a continuing motion, raise the napkin from the table and simultaneously turn it over to reveal your prediction. The palmed card should be centered beneath the napkin and is completely hidden.

Using both hands, adjust the card beneath the napkin as you turn the writing so that it can be read by the audience. What they see of course is the name of the card just selected. Ask them if you have predicted the right card. They will confirm that you have.

Place the napkin onto the table with the selection beneath it. Now draw attention to the card still protruding from the center of the pack. This is

believed to be the selection. While the pack remains on the table, cleanly and fairly square the card into the deck. Then pick up the deck and give it a brief overhand shuffle, apparently losing the card further. When John shuffles the cards here, he does so in a pointedly hesitant fashion, even stopping once as if he is calculating the position of the selection or is uncertain of it. This is all by-play generated to reinforce the audience's belief that the chosen card is still in the pack.

After the shuffle, square the deck and tentatively riffle its outer end several times. Then point the end straight at the napkin, holding the pack about six inches behind it, and give the cards a strong riffle. This will cause the napkin to flutter as it lies on the table. It may even be blown completely off the selection. The former circumstance is the more likely, however, and in this event ask the spectator to lift the napkin, revealing the card beneath. The discovery of the selection under the napkin is always a great surprise to the audience.

"Predictable Surprise" is the first of three tricks employing the deck and a cocktail napkin. The other two parts of the trilogy are taught next. Each of these tricks is strong enough to stand on its own, but if they are performed in sequence, they form a striking routine that climaxes with the complete vanish of the deck and an impressive card revelation — without the cards. ♣♣

STRAGGLER

Effect: A freely selected card is returned to the center of the deck and all the cards are wrapped in a cocktail napkin. The performer snaps his fingers and one card penetrates through the napkin. Regrettably, it is not the selection. The performer snaps his fingers again, and another card falls through the napkin. This card too proves to be incorrect. With a third snap of the fingers, a stream of cards penetrates magically through the napkin, leaving only one card trapped inside. When the napkin is slowly and fairly unfolded, the chosen card alone is found within. Both napkin and deck are unprepared and can be examined. ♣

Method: Have a card selected and noted by the audience. If you choose to perform this trick after “Predictable Surprise”, as John does, rather than have a new card chosen, use the previously forced card for the selection. Replace the chosen card in the center of the pack and secretly bring it to the top with as little overt manipulation of the cards as is possible. John uses a side steal here. The pass is another expedient means.

After the card has been controlled to the top, and while attention is diverted from the deck (which you hold face-down in left-hand dealing position), push over the top card and form a left fourth-finger break beneath it as you push it square again with the pack. The misdirection for this quick maneuver is provided by the right hand as it picks up a small white paper napkin, such as a cocktail napkin, by one corner, and snaps it open. (Again, if you are routining this trick with “Predictable Surprise”, the napkin employed in that effect is used again here.) Clip the corner of the opened napkin between the first two fingers of the right hand, letting the body of the napkin hang below the palm-down hand. If the napkin has been written on or bears some printing, hold it by the corner nearest the writing or printing.

Address the person who chose the card and ask her to cup her hands together, as if she were catching water. Demonstrate this position with your hands, even though they are occupied. Then, as she follows your

instructions and attention is drawn to her, bring your right hand over the pack, as if to grasp it from above. The napkin will naturally hang down over the inner side of the right fingers (Figure 11). As you apparently grasp the deck, however, actually grip only the separated top card — forefinger at the front and thumb at the back — taking care not to bow it, and tilting it down a bit at the front and the left side to conceal the lack of thickness from those angles. Immediately move the left hand forward with the deck, carrying it under the napkin until it reaches a position just behind center. The napkin completely screens the hand and deck during this action. Release the corner of the napkin from the right fingers, letting the napkin settle over the left hand; and immediately move the right hand forward toward the center of the napkin, while holding the selection as if it were the full deck. Your fingers mask the front edge so that it remains obscured. Set the single card directly onto the covered deck, with the center of the napkin sandwiched between the two.

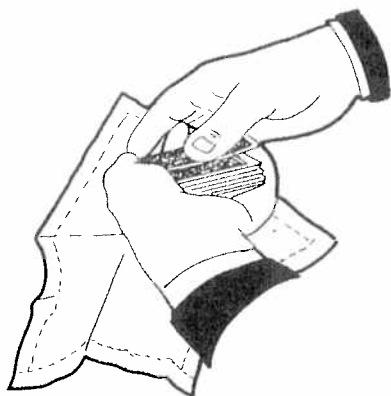


figure 11

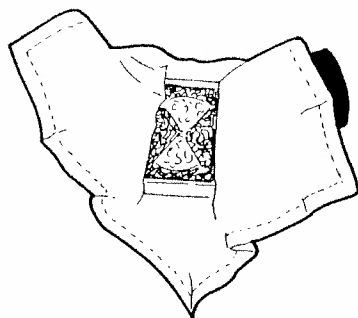


figure 12



figure 13

In a continuation of these actions, press the right fingertips against the outer end of the pack, folding a portion of the napkin closely over the front edge. Then, as your right hand grasps the deck through the napkin, move your left forefinger forward and back, pinching a bit of the napkin between the finger and the face of the deck. The napkin should be drawn taut around the front end. If you now remove the right hand from the pack, the white napkin very effectively simulates the front end of the cards

(Figure 12, audience's view). It will now be understood why any writing or printing on the napkin has been positioned on the portion nearest you: you do not want printing stretched over the outer edge of the pack. Tilt the front of the deck downward slightly to hide any gapping that might occur between the top card and the paper-covered edge.

This semblance of an edge is not belabored. When the right hand releases the pack, pause for only a moment. Then, with the right hand, fold the corners of the napkin up and over the top of the cards — right and left corners first, then the front and back corners. This forms a slightly loose bundle, which aids in concealing the deck beneath. As you do this, retain the pinch of napkin that is caught around the front of the pack (Figure 13).

The selection is now wrapped alone in the center of the napkin. The deck lies concealed below it, in left-hand dealing grip. Sway the top portion of the pack leftward a bit by squeezing the fingertips against the right side of the pack. This helps to hide the left edge of the pack under the bundle. To the same purpose, it is wise to tilt this side of the pack slightly downward and turn a bit to your left.

Once the bundle is formed, use the palm-down right hand to grasp it and the deck below by the ends, fingers at the front, thumb at the back. Simultaneously use the left forefinger to buckle the bottom card of the pack (or execute a fourth-finger pull-down), forming a break above this card for the right thumb. Then remove the left hand from the pack and bundle.

"All I do now is snap my fingers..." Move the bundle over the spectator's cupped hands, snap your left fingers loudly and release the bottom card of the pack, letting it fall. "...and your card penetrates through the deck and the napkin." Let the spectator check the card to see if it is hers. It is not, and she will tell you as much. During this strong misdirection, momentarily bring the left hand palm-up under the pack and buckle or pull-down the new bottom card, forming a right thumb break above it. Then move the left hand away from the pack.

"Let me try it again." Snap your left fingers and release the bottom card of the pack into the spectator's hands. When it is checked, you are found to have failed again. Snap your fingers a third time. In unison with the snap, dribble the rest of the pack into the spectator's hands in a slow steady stream, until the right hand holds only the napkin bundle. "Was it one of these? No — but look! There is one card left inside the napkin." Display

the bundle on all sides; then drop it into the spectator's hands. Slowly unfold the corners of the napkin, using just the tips of the fingers in a scrupulously fair manner, to uncover the single card inside. Turn it face-up to reveal the selection and conclude.

This effect is as entertaining as it is astonishing. Even the preliminary failures are amazing, as the penetrations of the cards through the napkin are a mystery. And the final revelation is a complete surprise, as it is contrary to what the audience is initially led to expect. ♡

FINAL TRACE

Effect: A chosen card is lost in the pack, after which the deck is wrapped in a paper napkin. The performer proceeds to crumple the napkin effortlessly into a ball. "The deck is still inside there, along with your card," he claims, despite the fact that there is obviously nothing substantial left in the napkin. "All I have to do to get it out is light the napkin." He does this, lets it burn briefly, then tamps out the flame. Baring his forearm, he brushes the blackened napkin quickly over it, and the name of the card mysteriously appears in ashy gray writing on his skin. ☞

Method: This is the last phase of John's deck and napkin routine, preceded by "Predictable Surprise" and "Straggler". It can, of course, stand on its own.

In this trick John has combined two effects: a clever full-deck vanish with the venerable Writing on Arm trick. The latter effect, known for centuries as "The Great Dictionary Trick", has been a popular standard since the early eighteenth century. Originally a chosen word, which was forced, was written on a piece of paper, then burned. The ashes from the paper were rubbed on the performer's arm to produce the selected word. In more recent times the trick is most often done with a chosen playing card, thus losing some of its magical logic in the translation. John has restored that logic within the context of a card trick.

There is one bit of minor preparation. First decide on the card you will force and, with a sharpened piece of soap, which you soften by wetting it, write the value of the card and draw the suit pip just below it on the inside of either forearm. The soap trace is, of course, invisible on the skin. In impromptu circumstances at restaurants, John has prepared for the trick on the spot by retiring to the lavatory, where he could use the liquid soap there to write the name of the card on his arm. He applies the soap with one finger and lets it dry. If there is a hot-air hand drier available, this can be used to speed the drying.

As you begin the effect, lay an open cocktail napkin on the table. Also have a cigarette lighter in your left coat pocket and an ashtray within reach.

Force the card matching the name you have written on your arm. If you are performing the series of effects as John has routined them, instead of asking for a new selection to be made, use the card that was forced in "Predictable Surprise", and which has just been found inside the napkin. Gather the deck and mix the chosen card into it, or have a spectator lose the card in the pack.

Now take the open napkin and lay it over the palm-up left hand, its outer half positioned over the palm and the near corner resting over the wrist. Lay the face-down deck on the left hand, roughly in dealing position, with its outer end falling approximately one inch behind the outer edge of the napkin. (This position will vary, depending on the size of the napkin.) With your right hand, grasp the inner edge of the napkin and carry it forward, over the deck. When this edge has been brought forward as far as it can go, it should rest fairly even with the outer end of the deck (Figure 14). Learn to position the pack correctly, so that this outcome is reached without awkward adjustments. The wrapping of the napkin around the pack, from start to finish, should appear unpremeditated, almost careless.

Without hesitation, use the right fingers to push the right side of the napkin around the right edge of the pack and under it (Figure 15). This action positions the right hand perfectly to grasp the deck, thumb on top, fingers below. Do so, while the left hand pushes the left side of the napkin around the left edge of the pack and beneath it (Figure 16). The left hand is automatically in position to reclaim the wrapped deck, thumb above, fingers below. Do this and, with the palm-up right hand, immediately grasp the deck by its inner end. Rotate the package end for end, turning the open outer end inward while keeping the deck face-down. As the deck is turned, bring the backs of the left fingers down on the unfolded portion of the napkin (Figure 17), and with these fingers, fold this side under the package (Figure 18). The folding of the napkin around the deck is a standard paper fold, commonly used to vanish a coin. If you try the fold with napkin and deck you will discover that the parcel is left completely open at the inner end, and the deck can slide out. Nevertheless, when the folding is done quickly and nonchalantly, the illusion of endosing the deck within the napkin is completely convincing.

At the end of the wrapping, you take the package into left-hand mechanic's grip. Maintain this grip as you look up at the audience and ask, "Does anyone have a lighter?" As you say this, move your right hand to your right coat pocket and search this pocket very briefly, as if checking

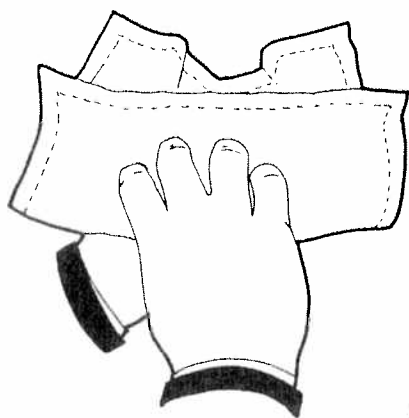


figure 14

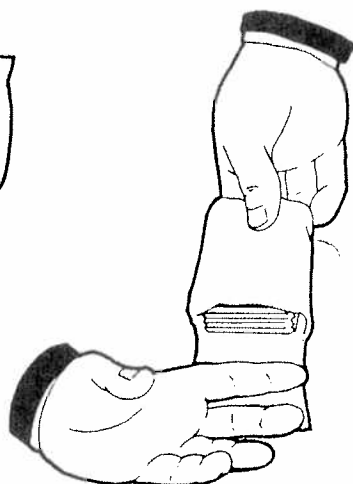


figure 17

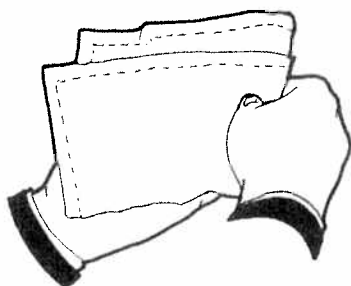


figure 15

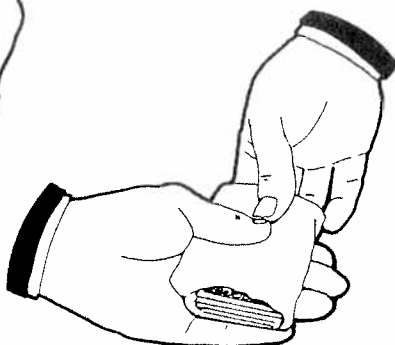


figure 18

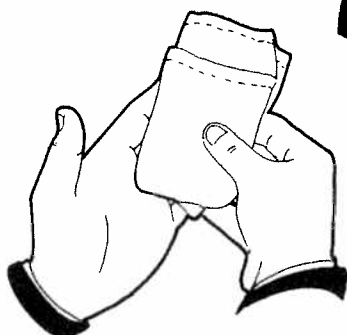


figure 16

for a lighter. Simultaneously lower the left hand about a foot, to rest position near waist level, back of the hand outward; and, in this action, quickly press the forefinger inward an inch on the end of the package. This forces the inner end of the deck out of the open side of the package (Figure 19). Immediately relax the forefinger, allowing the napkin to spring back into its previous shape.



figure 19

The right hand does not linger at all in the pocket. It comes out, obviously empty, and you transfer the package from the left hand to right-hand dealing grip. However, in doing so you steal the deck from the napkin. To accomplish this, raise the left hand and package, bringing the hand again palm-up, but keeping the outer end of the package directed toward the eyes of the audience, so that the protruding end of the deck cannot be seen. At the same time, move the right hand to meet the left. With the right hand turned palm-up, lightly grip the empty outer right corner of the package in the fork of the thumb. Simultaneously move the left fourth finger back until it can contact the exposed inner right side of the deck. Grip this free end securely between the tip of the fourth finger and the heel of the thumb. Without hesitation, move the right hand's package forward an inch or two while you move the left hand inward, secretly drawing the deck from the paper form (Figure 20). In a continuing action, turn the back of the left hand outward, concealing the deck in something akin to a gambler's cop (Figure 21), and move the left hand swiftly to the left-side coat pocket. Your request for a lighter establishes the motivation for the hand

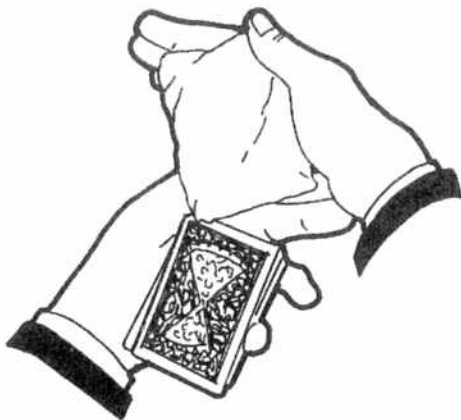
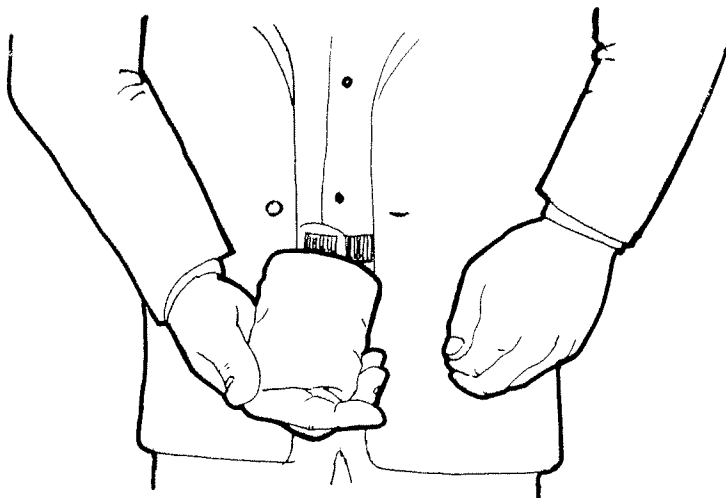


figure 20

*figure 21*

going to the pocket, just before it moves to do so, and at the same time diminishes the audience's interest in the action.

"Or a match?" you ask. You are still looking at the audience, misdirecting away from the hands as they search your coat pockets. Quickly remove the left hand from the pocket, bringing out the lighter and leaving the deck behind. Your two questions follow so closely upon one another as to form a single sentence: "Do you have a lighter — or a match?" And it is during the few seconds it takes to utter these words that the entire search of the pockets and the stealing of the deck is performed.

"Oh, that's all right. I've got one after all. Will you hold this, please." Hand the lighter to someone nearby. Then take the empty paper shell back into left-hand dealing grip, handling it as if the deck were still inside. The same principle used in the Glass Through Table trick is in play here.

"Watch!" Look down at the empty package, focusing the audience's attention on it. Then, using both hands, slowly crumple the napkin into a loose ball at the fingertips.

Display the balled napkin, leaving no doubt that the deck is gone. Then explain, "The deck hasn't really disappeared. It is still inside there, along with your card. All I have to do to get it out is light the napkin." Now look at the person holding the lighter and ask her to light the napkin. Let it burn a bit, until it is sufficiently blackened to provide the ash you need to develop the soap writing on your arm. Tamp the napkin in the nearby

ashtray to extinguish the flame. Then push back the sleeve from your prepared arm and briskly brush the blackened napkin over the prepared area, making visible the name of the chosen card. ♣♠

SOFT GLASS

Effect: The performer displays a glass and a half dollar. He drops the coin into the glass and it visibly penetrates the bottom. He inverts the glass and drops the coin onto the bottom. Again the coin instantly penetrates, and lands under the glass.

Next he stands the coin on edge, catching it between the table and the bottom of the glass. The coin instantly penetrates the bottom a third time, and appears inside the glass.

While the glass is obviously ordinary, the performer suggests that some might suspect its solidity. To surmount any suspicions, he covers the glass with a unprepared paper napkin. He then drops the coin into the glass, upon which it falls straight through the glass and the napkin.

Having shown that the coin can easily pass through the glass, he now demonstrates that the glass can penetrate the table. This he does by smashing the napkin-covered glass flat on the table, passing the glass through the table top. This concludes a visual series of surprising penetrations with objects that are entirely unprepared and examinable. ♣

Method: You will require two duplicate half dollars, a paper napkin and a clear glass. The best glass to use is one that U.S. bartenders call an “old fashion” glass or a “rocks” glass. These glasses measure approximately three inches in diameter and three and a half inches in height. The bottom is thick and recessed. Another style of glass can be used, but the size and features just described facilitate the handling.

You must be seated to perform this routine. Have the napkin folded in quarters, as they come from the manufacturer, lying to your right on the table. Set the glass somewhere to your left, with one of the half dollars in it. When ready to perform, secretly procure the second half dollar, concealing it in right-hand finger palm.

With your left hand, pick up the glass and spill out the coin onto the table. This simple action immediately establishes that the glass has a bottom, without it being mentioned. Of course, this early in the

proceedings it is most unlikely that anyone would think anything to the contrary, but the fact is subtly verified for that time to come when such thoughts might arise.

Place the glass down again and, with the left hand, pick up the coin, taking it onto the fingers in readiness to finger palm. Now execute a utility or shuttle pass: apparently transfer the coin from the left hand to the right, but actually hold back the left hand's coin as you turn the hand palm-down over the waiting right hand, which turns palm-up below it; then move the right hand away from the left hand, letting the right hand's coin be seen. This hand-to-hand transfer is not done without an outward purpose. The overt motivation for passing the coin is to free the left hand, which is nearest the glass.

With the right thumb, slide the visible coin forward onto the middle phalanx of the right forefinger. The rim of the coin should lie against the outer edge of the second finger. The tip of the thumb steadies the coin there, lightly holding it in place. The coin is almost balanced on the forefinger. As the right hand does this and displays the coin, the left hand picks up the glass, grasping it near its bottom in the circle of the forefinger and thumb. The finger-palmed coin should lie just below the glass, hidden in the loosely curled fingers.

"If you want the coin to go through the bottom of the glass, all you have to do is just drop it — and it goes right through." Hold the glass, mouth up, over the center of the table, about six inches above the table top; and position the palm-up right hand directly over the mouth of the glass. Then tip the right hand inward, apparently dropping the coin into the glass — but in reality you perform a very old and very good coin pass:

As the right hand begins to turn inward, the thumb moves away from the coin and the second finger rises slightly: just enough to nip the near edge of the coin. As the hand approaches a vertical position, you let the coin topple inward, tripping over the edge of the second finger (Figure 22). The audience sees the coin fall away from the fingers and down. What isn't seen is that the coin topples over onto the middle phalanges of the second and third fingers, in perfect position for finger palming. The fingers need not curl in to grip it yet; for the moment just let it rest out of sight on the incline of the fingers. You may wish to raise the fourth finger very slightly, to form a ledge past which the coin can't pass. However, under no circumstances should you make even the smallest catching action with either the right fingers or the wrist. If these cautions are followed, the visual illusion of the coin dropping from the hand is all that can be desired.

In synchronization with the apparent drop of the coin into the glass, the left fingers relax slightly, releasing the finger-palmed coin. This coin drops to the table, having seemingly passed through the solid bottom of the glass.

Lower your right hand to rest position on the table, its coin now finger palmed. Let the glass in your left hand pivot mouth down between the tips of your thumb and second finger; then set the mouth of the glass over the tabled coin. This brings the solid bottom of the glass plainly into view. With your palm-down right hand, grasp the glass by its upturned bottom; then slide the glass slowly back and forth several times, causing the coin inside to clink against its sides. Release the glass and move the right hand to a rest position a few inches behind it.

Now bring the open left hand to the glass and grasp it by its sides, fingers in front and thumb behind. In this position the left fingers naturally screen the covered coin from the audience's view.

"I'll do that for you again." With the left hand, tip up the near side of the glass about an inch, permitting the right fingers to reach under it for the coin. The right fingertips do pass under the glass, but they leave it again without touching the tabled coin. Instead the right thumb pushes the finger-palmed coin to the fingertips and into view. There should be no hesitation as this substitution is made. Study the genuine actions of picking up the coin, then imitate them as closely as possible.

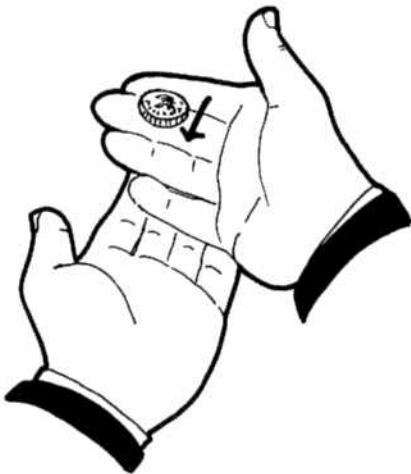


figure 22

"If you take the coin like this..." Casually display the right hand's coin, maneuvering it into position for another somersault vanish. Simultaneously lower the tipped mouth of the glass onto the table again. The left hand still conceals the coin under the glass from the audience, but if your actions and deportment are correct, all attention will be on the right hand's coin.

"...and just drop it — it goes right through the glass."

Repeat the somersault vanish already explained, holding the right hand a few inches above the inverted glass. A split second after the coin drops out of sight, raise the left hand an inch or two and grip the bottom of the glass; then slide the glass back and forth, making the covered coin clink against the sides. The second penetration has been achieved. Meanwhile, the right hand, with its coin finger palmed, has dropped to rest position near the edge of the table.

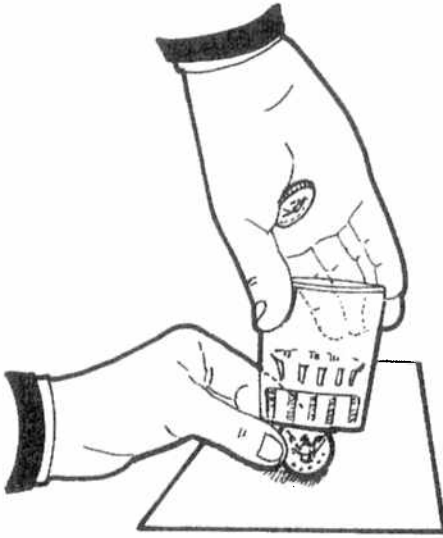
To prepare for the next penetration, you must adjust the right hand's coin from finger palm to classic palm. This is quickly done by letting the coin fall onto the fingertips, then pressing it into the palm. As this necessitates some visible motion of the fingers, John prefers to gesture casually with the right hand, following which he relaxes and lets the hand drop *momentarily* out of sight below the table as the coin is repalmed. The small movements can also be covered by some broader gesture of the hand above the table.

While the right hand makes its adjustment, maintain the audience's attention on the left hand and glass by turning this hand palm-down and picking up the inverted glass by its bottom. Turn the left hand palm-up with the glass and, with your palm-down right hand, grip the rim of the glass at the fingertips, thumb at the near edge, fingers at the far edge. This places the palmed coin directly above the glass. The position will be familiar to anyone who has done a standard coins-to-glass effect.

With your left hand, pick up the tabled coin and stand it on edge, broadside to the audience, against the table top. The coin should be placed about three inches forward of the near table edge. The left hand holds the coin pinched at the very tips of the forefinger and thumb, leaving as much of it exposed to view as is possible. Bring the glass over the coin and press the bottom of the glass, near its center, to the top edge of the coin (Figure 23). This pressure should be light and steady.

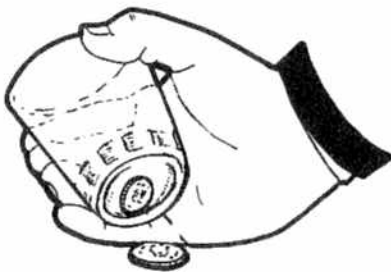
"If you watch the coin closely, you'll see it go right through the bottom. Watch." Pause briefly here, then release the left fingers' grip on the coin and move them away as you press the glass firmly downward, causing the coin beneath it to snap flat under the bottom of the glass. At the same instant, release the palmed coin into the glass. "There, right through the bottom of the glass and inside."

The combination of actions creates a startlingly convincing illusion of the coin penetrating through the glass. Thanks to the coin inside, and the natural refractive properties of the thick bottom, the coin under the glass

*figure 23*

and the edge of the fourth finger should rest lightly against the table. Now slide the right hand and glass inward a few inches, simultaneously tipping the glass mouth toward the audience. The coin under the glass is swept back by the bottom of the glass and the fourth finger (Figure 24) until it falls into the lap. (If the glass has a recessed bottom, as recommended, the recess aids in this action, as it does also in concealing the coin.)

The lapping of the coin is a short, gentle, brushing action. Do not be tempted to propel or kick the coin with a flick of the fourth finger. This is not necessary, and it might be observed. The instant the coin has left the table and is falling toward your lap, move the right hand and glass

*figure 24*

cannot be seen. Release the right hand's grip on the glass and show both hands empty as you make a non-chalant gesture.

As the spectators react to this new penetration, and their attention is momentarily relaxed, you lap the hidden coin in the action of spilling the second coin from the glass. This is both an easy and a natural appearing maneuver:

With your right hand, grasp the glass, fingers at the front, thumb at the back. The heel of the palm

forward a few inches, spilling the second coin from the glass with a gentle toss. The coin should land about twelve inches in front of the table edge. It is important to understand that if this lapping maneuver were started from a position too far forward, the sweeping action would become suspicious, if not

obvious. However, it appears perfectly natural and uncontrived if begun just a few inches from the table edge, as described.

Set down the glass for a moment, lean back and drop your left hand casually to the lap, as you allow the audience to react to the third penetration. While the hand is in the lap, move the lapped coin to a safe position under the left thigh. This is done to prevent the coin and glass from hitting one another during the final phase of the routine.

As your left hand is making this arrangement, pick up the napkin with your right hand. Bring the left hand from your lap to meet the right, letting the hand be seen empty as it comes into view. Unfold the napkin and lay it over the mouth of the glass. Loosely bunch the napkin around the glass as you pick it up. Using both hands, mold the napkin around the

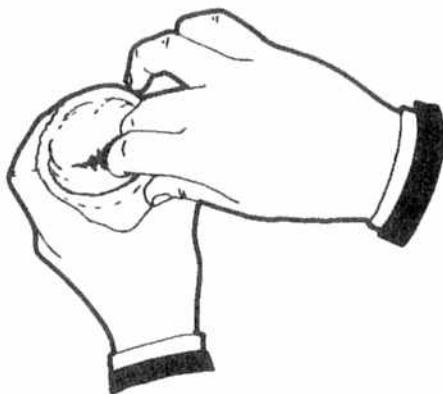


figure 25

mouth and sides of the glass, leaving the corners straight, the bottom unobstructed. Do not stretch the center of the napkin tautly over the mouth of the glass like a drum. Instead, push the center down into the glass, forming a depression roughly an inch deep. While doing this, secretly poke two fingers through the middle of the napkin, tearing a hole large enough for the coin to pass through without touching the paper (Figure 25). John recommends using napkins made from a hard, crisp paper, like cocktail napkins, as they tear more easily and hold their shape. However, where no choice is possible, soft paper napkins, even paper towels can be successfully used.

As the reader has likely suspected pages ago, you are about to perform the centuries-old trick, Glass Through Table. Therefore, it will be understood that the napkin must be formed around the glass, taking on its shape, while permitting the glass, when the time is right, to slip from beneath the paper form. This will happen in a moment. For now, take the covered glass into the left hand, fingers at the front, thumb at the back, holding it as if to drink from it.

During the few moments it takes to shape the napkin around the glass, you make some excuse for doing so: "I'll do it for you one more time. Because some people think I use some sort of gimmicked glass, I'll wrap the glass in this napkin. Now the coin must go not only through the glass, but through the napkin as well."

Reach out with your right hand for the coin, which lies approximately a foot forward on the table. Simultaneously move the left hand inward a bit, until it rests even with the table top and just behind the edge. As the right hand picks up the coin and displays it, ease the left fingers' pressure on the glass, letting it slip silently from the paper form and into your lap.

Now move the right hand inward and advance the left hand, until they meet about six inches forward of the table edge. Hold the paper form straight upward, several inches above the table, and position the right hand's coin directly over the form.

"Watch." Drop the coin straight into the form, through the hole in the napkin and onto the table. The coin must drop through without touching the paper, or the absence of the glass can be accidentally exposed.

"Right through the glass and the napkin." Pause for just a moment. Then continue, "If I can make the coin go through the glass, I should be able to make the glass go through the table as well."

As you say this, move your right hand and arm beneath the table, and secretly retrieve the glass from your lap. Do not, as one often sees done, drop the hand from a position of dead rest on the table straight to the lap, pick up the glass, then move it under the center of the table. Such an action betrays your purpose. Instead, swing the right hand and forearm in an arc, first to the right, then around the right end of the table and beneath. This action is less awkward in appearance, and it distances the hand from the lap in the minds of the spectators.

Once the hand is below the table, you can imperceptibly bend it back to your lap and pick up the glass. Bend inward mainly at the wrist, minimizing elbow motion, and make sure this action isn't evidenced by any visible motion of your shoulder.

As you say, "...right through the table as well," suddenly bring your left hand down, smashing the paper form flat beneath it, and at the same time, rap the bottom of the glass loudly against the underside of the table. Pause for a moment, keeping your left hand pressed flat over the collapsed napkin. Then bring the glass from below the table, display it and set it down smartly.

Raise the left hand, picking up the napkin, and tear it in half in a gesture of final proof, as if silently saying, "Nothing here." Then crumple the pieces into a ball and toss them aside. While signaling the end of the trick, this mildly dramatic gesture also destroys the only clue to the mystery: the hole in the napkin. ♪

CHILL PACK

This is a startling and instantaneous fingertip production of a pack of cards. John uses it to open a series a card effects. There is virtually no manipulation involved. The method relies mainly on convincing acting and cunning misdirection.

You are standing when you perform this, and must be wearing a suit coat. The pack, in its case, rests in the inner left breast pocket, top flap closed and downward, front (thumb notch) nearest the body. You prepare for the production with a seemingly fruitless search of your pockets:

Place both hands into their respective side coat pockets in search of a deck. From your expression you make it clear that you haven't found what you are looking for. Gaze directly at someone in front of you and ask, "Did you bring a deck of cards with you by any chance?" Bring your hands empty from your pockets.

With your left hand, grasp the left edge of your coat, near the top buttonhole, and pull the coat open slightly, about six inches from your body. You are now going to reverse an old pocket-loading ruse of Edward Marlo's (ref. *Amazing, Isn't It*, pp. 11-12) to load the deck secretly into the left hand:

With your right hand, reach inside the coat to the left inner breast pocket and grasp the cased deck. Remove it from the pocket and pass it to the left fingers below. The audience must not perceive any lowering of the right hand as you do this. The hand bends downward at the wrist, behind the coat, while the right forearm remains stationary.

This brings the free (flap) end of the case to the left fingers. Clip this end beneath the left fingertips, pressing it securely to the coat-covered left palm (Figure 26, coat opened wide to expose the position). Then bring the empty right hand from beneath the coat, having apparently not found the deck. Continue to grasp the edge of the coat with your left hand, but move it in, closer to the body.

There can be no hesitation or fumbling as the right hand removes the deck from the pocket and passes it to the left hand. To the audience it

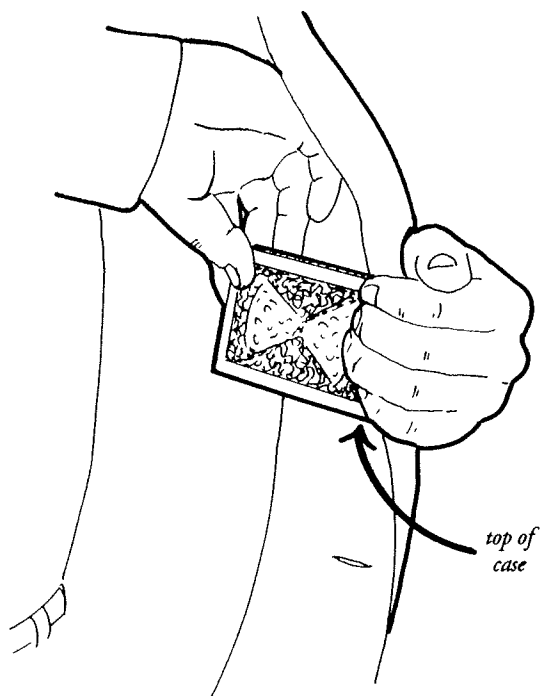


figure 26

must look exactly as if you had inserted the hand into your breast pocket, found nothing and brought the hand out again. The hands at no time seem to come together.

Just as the right hand is exiting from the coat, seem to spot something floating in front of you, just to your right. "Oh, there they are." Reach out with your right hand to the spot you are staring at and pretend to pluck an invisible deck from the air. Turn your hand over and back, as if examining the imaginary pack.

Understand, this mime sequence is much more than just by-play. It serves the important purpose of focusing everyone's attention at the place you wish it. As John Ramsay shrewdly observed, you must first command your audience's attention before you can misdirect it.

Suddenly look up and straight at the spectator you addressed earlier. "These will do nicely," you say to him, smiling. Here another of Mr. Ramsay's rules of misdirection comes to the fore: if you want someone to look at you, look at them. The sudden shift of your gaze, and the accompanying comment, draw the audience's eyes up to your face and



figure 27

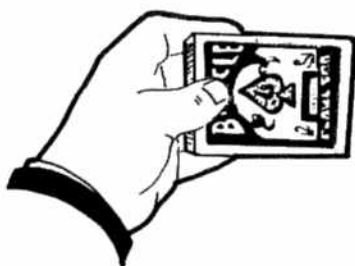


figure 28

away from your hands. A moment after eye contact is made, bring your hands together directly in front of your stomach. As you move the left hand slightly to the right and forward, let the edge of the coat slip from its grasp, but retain the deck in the curled fingers. Simultaneously bend the left thumb into the palm, behind the pack (Figure 27), then straighten it quickly, flipping the deck rightward and into view at the fingertips (Figure 28). Strive to make the deck *pop* into view just as the hands come together. As the pack swings into sight, its right end should meet the approaching right fingertips, giving the impression that the pack appears between the hands, rather than its having been produced by one hand or the other. It seems to become visible in the action of transferring it to the left hand. Briefly take it into that hand and display it.

At the instant you snap the deck into view, look down at your hands, directing everyone's gaze to them. Then, with barely a pause, nonchalantly flip open the flap of the case and spill the cards into the left hand.

The whole procedure consumes about five seconds. It is a quick interlude, but a magical way to begin a card routine. What could be more suitable than to produce the cards you need from thin air! ♣

POOR MAN'S CARD MANIPULATION

Effect: The performer removes cards from the deck, one by one, and squeezes them out of existence. After cleanly vanishing three cards in this fashion, he rapidly rematerializes each one from thin air. ♣

Method: For technical reasons, most manipulation sequences of this sort are restricted to platform or stage use. John's "poor man's" vanish and production emulates these stage effects, but is constructed for use at close quarters with the audience in front of you and a few feet away. Because of its highly visual nature, and the condensing of much magic into a short time, this is an excellent opening item that immediately establishes you as someone different from that uncle who knows a few packet-counting tricks. John often uses it in that capacity, first producing the deck as taught in "Chill Pack", then moving through the sequence about to be explained. This sequence is impressive to laymen, and holds several surprises for magicians as well. If you should follow "Poor Man's Card Manipulation" with "Ethereal Pack" (to be explained next), you will have at your disposal another complete card act, which is begun with the production of the deck and concludes with its vanish.

No setup is necessary for this sequence, though it is wise to position two contrasting cards at the top and bottom of the pack, and have a third card — one that contrasts with the top card — second from the top. This is easily accomplished by spreading quickly through the deck to find an appropriate threesome, then cutting the pack at that point to take one card to the face and the others to the top.

Before the audience is alerted that a trick is in progress, you must palm the top card in preparation for the first phase of the sequence. John uses a side slip to get the card secretly into right-hand classic palm. The side slip has been a standard sleight for almost a century, but many magicians who perform it do so in a manner far less deceptive than could be wished. John has observed that several mistakes are commonly made when executing the side slip. We will address these as we come to them, and show how they are remedied.

Begin with the deck held face-up in your palm-down right hand, fingers along the outer end, thumb at the inner end. The first action of the side slip is to slide the card at the back of the deck to the right and beneath the right palm. Most often you are told that the left fingertips push this card over. However, if you do just this, some left finger action can be perceived by the audience, and both hands linger too long on the pack. Normally you don't need two hands to hold a deck, and doing so calls attention to what you are doing, raising suspicions in the minds of the spectators.

To alleviate these weaknesses, execute the side slip as the right hand transfers the deck to the left hand (a valuable tip, which was commented on by Erdnase in *The Expert at the Card Table*, p. 188). Do not push the rear card to the right. Instead, move the right hand and pack to the left and, as the pack travels over the stationary left fingers, bring the tips of the second and third fingers into contact with the back of the rear card, just forward of center, and retard the movement of that card as the rest of the pack continues to move to the left. The card does not move straight to the right; instead it pivots on the tip of the right fourth finger, its inner end swinging out farther than the front. This angles the card, parallel with the right palm.

Move the left front corner of the pack deeply into the fork of the left thumb and clip it there. This leaves the left fingers free to press the side-slipped card securely into the right palm. At the same time, swing the right thumb under the end of the deck, then in against the side of the right hand, as the left hand carries the deck to the left. (This action ensures that the thumb is not left extended from the hand, a serious error when palming, often warned against, yet still seen far too often.) When the stolen card clears the deck, the left fingers can curl around the right edge of the pack, adjusting it into full dealing grip. (Some experts believe that it is better when doing a side slip to keep the left fingers extended and away from the side of the pack for a moment, rather than rushing the completion of the grip. This, they feel, eliminates telltale finger-flutter. [See Marlo's *The Side Steal*, pp. 20-21.] However, in the handling under discussion, the motion of transferring the deck to the left hand gives a perfect reason for the fingers' adjustment.)

Note that, when doing the side slip, the right hand carries the deck to the left hand — but once the deck is settled more or less into left-hand dealing position, the right hand halts and the left hand moves away with the pack. Any attention on the hands and cards (which should be minimal)

will be attracted by the movement of the left hand and deck, away from the still right hand with its palmed card.

Casually drop the right hand to a relaxed position at your side. Just as there is a fine line between good acting and over-acting, there is a difference here between letting the hand drop in a relaxed manner and letting it fall as if gravity has just doubled on your right. Let the hand hang loose and relaxed, rather than holding it rigidly at your side or, to the other extreme, swinging it like a pendulum coming to rest. Do, however, keep the hand close to the thigh with the thumb turned toward the audience. This looks much more natural than keeping the full back of the hand turned outward (an important tip that can be applied to many palming circumstances).

This first side slip is done, as mentioned earlier, on the offbeat, while attention is relaxed. In the audience's eyes the trick has not yet begun. It begins now:

"Let me show you something peculiar. I'll do it with the two of hearts." Here you name the card showing at the face of the pack, and with the tip of your left thumb you lift the left side of this card away from the deck, tilting it "tent-fashion". If you use a light touch, it is not difficult to lift only the one card. However, if two or three cards are caught by the thumb and raised, no great harm is done.

Turn a bit to your left and position the face of the raised card broadside to the audience. You are now in position to perform the Arthur Finley tent vanish (ref. *Stars of Magic*, pp. 94-95) — and that is just what you do. Bring the right hand to the deck and cover the raised card (Figure 29). As soon as the card is out of the audience's sight, gently deposit the palmed card squarely over it and let both cards fall onto the deck. It is vital to the illusion of the vanish that the left thumb remains stationary when the cards are released. If there is any visible motion of this thumb, the maneuver becomes transparent.

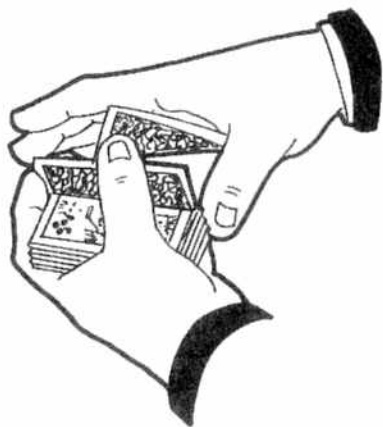


figure 29

As the cards fall, contract your right hand as if you were clumsily palming the raised card. Then move the right hand to your right, letting the face of the deck be seen. An indifferent card shows there, strongly implying that the two of hearts has been taken into the right hand. In moving the right hand away from the pack, hold it palm-down in a stiff, cramped posture, with the thumb cocked. In other words, commit every error of palming technique the masters warn against.

As you separate the right hand from the pack, make a partial body turn to the right, turning at the waist, and hold your right hand out to the side. As you assume this pose, turn the right hand palm-down and bend the



figure 30

first two fingers until their tips contact the tip of the thumb, forming a circle. At the same time, raise and separate the third and fourth fingers. For those familiar with Jay Marshall's classic act, this can be thought of as affecting the "flamboyant Lefty posture" — with the wrong hand (Figure 30).

The spectators should have a view straight through the tunnel formed by the fingers and thumb, but they must not be able to see the inside surfaces of the fingers. While this is not crucial at the moment, it will be in the final phase of the routine, so the position must be established during each phase.

"If I take the two of hearts and give it a little squeeze like this..." Rub the tips of the first two fingers and thumb together in little circles. "...the two of hearts disappears." Straighten the fingers away from the thumb, pause briefly, then turn the hand dramatically, displaying it front and back. The card has vanished. (If working for magicians, John will include an added feint here: he goes through the motions of a continuous front and back palm, as an extra tease, before showing the hand genuinely empty.)

"Some people think it goes up my sleeve, so I'll roll the sleeve up." Transfer the deck from the left hand to the palm-down right hand, grasping it from above by the ends. Then, with the freed left hand, push back your right sleeve. Retake the deck into left-hand dealing grip and, in doing so, side slip another card from the back of the deck into the right palm. Notice how the mention of rolling up the sleeve gives perfect

motivation for transferring the deck from hand to hand, and consequently provides cover for the steal of the card.

With your left thumb, raise the new card into tent position over the pack. Though the card immediately below it is the one just “vanished”, the tilted card completely conceals it from the audience’s sight. “Now I’ll do it again. Just watch. I take the queen of spades [*here you name the card now displayed over the pack*] and give it a little squeeze — and the queen completely disappears.” As you say this, repeat the tent vanish, depositing the right hand’s palmed card onto the deck, and go through the motions of vanishing the card from the right hand, exactly as taught above.

As all attention is on the right hand, with your left thumb push over three cards from the face of the pack and form a fourth-finger break beneath them. You may find it a wise precaution to glimpse the face of the pack first, to ensure that you have pushed over just three cards, before you form the break. You can make this check as you move the right hand to the pack to square it in preparation for the last vanish. Alternatively, a pinky count can be used.

“I’ll do that one last time, with the ace of clubs.” The card you name is the one now showing on the face of the deck. (Again, when working for magicians, John will sometimes feign a side slip at this point, encouraging their anticipation of a third tent vanish. Since a different technique is used for the third vanish, this feint only leads them further along the wrong path of thought. Of course, this added touch should not be employed when performing for laymen.)

Bend your left thumb to the near side of the pack, in preparation for raising the card to tent position. Simultaneously tighten the fourth finger against its corner of the pack, collapsing the break and stepping the three cards inward slightly. The step created makes it possible for the thumb to engage all three cards and raise them as one into tent position. This time, as you bring the right hand in front of the cards, you actually palm them, instead of dropping them onto the pack. When you palm the three cards, use the same cramped parody of a palm that you have employed in the previous phases. This is one of the rare instances when a miserable palming technique is actually desirable.

“Now watch. I’m going to take the ace of clubs...” Move the right hand from the deck and to your right, striking the same pose used in the previous vanishes. Since the palmed cards are bowed against the curve of the fingers, they are invisible to the spectators, who are looking through

the tunnel of the hand (Figure 30 again). The forefinger screens the edges of the cards from view. This is an established concealment, borrowed from stage manipulators. In Figure 31 the hand has been tilted to expose the position of the palmed cards.

"...give it a little squeeze and it disappears." Rub the first two fingertips against the thumb in little circles, then separate the fingers from the thumb, giving the impression that the hand is empty. You do not this time display it back and front as you have previously. Yet the audience will be convinced that the hand is empty. They expect the card to vanish, just as the earlier cards have, and those vanishes and displays of your empty hand have conditioned them for this last ruse. At this point they don't need to see the hand on both sides to believe the card has vanished. Consequently, they prematurely relax their scrutiny of the hand. The

psychology is sound, and will take in knowledgeable magicians as well as the public. Lower the hand roughly twelve inches, signaling through body language that it is no longer of interest.

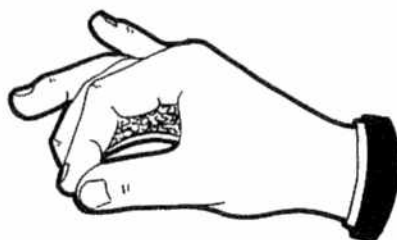


figure 31

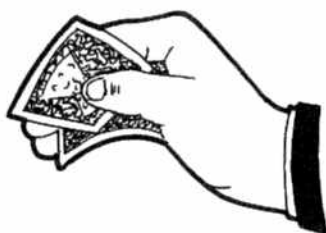


figure 32

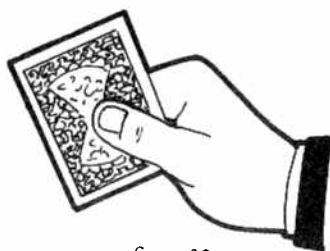


figure 33

"But if I do this..." Riffle the left thumb loudly down the corner of the deck. Simultaneously raise the right hand to its former position while you bend the right thumb in to contact the outer corner of the palmed packet, just behind the middle phalanx of the forefinger. "...all three cards come back." With the tip of the thumb, pull the first card swiftly forward and up, around the side of the forefinger (Figure 32). This causes the card to snap suddenly into view, back outward, caught vertically between the thumb and the edge of the curled forefinger (Figure 33). This production — a

variant of the "Aerial Production" from *Card Manipulations, No. 3* (p. 71) — is not difficult to perform and looks very magical.

If working behind a table, let the card drop onto it. Otherwise, clip the lower end of the card between the tips of the extended left first and second fingers. Riffle the corner of the pack again, and produce the second card in the same fashion as the first. Let this card drop, or take it in front of the previous card, forming a small fan. Then riffle the deck a third time and produce the last card.

You have smoothly vanished three cards and recovered them in a manner that should establish you with any audience as a magician several cuts above the average. ♡

ETHEREAL PACK

Effect: A card is selected, noted and inserted into the center of the pack. The performer announces that he will cause the chosen card to rise magically to the top. He slaps the pack and turns up the top card. This is a joker — which he is swiftly informed is not the selection.

He shuffles the deck, then slaps it a second time. The top card is turned up: the joker again. “This card always gives me trouble,” he explains, and pushes it into the center of the pack. He slaps the deck once more. “Maybe I’m slapping the cards too hard. Sometimes that drives your card to the bottom instead of the top.” The bottom card is removed from the pack and shown: again the unwanted joker turns up.

“Well, I’m just going to have to get rid of it.” With that, he pockets the joker. “Now there should be no problem. Watch!” He snaps his fingers over the pack, then turns up the top card. The joker is back again!

“I suppose the only thing to do now is to slap the pack...” He replaces the joker on the deck and gives it a slap. “...and make all the cards disappear except yours.” Suddenly the audience sees that the performer is holding only a single card: the chosen one. The rest of the pack has vanished. ♣

Method: This Ambitious Card effect gone wrong is funny, surprising — and highly entertaining for just those reasons. It is designed for standing performance, either close-up or parlor. If possible, you should have two identical jokers on top of the pack. Should two jokers be unavailable, pseudo-duplicates like the black kings will serve. Jokers or kings are recommended for their prominence. You want cards that an audience can easily remember. Jokers will be assumed throughout this description. One last thing: you must be wearing a coat.

Begin by having a card freely selected (the top pair obviously being excluded from the choice). As the spectator notes her card and shows it to the rest of the group, form a tilt break beneath the top two cards of the pack (the jokers). That is, procure a left fourth-finger break under the

top pair; then, while squaring the cards, secretly lower the near end of the pack about a quarter of an inch, forming a break under the top two cards that is open across the entire inner edge. Of course, if you are familiar with a method for setting the tilt break with one hand, that can certainly be employed here. (Such a method is described on pp. 250-251.)

With your free right hand, take back the selection from the spectator. John keeps the card turned face-down, so that its identity remains unknown to him. However, since the proposed effect will be one of causing the card to rise to the top, rather than one of discovery or location, you can openly look at the selection if you wish. Apparently insert the card into the center of the pack from the inner end; but actually feed the card into the tilt break (Figure 34), gliding it flat over the surface of the third card from the top. Finish the insertion by pushing the selection flush. As you do this, tilt the front end of the pack down a bit, allowing the audience to see the card apparently entering the center of the pack. (It should be mentioned in passing that there is a general tendency, when using a tilt break, to make it too large. This results in creating the illusion from the front that you are inserting the card under the deck, rather than at center.)



figure 34

When doing the tilt insertion, John often embellishes the maneuver with the Schwarzman-Aste tilt feint. That is, before the card is inserted into the break, its outer right corner is pushed against the center section of the pack at the inner end. The card is held at an angle, so that it does not enter the pack, but instead pushes a small center block forward, making it jut slightly from the front end. Immediately withdraw the card. With this quick and unstressed action you make clear to the audience your intention to place the card in the center of the pack, and give the impression that the cards have bound, making it necessary for you to begin again. On your second attempt, place the selection into the tilt break, as described above, and successfully push it flush.

"All I have to do to make your card rise from the middle of the deck to the top is give the cards a slap." Saying this, bring the flat of your right hand down smartly on the deck, and allow the tilt break to collapse under the blow. Raise the right hand and cleanly remove the top card. Display its face to the audience.

"Was your card the joker?" It was not, of course, and you will be told as much. "I must have slapped too hard. Let me try it again." Return the joker face-down to the top of the pack and give the cards a brief overhand shuffle, reserving the two jokers and selection on top. Give the deck another slap and display the top card.

"You said your card wasn't the joker, didn't you. This card always gives me trouble. Sorry." Insert the joker face-down into the center of the pack from the inner end, keeping your actions consistent with those used for the earlier tilt insertion. As your right thumb pushes the joker home, lift it slightly, forming a break beneath it for the left fourth finger.

Spread the cards casually from left hand to right as you say, "Your card is still in here somewhere." As you make this spread, cull the joker above the break to the bottom of the pack, using the Hofzinger spread pass:

The tips of the right fingers contact the right edge of the joker from below and pull the card to the right, disengaging it from the spread. The left thumb contacts the left edge of the card above the joker, holding it stationary as the cull is made. The left hand then continues to feed the remaining cards into the right hand and above the culled joker. Done properly, this cull should have the appearance of a quick, casual gesture and nothing more. Immediately square the deck back into the left hand and, in doing so, manage to push the top two cards slightly to the right. Form a fine fourth-finger break beneath them as that finger pushes the two cards flush again.

"Now it should work." Slap the pack again, taking care not to lose the break. "Maybe I'm slapping the cards too hard. Sometimes that drives your card to the bottom instead of the top." With the palm-down right hand, grip the deck from above by its ends, the fingers entirely masking the front edge, and the thumb taking over the break from the left fourth finger. During the next actions, tilt the left side of the deck downward a bit, so that the break is not inadvertently exposed. With the left hand, separate the bottom card from the pack, draw it to the left, then move the left hand forward, in front of the pack, as you turn the hand palm-down to display the face of the joker. Hold the joker by its opposite sides,

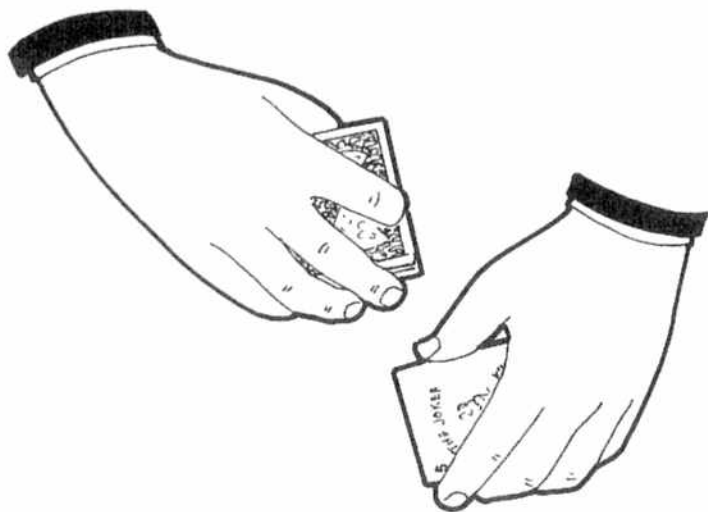
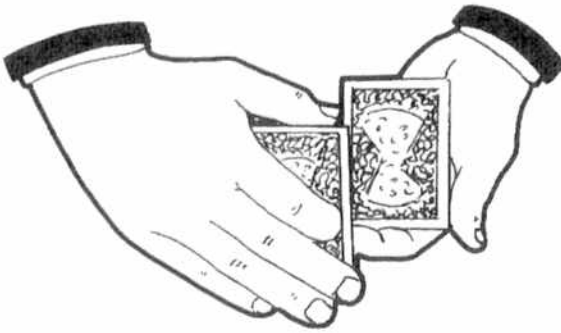


figure 35

at the tips of the fingers and thumb, while lowering it away from the palm for better display (Figure 35).

Look up from the joker to the audience, drawing their gaze from your hands, as you say, “Well, I’m just going to have to get rid of it.” With this you place the joker in your left coat pocket — and along with it you secretly dispose of the deck. This is achieved with twenty percent sleight-of-hand and eighty percent psychology. First we will address the manipulation, which actually requires more timing than dexterity:

The left hand is in front of the deck, palm-down, displaying the joker (Figure 35). This hand now retraces its path to the deck, simultaneously turning palm-up as it moves inward and under the pack. In this action, the fingers and thumb let the joker drop into a “deep” dealing grip, the outer end of the card lying just behind the forefinger. The right hand and pack remain stationary. The instant the joker comes square with the face of the deck, release all the cards below the break, letting them gently drop into the left hand. The left hand receives the deck directly on top of the joker, in deep dealing grip, with the forefinger stretched across the front end to mask the thickness. If you tip this end of the pack downward, presenting the back of the deck to the audience, the thickness is further disguised (Figure 36). Additionally, the left hand stays in motion, moving without the slightest pause directly to the left coat pocket, where it deposits the deck. During this action, turn *slightly* to your left. This short turn

*figure 36*

diminishes attention on the left hand while it aids in concealing the left edge of the cards in the right hand.

Meanwhile, the right hand remains still, holding its two

cards as if they were the deck. The fingers screen the front end, which is tilted downward, and the hand is kept close to the body, with the left edge of the cards turned slightly inward. These are the physical actions of the deck steal.

Now for the psychology. The steal is done on the offbeat, taking advantage of the misdirection provided by the presentation. The second appearance of the joker should suggest to your audience that its production is something less than coincidental, and that your failures are quite possibly contrived. With the third appearance of the joker, the running gag is clearly established. Laughter results, and it is during that moment of relaxation, as you draw everyone's eyes up to your face, that you make the steal and pocket the deck. The left hand moves briskly but not hurriedly to the pocket, and the steal is over before anyone can start to consider what might next be in store. Also, note how the line "Well, I'm just going to have to get rid of it" psychologically prepares the audience for the left hand's trip to the pocket, just an instant before the action is made. By explaining the action before it occurs, you diminish interest in the action itself.

When you remove the left hand from your pocket, let it be seen empty and bring it back to your right hand. Place the two cards into the same deep dealing grip just used with the deck, this time concealing a lack of thickness. As you transfer the cards, turn slightly to your right and keep your left hand close to the body, protecting the right side of the cards from the audience's notice.

"Now there should be no problem. Watch!" Snap your right fingers over the left hand's cards; then, simulating the actions of dealing from the deck, push over the top card and take it from above, by its ends, into the

right hand, being careful not to expose the absence of the pack. Display the face of the card, holding it in front of the left hand to draw attention away from single card there while screening it. The joker is back again. Exhibit surprise and annoyance at this discovery. The reappearance of the joker should be both astonishing and funny to the audience. It seems impossible that the card they saw you place in your pocket could be back on the deck. Notice how the magical extension of the running gag cunningly distracts from the pending climax while providing time misdirection between the moment of the deck steal and the revelation of the vanish.

Replace the joker face-down and square onto the left hand's card. "I suppose the only thing to do now is to slap the pack..." With the right hand, slap the cards solidly, and adjust the left fingers a bit to expose the absence of the pack. "...and make all the cards disappear except yours." Immediately snap the double card face-up, handling it as a single card, and display the face of the selection.

To conclude you can slip the double card into your breast pocket; or you can first show it is unquestionably a single card by stealing away the joker in left-hand gambler's cop, as the right hand spins the selection into the air or tosses it casually onto the table. For readers unfamiliar with this form of palming, the double card is held with its outer end in the loose curl of the second finger. The front edge of the double lies just behind the length of the forefinger, and all the fingers are slightly curled to rest beside the second finger. Contract the second finger slightly, buckling the lower card away from the joker at the inner end. With the right hand, grasp the joker by its inner right corner and carry it away, as you turn the left hand inward to hide the stolen card (Figure 37). The inner right corner of the palmed card projects beyond the heel of the hand, and therefore must be concealed by positioning the hand partially palm-up while keeping it near the body. Mirror practice will do much to teach the correct angle of the hand.



figure 37

After spinning or tossing the joker, catch it or pick it up in the right hand and, as you bring the right hand back to the left, near waist level, turn the left hand palm-up and receive the joker squarely over the palmed card. Then casually slip the double card into your breast pocket and conclude. Do not be tempted to reproduce the deck from your pocket. Doing so would only weaken the vanish while providing a clue to the method.

Should pseudo-duplicates be used in place of identical jokers, a few last observations might be order. You will note that the second card of the pair is not exhibited until the fourth and final production of the wrong card. The change in suit at this point will not be perceived for three reasons: First, cards like the black kings are purposely used, as they are easily mistaken for each other. Second, you never refer to the suit of the king. You simply call it "the king". And third, by the time the stand-in makes its appearance, the audience is conditioned to expect the king previously produced, and consequently will see what they have been led to anticipate. For these reasons the substitution is safe from discovery.

The humor, surprise and mystery inherent in this effect make it a strong piece of magic. The deck steal will seem dangerously bold to many on a first reading, but it is not difficult to do deceptively. When executed smoothly and unhesitatingly, with the proper psychology applied, it will even elude the notice of well-posted magicians, as John has proven on many occasions. ♡

STREAMLINED CYLINDER AND COINS

Effect: The performer exhibits four silver dollars, a small disk cut from a wine cork, a wand and a hollow cylinder that has neither top nor bottom. He sets the cylinder over the cork disk on the table, then spreads out the four coins. One by one he vanishes the coins from his hand in a completely baffling manner. When he raises the cylinder, the four coins are found there, in a stack with the cork lying on top.

The performer takes the cork into his hand and covers the stack of coins with the cylinder. Then, without warning, the cork suddenly transforms into the four coins; and when the cylinder is next raised, the coins are found gone and the cork is back. ♪

Method: The effect just described, as many readers will have recognized, is John Ramsay's celebrated "Cylinder and Coins". Mr. Ramsay's trick is a brilliant embellishment on "The Cap and Pence". The latter mystery has been popular with magicians and their audiences for over three and a half centuries, and is still widely performed to this day. On the other hand, John Ramsay's exquisite variation is revered among magicians, but very seldom performed. The main reason for this is the heavy demand the Ramsay trick places on the performer's abilities. Indeed, this trick has acquired a reputation of great difficulty among magicians. It is John's opinion that this reputation arises not from the sleights required — which are no more demanding than those used in many frequently performed tricks — but from the boldness of the deceptions, which require expert misdirection and bluff.

John, as a young man, heard other magicians comment on the extreme difficulty of Ramsay's "Cylinder and Coins", and he took it as a challenge to master it. When he had done so, he began performing it and was disappointed to find that the trick hadn't the impact for lay audiences that it did for magicians. Mr. Ramsay's magic, like Slydini's, is highly idiosyncratic. While the innovations of these men hold important lessons for all magicians, the details of structure and style often do not translate successfully to other performers. They are too closely bound to the

character of the inventor. In Mr. Ramsay's case, his magic was frequently loaded with feints and nuances designed to fool magicians, but which held no meaning for the public. John, in an effort to reap the reaction from audiences that he knew "The Cylinder and Coins" was capable of eliciting, began to tinker with its structure. The changes he eventually made accomplished two things: all the feints but one were eliminated; and the action in the second phase of the trick was accelerated. In the original Ramsay handling, the coins were extracted magically from the cylinder one at a time. The interest of modern audiences is likely to diminish during four such repetitive productions. Consequently, John produces all four coins at once. In doing this he has also clarified the basic effect: the transposition of the cork and coins. To the same end, he has eliminated the incidental effect of passing one of the coins through his hand, which Ramsay included among the vanishes. John believes that this penetration only detracts from the baffling effect of the vanishes. Despite this structural editing, John's handling remains in large part faithful to the original; and he is quick to add that he does not view his revisions as improvements over Mr. Ramsay's routine, but only a retailoring that better fits his style of performance.

Here I will insert a personal note: Over the years I have seen several highly accomplished performers present the Ramsay routine, and at points in the presentation I found the effect became confusing. I have also seen John perform his version of "The Cylinder and Coins" on at least six different occasions, and in his hands the effect is always crystal clear. Nor is the deceptiveness decreased by the elimination of feints. So good is his misdirection, even when one knows the details of the handling, one can still be fooled repeatedly. This trick is a fine example of John's talent for carving to the heart of an effect, and paring away the extraneous from it.

The element of misdirection was given little attention by Victor Farelli in his monograph, *John Ramsay's Cylinder and Coins*, much to Mr. Ramsay's dismay; and even in Andrew Galloway's worshipful tribute, *The Ramsay Classics*, much of Ramsay's charismatic misdirection in this trick must be intuited by the reader. (Nevertheless, Mr. Galloway's books on John Ramsay are strongly recommended to anyone who wishes to understand the exceptional thinking of this master of misdirection.) John, in his interpretation, has made a concerted effort to apply misdirection following Mr. Ramsay's precepts. In teaching the Carney handling, these points of misdirection will be given an importance that we believe Mr. Ramsay would approve.

Needed are four silver dollars, a matching hollow stack of coins, a cylinder that fits over the stack, a wand and two duplicate disks of cork.



figure 38

The hollow stack consists of three silver dollars with most of their centers drilled out, topped by an intact fourth dollar. These coins are permanently glued together in a straight stack (Figure 38). Some magicians think it more convincing if the coins are glued in a slightly staggered configuration; and for years manufacturers of magic props have constructed hollow stacks that are riveted near one edge, so that the coins may be spread. In John's opinion, both embellishments are functionless. The stack is never long exposed to the audience; and if you handle the straight stack correctly, it can be entirely convincing. On the other hand, if your handling arouses suspicions of a solid stack, staggering and rivets aren't likely to repair the damage done.

The disks of cork are sections cut from any bottle cork of suitable size. The disks must fit loosely inside the hollow stack of coins. A slice of cork approximately three-quarters of an inch in diameter and three-sixteenths of an inch thick is a good size.

The cylinder should fit easily over the hollow stack and the loose coins; yet it should be a close enough fit that you can, with a light squeeze of the fingers and thumb at its base, hold the hollow stack securely inside as you raise the tube. The cylinder measures two and a half inches to three inches in height. The cylinder John uses is made of black leather, but a length of cardboard tubing will work just as well. Mr. Ramsay used a cardboard tube, which he painted silver. The silvering was an extra precaution: it aided in camouflaging the rim of the hollow stack, should its bottom edge be exposed accidentally when the stack was picked up inside the cylinder.

Set the props for performance as follows: Stack the four loose coins and place one of the cork disks on top of them. Set the hollow stack over the cork and on top of the coins. Put the second cork disk on top of the hollow stack (Figure 39), and set the cylinder over everything. This assembly should be resting on the table when you begin. The wand can be anywhere convenient.

As you introduce the trick, with your right hand, pick up the wand and place it under your left arm, pressing it to your side with about two-

thirds of its length extending forward. Then push back your sleeves, making it clear with this gesture that they will play no part in what is about to be seen; and simultaneously let your hands be seen empty. Now slide the cylinder and its contents to a position slightly to your right and, with the right hand, lift the cylinder while squeezing its sides to retain the hollow stack inside.

"In this trick we use a little slice of cork..." With your left hand, pick up the cork and display it on the center joints of the fingers. Then set the cylinder over the cork, while allowing the hollow stack inside to slide down, covering the cork.

"...and a cylinder with no top or bottom." To emphasize this simple fact, insert the tip of your right forefinger briefly into the cylinder. At the same time, place your left thumbtip on the upper rim, anchoring the cylinder to the base of the left fingers. Now invert both hands at once while



figure 39



figure 40

withdrawing the forefinger from the cylinder and letting the second cork fall onto the right fingers. In the same action, curl the left fingers, tightening them across the bottom of the tube and squeezing it to prevent the hollow stack from falling through (Figure 40). This apparent dropping of the cork through the cylinder establishes in a nonchalant way that the tube is empty.

Immediately turn your left hand palm-up again, bringing the cylinder upright. With your palm-up right hand, grip the wand at a point near your left arm and take it from under the arm. Let the cork lie openly in the right fingers as you take the wand. At the same time, move the left thumb from the top of the cylinder to its base

and, with the thumb, tip the top of the cylinder forward, toward the audience, leaving the hollow stack concealed in the cupped left fingers (Figure 41). Insert the outer end of the wand through the cylinder, lift it from the left hand and spin the cylinder briefly on the wand, showing it unquestionably empty.

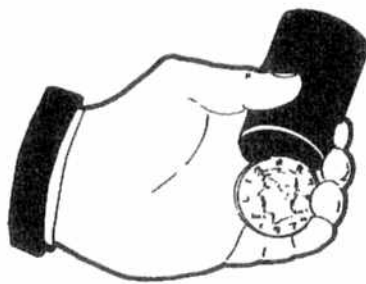


figure 41

"Now, the trick isn't with the cylinder or the cork." Here, reverse the previous actions, using the left hand to remove the cylinder from the wand and tipping it upright on the left fingers, over the finger-palmed stack.

"The trick is with these four silver dollars." Using the tip of the wand, knock over the stack of coins on the table, causing them to spread leftward. Then replace the wand under your left arm and hold the right hand palm-up, displaying the cork again. Without a pause, invert the right hand over the cylinder, tossing the cork into it. Then, with the right hand, immediately grasp the cylinder at its base and raise it from the left fingers, lifting the hollow stack as well. This leaves the duplicate cork disk exposed on the fingers, while its twin lies inside the cylinder, on top of the stack.

"The cork is a sort of marker. It becomes important a little later on." Lay the left hand's cork onto the table, a bit to your right; and set the cylinder (and hollow stack) over the cork.

"So we have four silver dollars..." With the fingers of both hands, spread out the row of coins evenly before you. "...and a little piece of cork." With your right hand, lift the cylinder and stack an inch or two, briefly exposing the cork on the table as you mention it; then lower the cylinder back over the cork.

"Now, these are real coins, not rubber novelty-store coins." With your right hand, pick up the coin at the right end of the row and tap it on the table or another coin to demonstrate its solidity. Then turn the right hand palm-up, gripping the coin by its bottom edge between the tips of the forefinger and thumb. Display the coin broadside to the audience as you gaze at it and say, "If I wanted something this solid to disappear, I couldn't do it myself." Begin to move your left hand toward the coin. At the same moment move your gaze from the coin to the audience, making eye

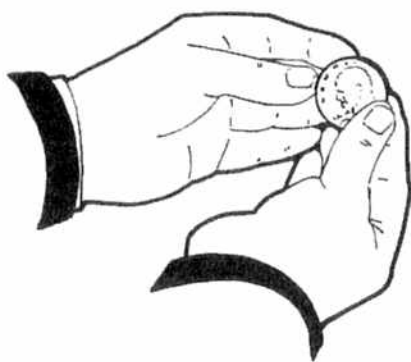


figure 42

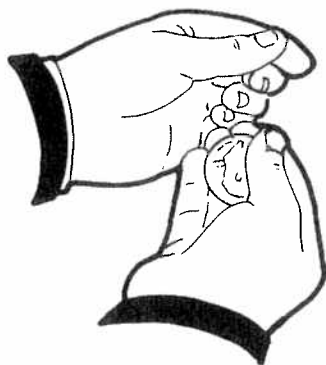


figure 43

contact. This sudden shift of your gaze misdirects the audience's attention momentarily away from the coin. It is at this moment that you execute the Ramsay pivot vanish. It is disarmingly simple: While the right hand remains stationary, the left hand moves in front of the coin to grasp it, palm toward you (Figure 42). Begin to close the left fingers smoothly around the coin, with the fourth finger leading the rest. As the inner phalanx of the fourth finger contacts the edge of the coin, relax the right fingers' pressure slightly and let the coin pivot leftward and down, behind the right fingers (Figure 43). The right fingers do not move as the coin swivels into its concealed position. Instead, gravity does the work for you. Continue to close the left fingers loosely, without a pause, and press the tip of the left thumb to the middle phalanx of the forefinger, as if grasping the coin in a relaxed grip.

"I'd have to use the magic wand." As you say this, look at your left hand. Simultaneously move the right hand from the left hand and toward the wand. During this action — and not before — use the right thumb to slide the coin slightly inward and into finger palm. However, the thumb must be out of the audience's sight for the briefest possible moment. Once the coin is in finger palm, the thumb resumes its place, pressed lightly to the tip of the forefinger, until it is needed to grip the wand. If the spectators lose sight of the thumb, they will assume it is doing something covert, and this assumption would be disarmingly accurate. With the palm-up right hand, grasp the wand as you did before and bring it from under the arm. Wave it gracefully once or twice over the left hand. On the final wave John makes a toneless whistling sound, as if he were forcefully blowing out a candle: "*Whoosh!*" This punctuates the moment of the vanish. Pause for a moment, building a bit of suspense. Then open the left fingers and

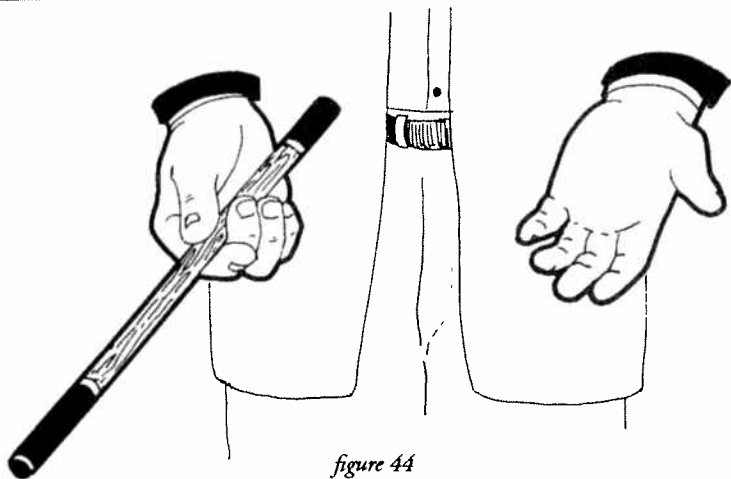


figure 44

display the hand front and back, showing the coin gone. (This dramatic pause, though it will not be mentioned again, is a technique used with each of the vanishes in this routine.)

As you direct all attention to the left hand, casually turn the right hand to a relaxed palm-up position, letting the palm be seen empty. The coin is hidden naturally in the curled fingers as they hold the wand (Figure 44).

One thing that impresses the viewer when watching John do this vanish — and for that matter the entire trick — is that his actions are relaxed and unhurried. He affects an attitude that the coin really is gone, and this contributes heavily in swaying the audience toward this conviction. This attitude is the essence of good sleight-of-hand: one must have the audacity to hold an object secretly while giving no clue, not even the smallest hint, that one's hand isn't completely empty.

"I'll do that again, even though nobody asked." Place the wand once more under your left arm; then, with the left hand, pick up the second coin from the table and transfer it to the right hand, where you hold it at the tips of the thumb and forefinger, in position for the Ramsay pivot vanish.

"Here's the second coin. I can make these vanish separately, individually or one at a time." As you say this, watch the coin you are holding, while you move your left hand toward it. Then look up and make eye contact with someone in the audience. "Which would you prefer, sir? Separately, individually or one at a time?" It is as you look up and ask the spectator this question that you execute the pivot vanish, again misdirecting away from the sleight. As soon as the left hand pretends to grip the coin, turn

your gaze on it and move your right hand inward to take the wand from under your arm. Within this movement, slide the newly vanished coin gently downward and over the finger-palmed dollar. Given a light touch, no discernible noise will be made. (Well-worn coins — “soft coins” as they are sometimes called — also help to silence such maneuvers.) Once you have taken the wand from beneath your arm, stop moving for a few moments as you wait for the spectator’s answer. We’ll assume it is “One at a time.”

“One at a time? I’ve never done that before. I’ll have to improvise a little bit. Here we go.” Focus attention on your left hand as you wave the wand over it, at the same time giving the audience a glimpse of your empty right palm. “*Whoosh!* There it goes.” Open the left hand and display it on both sides, showing it empty. Again the right hand comes to rest palm-up, holding the wand and letting its empty palm be seen (a favorite stratagem of Ramsay’s).

“The second coin is gone. That leaves me with just two coins.” Here you replace the wand under your left arm as your left hand stacks the two remaining coins on the table, then picks up both by their edges, thumb on one side, fingers on the other. Raise the left hand, turning it palm-up and presenting the two stacked coins broadside to the audience, in what might be called French drop grip.

Begin to move the right hand toward the left as you look at the cylinder on the table and say, “Oh, don’t forget the little piece of cork over here.” As you direct attention momentarily away from your hands, you execute a subtle coin exchange. Outwardly you appear to take one of the left hand’s two coins and hold it at the right fingertips. In reality, much more happens. As the right hand moves toward the left hand, the right fingers straighten and the right thumb pins the two finger-palmed coins to the

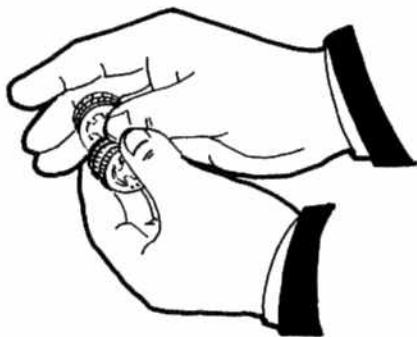
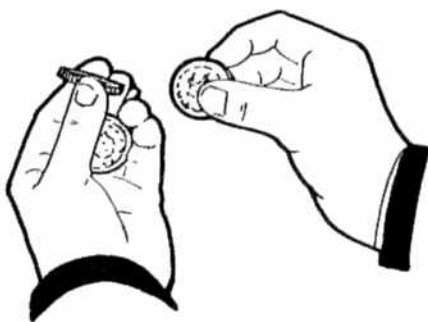


figure 45

middle phalanges of the fingers. This position of the thumb behind the fingers will be interpreted by the spectators as a natural action preparatory to gripping the left hand’s coins. The right fingers move over the left hand’s two coins, screening them momentarily from the audience’s view (Figure 45).

*figure 46**figure 47*

The instant the coins are covered, the left thumb swiftly lowers them flat into left-hand finger palm. (Some slight noise is permissible, as two coins are openly being handled.) The left fingers and thumb then immediately grip the right hand's palmed pair edgewise, substituting these two coins for the ones just released. The right hand moves back to the right, brushing the tips of the fingers over the surface of the forward coin, and draws that coin away (Figure 46), holding it gripped at the fingertips (Figure 47). Without hesitation, the left thumb snaps its remaining coin from French drop grip to a fingertip grip identical to the right hand's. Then, together, both hands turn briefly palms-down, still displaying their coins. All this is done as a smooth continuous action, in the space of about a second.

Pause briefly; then return the right hand's coin to the left hand, forming a two-coin spread at the fingertips. Both the secret exchange and the brief display of the coins is done while you continue to stare at the cylinder. Throughout all this you act as if you are going to show the coins, but then you interrupt the display as you remember the cork under the cylinder. Referring to it you continue, "That becomes important just a little later on." With your empty right hand, grasp the cylinder just below center and raise it for a brief moment, lifting the hollow stack as well, to show the cork on the table. Do not, of course, squeeze the cylinder so tightly that the pressure can be perceived by the audience.

Replace the cylinder and stack over the cork, and during this action, let the right hand be seen clearly empty. This brief display of the cork is purposely used to save the effect from being "too perfect". Later, when the spectators think back, trying to reconstruct how the trick might have been done, they may remember that you did pick up the cylinder after several coins had vanished, and while the movements used were

impeccably clean, the action provides a false trail of thought: "He might *somehow* have slipped the coins under the cylinder when he picked it up that time." While this line of reasoning leads to no genuinely tenable solution, it does distract the mind from the true method. If the cylinder were left untouched until the stack of coins is revealed under it, there is one less route for conjecture, and that much more likelihood that the real method might be surmised.

You now resume the action you have interrupted: "Two coins left..." Appear to take one of the visible coins back into the right hand, but instead you make another secret exchange. This maneuver is an idea of Roger Klause's. Move the fingers of the palm-down right hand in front of the spread pair of coins, concealing them for a brief moment from the audience. Without hesitation, place the two coins at the left fingertips directly into right-hand finger palm. Immediately bend the left second finger and thumb inward, grip the left hand's finger-palmed coins by their outer edges (Figure 48) and straighten the thumb and finger, carrying the

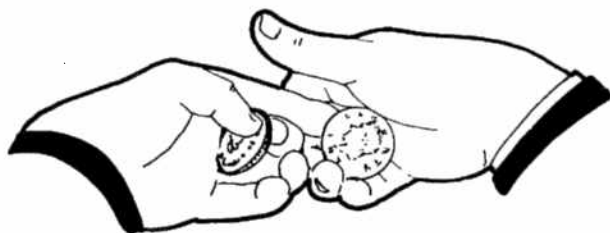


figure 48

pair toward the left fingertips. Again without hesitation, grip one of these coins between the right thumb and second finger and separate the hands, displaying one coin at the fingertips of each. The two vanished coins are again in right-hand finger palm, after both hands have been seen empty. This pair of hand-to-hand exchanges, when done casually and unfalteringly, is a most convincing and subtle way of showing the two coins really have vanished. However, do not treat these actions as proving displays.

The third coin will now vanish, through a method of John's invention:

"...and in order to make these disappear I wave this one..." Indicate by gesture the right hand's coin. "...over that one, counter..." Turn slightly to your left, and circle the right hand's coin slowly around the left's, moving the right hand over the left hand and inward, then under the left

hand and outward. But suddenly stop this motion as if you are uncertain. "Yes, I'm pretty sure that's right — counterclockwise." Let the left hand's coin drop onto the left palm and snap the left fingers closed over it. Then resume the right hand's orbits around the left hand. After two or three circuits, stop. "And as you can see, it completely..." Turn the left hand palm-up and focus all attention on it. Now open the hand, revealing the coin on the palm. "Oops!" As the left hand opens, let the right hand drop a short distance to waist level, where it relaxes at the wrist, turning the fingertips slightly inward toward your stomach. This small adjustment in the position of the hand conceals the coin at the fingertips from the audience, and moves the hand just beyond the focus of attention. Secretly pull the coin inward, sliding it silently onto the finger-palmed stack. Leave it there and press the tip of the thumb once more against the fingertips.

Now look up at the audience as you say, "I'm sorry — it's clockwise, I guess." As you misdirect away from the hands in this manner, close the left fingers loosely over their coin, simultaneously turning the hand partially palm-down (the back of the hand is turned more leftward than upward). In doing so, let the coin drop onto the fingertips and shift it quickly backward into heel grip; i.e., caught between the heel of the hand and the fingertips. At the same time, swing the right hand outward at the wrist, so that the right fingertips, for just an instant, contact the heel of the left hand. Without the smallest hesitation, transfer the heel-clipped coin to the right fingertips (Figure 49). Timing here is crucial to the success of the sleight. In an uninterrupted action, move the right hand forward, starting a circuit around the left hand in a direction counter to the previous circles. Look down at the hands again, drawing attention to them while the right hand makes three slow circuits of the left. Say, "That's the proper way — and, *whoosh!* — it disappears!" Turn the left hand palm-up and slowly open it, showing it empty. Let both sides of the hand be clearly seen.

"That leaves one last coin. Now, some magicians would try to trick you at this point — yeh, *no kidding!*"



figure 49

As you say this, hold your right hand palm-up, with the last visible coin displayed at the fingertips, in position for the pivot vanish. "After they put it in their hand..." Bring the left hand in front of the coin and close the left fingers, apparently taking it. However, this time, as you perform the pivot vanish, silently slide the coin immediately onto the finger-palmed stack. You can keep the hands together a bit longer than usual this time, because you wish to create a bit of suspicion. This affords you a few extra moments to palm the coin noiselessly. Notice that you do not misdirect away from the sleight, for this time you are performing a feint.

Separate the hands, following the left with your eyes. As the right hand moves a few inches to the right, place your thumb on the far edge of the stack of palmed coins and raise it, tipping the stack up on edge. The coins are held securely between the thumb and the base of the fingers (Figure 50). This is not a Frikell (a.k.a. Ramsay) thumb palm. The coins are not held deep in the fork of the thumb, but are well forward of it.

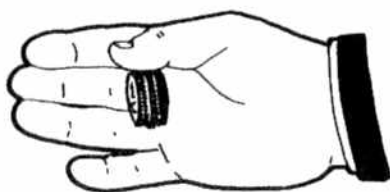


figure 50



figure 51

"...they try to sneak it back out."

Bring the right hand over the closed left hand, which at this point should be turned back outward, and touch the right fingers to the back of the fist. This brings the stacked coins directly to the left fingertips, where they are then clipped in left heel grip (Figure 51). Let the hands linger together for a moment, then separate them, turning both palm-down while closing the right hand into a fist. Follow the right hand with your eyes. Where there was mild suspicion before, it has now been stoked into full-fledged doubt.

Pause for a moment and continue to stare at your right fist. Then say, "I don't do that," and open your right hand, palm-outward, showing it empty as you shake it back and forth in a gesture of denial. Look up at the audience

now and smile. Their gaze follows yours, and they look up at you. Having exposed the feint, their attention on your hands lapses for a moment. They laugh and relax — and you take advantage of this misdirection.

“It’s here,” you say as you tap the back of your left fist with the right fingers. In that instant you steal back the stack of coins: the right thumb passes below the left fist, contacts the far edge of the stack, and catches it again in the oblique forward thumb palm explained above (Figure 50 again). There must be no lingering this time. The transfer is done quickly and surely, as you continue to look at the audience, not at your hands. When the right hand moves away from the left, use the right thumb to lower the stack flat onto the fingers and back into finger palm. These actions are simply the reverse of those in the preceding right-to-left-hand transfer.

In a continuous motion, raise the right hand, turning it palm toward the audience, forefinger extended upward in a gesture of emphasis. The hand appears empty, for the stack of coins is concealed in the loosely curled second, third and fourth fingers (Figure 52: the Ramsay subtlety again). This gesture is accompanied by the single word, “Look!”

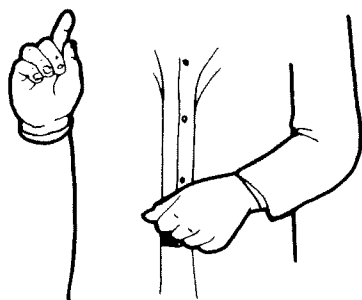


figure 52

This pose is held for no longer than it takes to say the word, and must not appear staged or purposeful.

Now look at your left hand as your right hand, turning partially palm-up, moves to take the wand from under your arm. Insert the end of the wand into the curl of the left forefinger and thumb. “All I do is push the wand through...” Push the wand half way through the left fist, then turn the fist over so that you can grasp the opposite end of the wand in your right hand. Pull the wand to your right and from the left fist. Do this in such a manner that no suspicion of manipulation can be entertained.

“...and wave it over the top...” Do so. “...and, *whoosh!* There it goes.” Open the left hand and show it front and back. The coin is gone.

“Now, I know where they go, because I’ve seen the trick before: underneath the little piece of cork right over here.” With your left hand, grasp the cylinder. Pause for an instant, to build suspense. Then lift the

cylinder, revealing the hollow stack with the cork sitting atop it. Slip the cylinder over the wand and spin it briefly. This serves as an applause cue. With your left hand, pick the cork disk off the stack as the spectators respond, and place it on the table, roughly a foot to the left of the stack.

“Now I’ll explain that once again for the slower students. This time, instead of covering the cork, I’m going to cover the coins.” Remove the cylinder from the wand and set it briefly over the cork as you mention it. Immediately lift the cylinder from the cork and place it over the hollow stack; but seem to have a bit of trouble and remove the cylinder, setting it down just behind the stack. Then frame the stack with the left fingers on all sides and pretend to straighten the coins. This, of course, is pure bluff, but must be acted convincingly. It is a touch that can throw even knowledgeable observers off the track. Following this little ruse, replace the cylinder over the stack.

“The coins are covered here, and the cork is in my hand.” With the left hand, pick up the exposed cork disk by its edges and display it in French drop position. Also place the wand under your left arm. Concentrate your gaze first on the cylinder, as you cover the stack; then turn it to the cork in your left hand.

When the right hand leaves the wand behind, the thumb contacts the far side of the finger-palmed stack and tips it up on edge (Figure 50 again). This allows the right fingers to straighten briefly, assuming a more natural position as they prepare to take the cork from the left hand. This palming position is maintained for only a moment, while the right hand moves to meet the left.

Raise your eyes from the cork to look at the audience as you say, “I’ll caution you, don’t blink or you’ll miss it.” The shift in gaze and your words again misdirect from the hands as they execute a sleight: pretend to take the cork into the right hand, but actually perform the French drop, letting the cork fall into the cupped left fingers as the right fingers screen the action and close as if grasping it. In fact, the fingers close around the stack of coins. It is important to the illusion of the French drop that the left thumb does not move, and that the left hand remains stationary for a second after the sleight is executed, permitting the empty space between the left thumb and fingers — where the cork was seen a moment before — to be perceived by the spectators.

“Watch!” Turn your gaze to the clenched right hand and move the fingers in a sort of crumpling action. Suddenly snap your right forefinger

off your thumb and at the same time make the coins rattle loudly. Pause for a brief moment.

"The coins are here..." Open the right hand palm-up and let the four coins cascade off the fingertips onto the table.

"...the cork is back..." With your right hand, lift the cylinder and the hollow stack, exposing the cork on the table.

"...and the trick is over." Set the cylinder and hollow stack onto the curled left fingers, covering the hidden cork there. Immediately use the left thumb to tip the cylinder forward, while leaving the stack and cork concealed in the curled fingers (Figure 41). With your right hand, remove the wand from under your arm, insert it into the cylinder and spin the cylinder on it, visually concluding the trick. Take the cylinder back into the left hand, slipping it over the hollow stack and cork; then pocket the lot, or put them away in a bag or your case.

Or do this: With your right hand, pick up the cork from the table and drop it into the top of the cylinder. Immediately lift the cylinder, taking the hollow stack with it, and expose the duplicate cork on the left fingertips. With the left hand, gather the loose coins into a stack on the table, set the cork on top of them, and place the cylinder (with the hollow stack) over the coins and cork. You are now reset for the next performance.

Use both hands to pick up the consolidated items as a unit and put them away. Do not, of course, squeeze the sides of the cylinder to pick everything up, as this would expose one of the principles used in the routine. The entire process of tidying up is done casually, almost absent-mindedly, during the final applause, without giving any attention to the actions.

Despite the length of the description, this trick consumes less than three minutes in performance, and within that time a lot of magic happens. The sleights are not difficult, but it requires practice to do them in a relaxed and unfaltering manner. It is the mastery of the misdirection, though, that will take the most study and rehearsal. It is vital to the success of this exquisite piece of magic. John believes that the Ramsay "Cylinder and Coins" is one of the single finest lessons on misdirection in all magic. If you master it you will have acquired techniques of inestimable value to every trick you perform, repaying you far in excess of the time and effort you will expend. ☺

SIDE-POCKET TRANSPO

Effect: The problem of causing two cards to transpose is centuries old and, when clearly presented, it is an impressive feat. The methods that provide the most startling and direct transpositions require a duplicate card or a gaff. Nevertheless, magicians over the decades have striven to equal these results without recourse to special cards or duplicates. In this article, and the next, two solutions are given that come as close to achieving that goal as any I've seen.

Two cards are clearly shown, fronts and backs, and one is placed in the performer's coat pocket. The remaining card transforms into the pocketed one, and when the card in the pocket is brought forth, it is seen to be the card just vanished. ♣

Method: You will be working with the cards second and third from the top of the pack. The faces of these cards should contrast dramatically with each other. If two such cards are not naturally in these positions, cut the pack or openly arrange the cards to situate a suitable pair under the top card. If one card of this pair is an ace of spades or a joker, so much the better, as these are particularly easy to remember. For this explanation, we will assume the card in the second position is the ace of spades, and the card beneath it is the king of hearts.

The action is begun with a double lift to display the ace of spades apparently on top of the pack. Any direct and deceptive double lift can be used. John's recommended technique employs the Vernon push-off from *Dai Vernon's Ultimate Secrets of Card Magic* (p. 54). It is done in this manner:

With the deck held face-down in left-hand dealing position, form a left fourth-finger break under the top two cards. Then introduce the very tip of the left third finger into the break. Now bend the left thumb inward, in preparation to push over the top card. The tip of the thumb should lie near the center of the card and roughly in line with the third fingertip (Figure 53). You now apparently push the top card over, but you actually move the double card above the break about an inch to the right, perfectly



figure 53

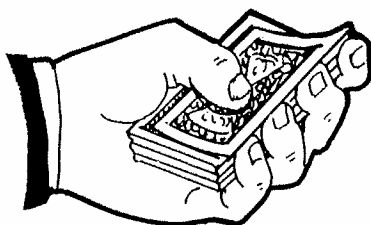


figure 54

squared. This is accomplished by straightening the thumb and third finger rightward in precise synchronization (Figure 54). There is a knack to this action that only practice can provide, but when mastered this is arguably the most natural and dependable push-off technique yet devised.

With your palm-up right hand, grip the double card at its inner right corner and turn the hand palm-down, exposing the ace to the audience. When you do this, keep the right hand and double card close to the deck, and use the tip of the left forefinger to pull inward lightly on free non-index corner of the double. This bows the card slightly, preventing telltale separation at the edges. It also keeps deck, double card and hands all within a confined visual frame, rather than splitting the focus, which would be the result if the right hand carried the double away from the pack.

Name the ace as you exhibit it clearly. Then turn the double card face-down onto the deck. You can simply place the double square onto the pack, then push over the top card; but John employs another Vernon refinement here: As the right hand turns palm-up, rotating the double card face-down over the pack, the fingertips secretly swivel the lower card (the ace) to the left. You split the double card in this manner just as it comes face-down over the pack. The ace should be aligned squarely with the top of the deck while the upper card lies angled to the right (Figure 55, a stop-action pose). Use the tip of the left forefinger, at the front of the pack, as a guide for aligning the ace as it moves flush. When executed smoothly and with the proper timing, the displayed card never appears to come square with the deck. (See *Dai Vernon's Further Inner Secrets of Card Magic*, p. 70, for the original description of this replacement.)

"I'm going to put the ace of spades here in this pocket." With your free right hand, pat your right-side coat pocket. The comment and gesture are used to provide motivation for the replacement of the ace on the deck, which would otherwise be illogical. With the right hand, remove the top card (an indifferent one) from the pack and, taking care not to expose its face, slip it cleanly into the indicated pocket.



figure 55

As everyone's eyes follow the right hand in its task, push over the top two cards of the deck, and catch a fourth-finger break beneath them in the action of squaring them once more with the pack. You are now prepared for a double turnover. Bring the right hand back to the pack and flip the double card face-up there. John purposely carries the double forward slightly, so that it lands outjogged approximately half an inch on the deck. He pauses very

briefly, letting the king of hearts be noted, before he then uses the left forefinger to push the double square with the pack. This little touch makes the turnover appear all the more fair and casual.

You will now perform the first transformation from *The Expert at the Card Table* (pp. 151-152). Jeff Busby has recently brought to light the information that this color change is likely the invention of Harry Houdini (ref. P.T. Selbit's *The Magician's Handbook*, pp. 27-28). The change is well-known to magicians, but is seldom seen performed. This is due not so much to difficulty as to a certain mechanical quality of the movements that is hard to escape. John is one of the few I've seen who has conquered this problem, and the transformation in his hands looks deft, relaxed and entirely magical. Here is how this is achieved.

Raise the pack from the left palm to the fingertips — thumb at the outer left corner, forefinger at the front end, and the other fingers aligned along the right side near the outer right corner. Tip the front of the pack downward to ensure that the audience can see the face of the king. You will now secretly outjog the king, using an idea of Howard Schwarzman's:

Bring the right hand, fully open and palm-up, adjacent to the right side of the pack (Figure 56). Then turn it palm-down over the deck, as if closing a book. Think of the right fourth finger and left edge of the palm (the hypothenar) as a hinge on which the right hand revolves.

The first portion of the right hand to contact the face of the king should be the tip of the fourth finger. As the hand settles over the pack, move it

outward a short distance, while using the tip of the fourth finger to slide the king forward for roughly a quarter to one half of an inch. This forward motion is done simultaneously with the turning of the right hand, and therefore is concealed by it. The left forefinger should follow the king without resistance, remaining at its outer end.

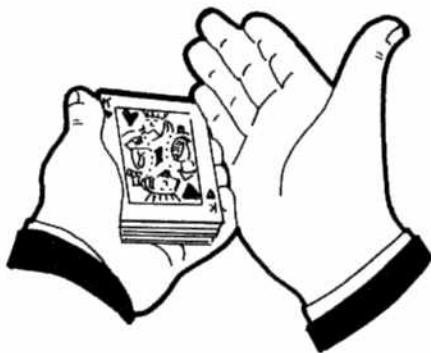


figure 56

With the left hand, carry the deck forward, from beneath the right hand, while that hand remains stationary. As you do this, tilt the front of the deck down a little farther, bringing the face of the king again into clear view. At the same time, press the base of the right palm (that portion of the hand adjacent to the wrist) very lightly against the exposed inner end of the card below the king (the ace), and hold this card back, hidden beneath the right hand. As you bring the deck into view, say, "Now remember, the king of hearts is here." This comment provides an outward reason for the left hand's action.

Halt the left hand the instant that the outer end of the ace clears the inner end of the king. The ace is held securely pressed to the right hand by the inner end of the deck. This allows you to lift the right fingers from the pack (Figure 57), giving the illusion of complete separation.

Note here how the usual outward and back sliding action of the right hand over the deck, described by Erdnase, has been eliminated: the forward motion is concealed by the act of turning the right hand down, and the reverse motion is replaced with a forward movement of the left hand and deck, transforming an objectionable mechanical action into one that appears natural.

To effect the change of the king to the ace, bring the right hand forward to cover the deck, secretly sliding the ace over the king. The instant it can do so unobserved, the left forefinger pushes the king flush

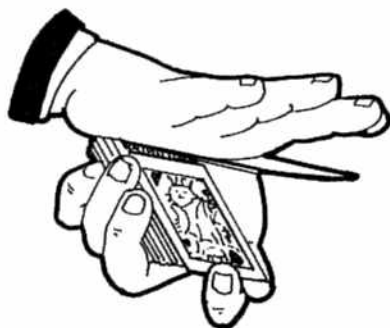


figure 57

with the pack and the ace. Use the left thumb and fingers to “box” the cards, guiding the ace into perfect alignment with the pack. Allow gravity to do the work here. In a smooth and graceful motion, wave the right hand from side to side over the deck, then lift it away, revealing the change.

Let a moment or two pass while the audience takes in the transformation. When their attention relaxes, pull down with the left fourth finger on the inner right corner of the deck and release the top two cards from the fingertip. Then catch a break under these two cards with the third fingertip. This procedure will be aided by the reverse bridge in the face-up ace and king.

Once the break has been formed, perform another Vernon push-off as you apparently thumb over the ace. You will now execute a minor variant of Edward Marlo’s stud turn palm (ref. *Thirty Five Years Later*, p. 56). In this sleight, as you take the ace from the deck and into the right hand, you secretly maneuver the king into right-hand classic palm. The details are these:

Bring the right hand palm-down above the double card as it rests sidejogged on the pack. At no time should the hand conceal more than half the ace from the audience. The instant the right hand is in position, use your left fingertips to push the lower card of the double (the king) to the right and into the right palm. No movement should be visible: the left thumb remains stationary and holds the ace steady on the pack as the king is slid over.

At this point your right thumb should rest along the inner end of the ace, with the right inner corner of that card lying in the fork of the thumb. Sweep the right thumb around the end of the ace and underneath, until

it can contact the outer right corner of the card and press it against the right forefinger (Figure 58). The thumb’s action further seats the king into classic palm as the right hand automatically contracts with the movement.

Now revolve the right hand partially palm-up, simultaneously removing the ace from the deck and turning it end over end. At this point the ace



figure 58

is held with its back toward you and the upper end directed forward (Figure 59). Held in this position, the right hand looks relaxed while it conceals the palmed king. This could not be said if the card was held fully upright and the backs of the fingers were entirely exposed to the audience. It is likely that the inner right corner



figure 59

of the ace will be trapped between the palmed card and the fingertips. To resolve this problem, as the hand is turning, simply straighten the fingers and thumb slightly until the corners of the cards clear one another.

As you execute the deal palm, misdirect from it by looking at the audience as you comment, "The king of hearts vanishes and the ace of spades takes its place." You must not, at this moment, think yourself to be displaying the ace in your right hand. The ace was displayed while it was on the deck. When you take it into the hand, the display is finished; you are now simply removing it from the pack. You wish to diminish attention on this card (and consequently on the right hand) as its importance to the plot wanes.

With the left hand set the deck aside; then take the ace from the right hand, still holding it face toward the audience. Drop the right hand casually to your side as you once more focus attention on the ace. "The funny thing is that this ace used to be in my pocket." As you mention the pocket, reach into it with the right hand. "But now the king of hearts is there." Slowly bring the right hand from the pocket, holding the king at the fingertips. Display both cards, then return them to the deck as you conclude the trick.

An indifferent card still remains in your pocket. There is no rush to return it to the deck. Wait and choose your time to do so, making sure that the action goes undetected; or simply leave it in the pocket if it is not required. ☺

TRANS-ESSENCE

This solution to the card transposition problem was inspired by an idea shown to John by Alphonso, a talented Los Angeles magician. Alphonso's original method, and John's interpretation, were published together in James Patton's February 1989 "Magicana" column (*Genii*, Vol. 52, No. 8, pp. 501-504). The approach taken is intriguing, for only two ungimmicked cards are used; the rest of the deck is out of play. Consequently, it is one of the "purest" — perhaps Spartan is the more accurate word — approaches conceivable. This element fascinated John and prompted his experimentation with Alphonso's original method. The fruit of that experimentation follows:

As any two cards may be used, you can remove a pair from the pack, or have them nominated by the spectators — the only restriction being that the cards should contrast strikingly with each other. For teaching purposes we will again employ the ace of spades and the king of hearts. Take these two cards from the deck and place the balance aside. Hold the ace and king face-up in your left hand.

Explain to the audience that you will place one of these cards in your pocket, and ask someone to designate which card it will be. Emphasize that you will pocket the card he names, and that he should not let you influence his decision in the least. In truth, it is irrelevant which card goes into your pocket; but stressing the freedom of the spectator's choice serves two valuable psychological functions: First, it makes the location of the chosen card more vivid in the spectators' minds, thus clarifying the transposition when it occurs. Second, it causes everyone to anticipate some effect other than a transposition. This false anticipation misdirects from the critical early actions of the trick, mentally obscuring them, and makes the transposition a genuine surprise.

Take the card named into your right hand — let's suppose it is the ace — and hold the other card in your left hand. Apparently pocket the ace, but in reality you palm it. Your right hand carries the ace to the right-side coat pocket, but once in the pocket it quickly maneuvers the card into

gambler's cop (Figure 60) and exits the pocket, seemingly empty (see p. 48 for a full description of this palm).

As you bring your right hand from the pocket, direct attention away from it and to the king in your left hand. This is accomplished by focusing your gaze on your left hand as you turn it palm-down to display the back of its card.

Keep your right hand close to the body, guarding against accidental exposure of the palmed ace, as the hand moves from the pocket to somewhere above waist level directly in front of you. Look up from your left hand, as you make eye contact with the spectators and comment on the king. Simultaneously turn the left hand palm-up again as you move it inward to meet the right hand; and lay the face-up king squarely onto the face-up ace concealed in right-hand gambler's cop.

Immediately frame the cards with the right fingers and thumb to ensure that they are in perfect register; then curl the right forefinger under the outer end of the double. With the aid of this finger beneath, and the thumb and second finger at opposite front corners, raise the double card from the right palm and hold it there momentarily, while the left hand retakes it. With the palm-down left hand, grasp the double card by its opposite sides, thumb at the inner right, second finger at the inner left, and the forefinger curled lightly onto the face (Figure 61). Relax the left hand's hold on the double and snap the two cards over as one, letting the left edge escape from the tip of the second finger. Firmly pinch the cards between the left thumb and forefinger as they flip face-down, preventing them from separating. As you snap the double card over, it should be held directly above the right hand. The snapping over of the double is done virtually in the right hand, which waits to reclaim it immediately in gambler's cop. Without the slightest



figure 60



figure 61

*figure 62*

hesitation, smoothly steal away the bottom card (the king) by buckling it with the tip of the right second finger (Figure 62). Keep the right hand stationary as the left hand moves up and forward, carrying away the top card.

“If I give the king a flick like this...” Here loudly snap the inner left corner of the ace off the left second finger. Then dramatically expose the face of the card to the audience, revealing the near instantaneous change. “...it changes into the ace.”

While attention is riveted on the left hand's card, move the right hand directly to the right coat pocket, reach inside, then slowly withdraw the hand, holding the king at the fingertips. “And the king is in my pocket.” As the audience responds to this disclosure, display both cards front and back and conclude. ♡

INSCRUTABLE

Effect: The performer reveals that, with the exception of the jokers, he has the ability to know the position of any card in the pack, no matter how well shuffled the cards may be. To demonstrate this rather wild claim he spreads through the face-down deck, naming various cards as he comes to them. This demonstration, however, is something less than impressive, as he is obviously looking at the faces of the cards before he calls out their names. The farce is brought to a halt when he finds a face-up joker in the pack.

"I always have trouble with the jokers." Saying this, he turns the joker face-down and inserts it back into the center of the deck. "When you know the positions of all the cards in the pack, the aces are very easy to find. For instance, the top card, the ace of spades, is..." Here he turns over the top card to find it is a joker. "Here, I'll just put it over here to get it out of the way." He places the joker onto the table.

"Now, the ace of hearts is about half way down in the pack and..." He cuts the deck near center and turns up a card there. It is another joker. He places it onto the table with the first.

"Anyway, the bottom ace, the ace of..." He turns the deck face-up, only to find another joker. He tosses it aside with the other two.

"It looks like jokers are popping up everywhere." Suddenly a face-up joker pops out of the center of the deck. "Well, there's only one thing to do, I guess — just wave the joker over these like this." He waves the face-up joker over the three tabled cards, then flips them face-up. In that instant, all four jokers change to the aces. ♣

Method: This is a variant presentation and handling of Derek Dingle's "Regal Royal Flush" (ref. Lorayne's *Afterthoughts*, pp. 66-71, and Kaufman's *The Complete Works of Derek Dingle*, pp. 158-160). John has trimmed down the effect to its essential elements, eliminating anything that might slow down the magic or needlessly complicate the plot. In the original Dingle presentation, a card was chosen, after which

five duplicates of the selection were produced from different locations. These duplicate cards were then transformed into a royal flush. John has dispensed with the selection of a card, believing that it added little to the overall effect. In addition, producing duplicates of the selection naturally raised doubts in the minds of spectators about either the honesty of the deck or the reality of the duplicate cards. Neither suspicion is desirable. Since it is more likely that multiple jokers might be present in a pack, this is the card around which John chose to build his presentation.

As you work through the handling, notice how the actions have been carefully integrated, each one leading smoothly into the next. The sequence has a polished feel to it, from beginning to end.

Prepare by positioning three aces on top of the pack and the fourth on the bottom. Also insert a face-up joker into the deck, roughly forty cards from the top. While this simple setup is not hard to arrange during performance, it is suggested, nonetheless, that the trick be used as the opening piece in your card routine. It is perfectly suited to this task, since a great deal of visual magic happens quickly, with no lengthy procedures to slow the pace.

Offer the deck to someone nearby. "Would you please shuffle the cards?" However, just as he moves to take the pack, pull it back out of his reach and say, "That's enough." It's an old gag, but it still plays well. With a slightly apologetic tone in your voice, explain, "Well, it really wouldn't matter how much you shuffled the cards, because I know the position of each and every card in the pack — even when they are shuffled." Spread off a few cards from the top of the face-down deck, taking them into your right hand and turning the hand over to expose the card at the face of the spread. "For instance, I knew that that five was there." Time your words to the action, sighting the card an instant before you need to name it. Do not hesitate before naming the card. Time the glimpse precisely to coincide with your words. Done in this fashion, the ruse is nevertheless transparent, and will elicit growing laughter as it is repeated several times.

"I knew that." Push off another small spread of cards from the pack, taking it into the right hand, below the previous cards, and turn the hand to display the face of the spread. "And I knew that the queen was there..." Again you name the card as you expose it. Then push over another group and repeat the gag. "...and that the six was there."

"I know the positions of every card — well, everything except the joker. Jokers are very difficult, and I can't follow them. But the others are easy."

Resume spreading off small bunches of cards, showing the face of each group. "The tens are easy." Here you again name the card exposed at the face of the new batch. "The kings are easy; the...oh, a joker." At this point you spread far enough into the pack to expose the face-up joker. Stop dead when the joker is reached, hesitating as if befuddled by its presence.

After a few moments, resume: "You see, I always have trouble with the jokers." As you say this, outjog the joker where it lies in the pack, and square all the cards back into the left hand. As the right hand aids in squaring the pack from above, grasp the top card by its ends and secretly lower the inner end of the deck below it, forming a tilt break. Then, with the right hand, strip the joker from the pack and turn it face-down.

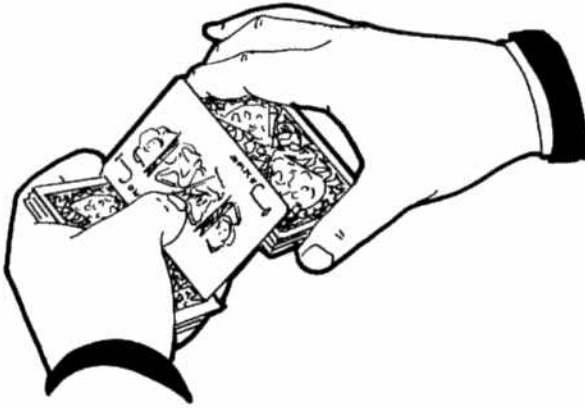
"I'll just get rid of that here." Perform the Schwarzman-Aste tilt feint (see p. 44), then insert the joker into the break and slide it forward, over the second card from the top. At the last instant, just before the joker is completely flush with the pack, raise it to join the tilted top card, forming a break below it. Having done this, remove the right hand from the deck.

"Anyway, the point is that, when you know the positions of all the cards in the pack, the aces are very easy to find. For instance, the top card, the ace of spades, is..." As you mention the top card, perform a double lift, picking up the two cards above the break at their inner right corners. Turn the right hand palm-down to display the face of the joker.

"Oh, that's the joker. I always have trouble with them." Execute Dai Vernon's swivel replacement (see p. 66) and leave the top card of the double jogged to the right on the pack.

"Here, I'll just put it over here to get it out of the way." Point with the right forefinger to a convenient spot near you on the table. (This gesture provides a plausible reason for replacing the card on the deck.) Then deal the top card face-down at that spot. As the right hand does this, secretly pull down with the left fourth finger on the inner right corner of the pack, forming a break near center.

"Now, the ace of hearts is about half way down in the pack and..." Perform a false cut pass. That is, bring the right hand palm-down over the pack and grasp it by the ends. Then execute the initial actions of a standard pass, but lift the bottom half of the deck five or six inches straight up in the right hand. The left fingers snap the top half around the rising bottom half and settle it again into dealing grip. The illusion desired is one of simply cutting off the top half of the pack. This application of the pass is very old and will be familiar to most readers.

*figure 63*

Immediately upon cutting the pack, use the left thumb to push over the top card of its portion. This, apparently, is the card just cut to. Use the left side of the right hand's packet to flip the card face-up on the left hand's half; then push the face-up card to the right.

"Oh, that's the joker there." Pause for a moment, staring at the card in bewilderment. Then look up. The audience's gaze will follow yours. During this moment of misdirection, perform Marlo's reverse drop switch:

*figure 64*

Use the right hand's packet to flip the joker face-down. However, as you do this, leave the left thumb extended across the back of its packet (Figure 63). When the joker is turned over it must fall onto the back of the left thumb. The instant the card hits it, the thumb rises about an inch: just enough to lift the joker and press it flat against the face of the right hand's packet (Figure 64). With the tips of the right fingers and thumb, catch the joker square beneath the packet, and move the right

hand to the right. Without hesitation, thumb off the top card of the left hand's packet onto the table, letting it fall partially onto the previously tabled card. When you perform these actions, treat them as a smooth, continuous whole.

If you are unfamiliar with the reverse drop switch, it may seem a rather bold maneuver. However, given a dozen trials you will find it completely deceptive and relatively easy to master. Also keep in mind that you misdirect away from the hands as you perform the sleight, and that the audience's interest in the joker naturally decreases once its face is seen.

Slip the right hand's packet under the left's and square the deck again into left-hand dealing position as you say, "Anyway, the bottom ace, the ace of..." With the right hand, grasp the deck from above by its ends and turn the hand palm-up, exposing the joker on the bottom. "No, no, no." As the spectators relax their attention on the cards, responding to the humor of the situation, you execute a side glide in the following manner:

While the right hand holds the deck face-outward, touch the tip of your left second finger lightly to the face of the joker (Figure 65). Then turn the right hand palm-down while maintaining the left fingertip's contact with the face of the pack (Figure 66). At the same time, shift the right hand slightly leftward while the left second fingertip holds the joker stationary. In this way, the joker is slid secretly about half an inch to the right of the deck, without any visible pushing action. Without pausing, move the left hand leftward, drawing the second card from the face of the pack to the left. Do not use the left thumb to grip this card. Instead, let the card ride along on the left fingers (Figure 67) until it is free of the pack. Then let it drop onto the two previously tabled cards.

Look up from the cards to the audience and say, "It looks like jokers are popping up everywhere." As the audience's gaze is momentarily misdirected by this, you cause the joker to spring face-up from the center of the pack. J. K. Hartman's popover flourish is responsible for this:

The palm-down right hand still holds the deck by its ends, and the bottom card (the joker) is jogged to the right as a result of the glide. If you curl the tips of the right second and third fingers in, onto the face of the joker, then use them to pull very slightly outward on the card, you can cause the inner end of the joker to drop away from the pack. This is in essence the initial action of the Kelly-Ovette bottom placement.

Just as this maneuver is accomplished, bring the left hand, palm-up, immediately behind the deck, and move the right hand inward,

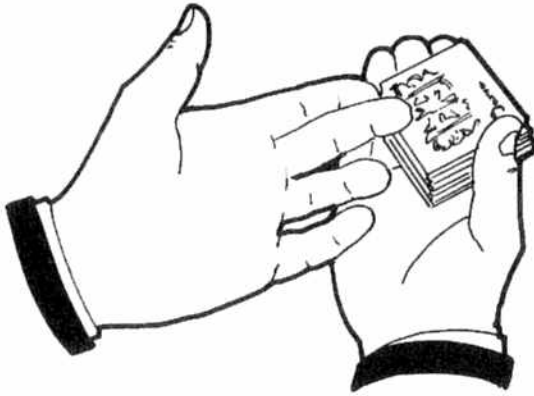


figure 65

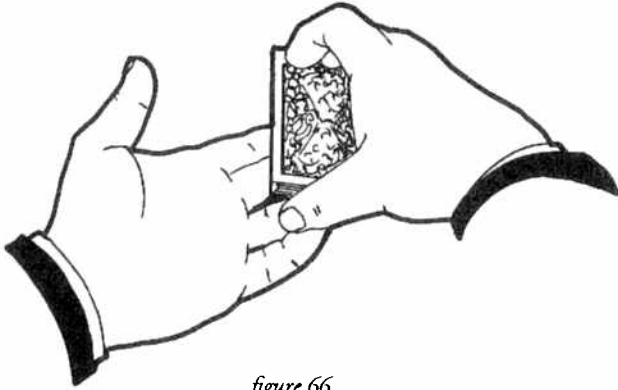


figure 66

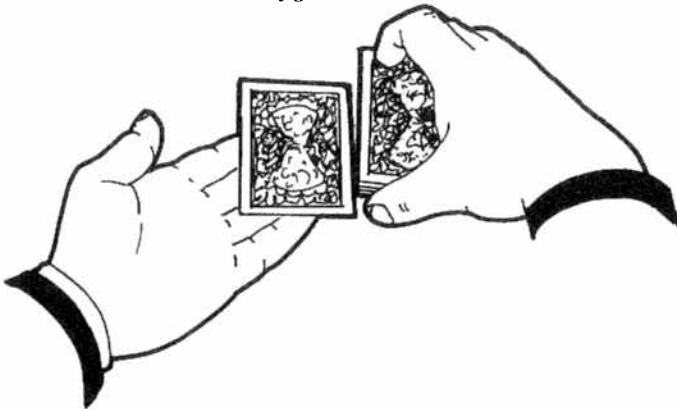
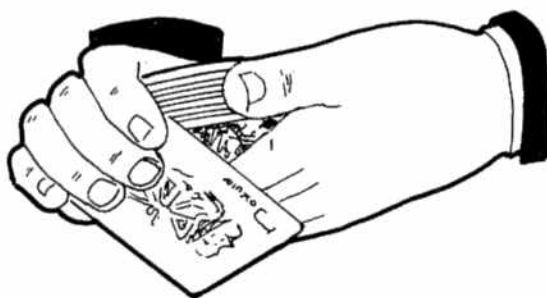
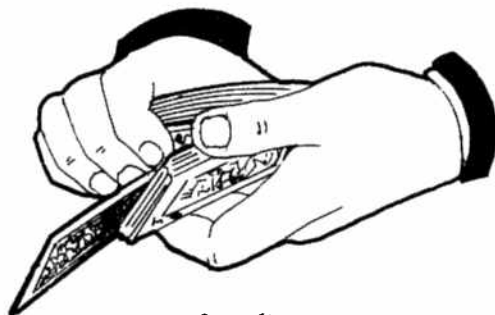


figure 67

*figure 68**figure 69*

introducing the left hand between the separated joker and the pack proper (Figure 68). As you move the right hand inward, also tilt the outer end of the pack downward slightly. Immediately grip the lower half of the deck by its sides near center, between the left thumb and second finger.

Now, with the left fingers, separate the halves of the deck at the outer end, lowering the bottom half away from the top. Simultaneously press inward with the right fingertips, forcing the isolated bottom card to pivot around the outer end of the bottom half and into the center break (Figure 69). All this is done in less than a second, as the hands move forward together.

Immediately close the gap at the outer end, trapping the joker, face-up and widely outjogged, between

*figure 70*

the halves of the pack (Figure 70). When done properly, the joker seems to pop from the pack.

“Ooh!” This exclamation is made as the joker pops into sight. “Well, there’s only one thing to do, I guess.” With your right hand, strip the joker from the pack and gesture with it. This provides a bit of misdirection, during which the left thumb pushes over the top card of the pack slightly, and the left fourth finger forms a break under the card as it pushes it square again. Lay the face-up joker momentarily on the pack.

“Just wave the joker over these...” Use your empty right hand to gesture at the three cards on the table. Then bring it back to the deck and lift the top two cards as one, taking them by their inner corners, thumb on the left side, second finger on the right. Curl the right forefinger onto the face of the joker and press down lightly, putting a mild concave bow in the double card. You are now in position to do the venerable snap-over change. However, you will do this within the context of an idea by Piet Forton (ref. *Piet Forton Lecture Notes*, pp. 10-11), which makes it appear that the three cards on the table, as well as the joker in your hand, instantly transform to aces.

The cards on the table are thought to be three jokers. In fact they are aces. The fourth ace lies hidden face-down beneath the face-up joker in your right hand. You have just said, “Just wave the joker over these,” and smoothly continue, “like this — and they all change to aces!” As you conclude this sentence, slip the outer end of the double card under the tabled three (Figure 71) and perform the snap-over change. That is, let the right corner of the double escape from your second finger. Simultaneously slide the tip of the forefinger toward the thumb and pinch the double card by the left corner as the cards snap over together, bringing

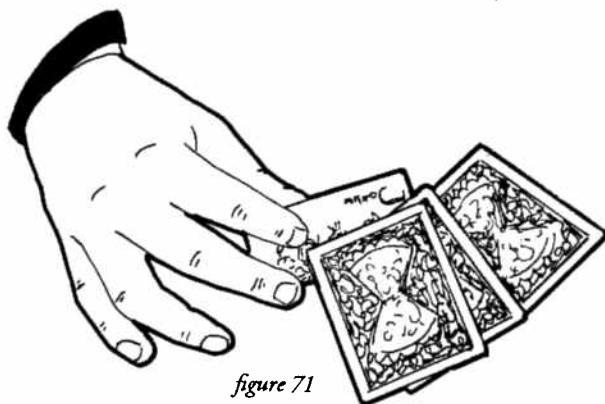


figure 71

the face of the ace into view. This action also causes the loose cards on the table to flip forward and face-up (Figure 72), exposing all four aces at once.

All that remains is to clean up the double card in your right hand. As a continuation of the snap-over change, smoothly swing the right hand to the deck in the left hand, and deposit the double card squarely on top. Then, without pausing, move both hands to the cards on the table and spread them into a row.



figure 72

As you do so, with your left thumb, push the fourth ace from the top of the deck, placing it at the left end of the row.

This is a highly entertaining trick, full of humor, surprises and visual magic; but the only way its potential can be fully comprehended is through its performance.

It should be mentioned that Darwin Ortiz has also modified Mr. Dingle's "Regal Royal Flush", concluding it with a four-ace finish. His routine is described in *Darwin's Deceits* (pp. 13-14), and a slightly revised handling appears in *Darwin Ortiz at the Card Table* (pp. 99-105). John was unaware of Mr. Ortiz's work on this plot when he devised "Inscrutable". ♣

HALF DOLLARS IN THE MIST

Effect: The performer displays two half dollars in his left hand. He takes one of the coins, makes it invisible and hangs it in the air. He does the same with the second coin. Both hands are seen clearly empty as the coins disappear.

He then reaches out and plucks the coins from their perches, taking one in each hand. They are still invisible, but with a little shake, they instantly appear again, at the fingertips.

The literature of coin magic teems with sequences for the barehanded vanish and reproduction of coins. Consequently, one should be cautious in adding to an overpopulated species. When John constructed this vanish of two coins, he adopted two rules by which he abided: one, there would be no gimmicks; and, two, there would be no handwashing or unnatural motions. His solution to this challenge successfully conforms to these restrictions. He offers this method as the most satisfying approach he has been able to conceive to date, but he continues to search for the ideal solution. The effect this method achieves is so thoroughly magical in appearance, I feel justified in committing it to print. ☞

Method: First, let's discuss the one limitation of the method. This trick is structured to be performed close-up — but no one must be standing behind you. If this simple condition is met, the angle requirements will be satisfied.

Two ordinary half dollars are used. Begin by displaying them, front and back; then casually toss them onto the open fingers of the palm-up left hand. One coin should lie on the inner phalanges of the second and third fingers, and the second coin should overlap the first, lying partially on the coin beneath and partially on the inner phalanx of the forefinger.

Stand with your left side turned partly toward the audience, toes pointing downstage right, and left hand held prominently in view, near waist level. After mentioning the two coins you hold, explain that you will demonstrate how they can be stored on something called “skyhooks” (a presentational conceit of John Ramsay's). With your right forefinger,

point to two spots in the air, near shoulder level and slightly to your right. This ploy draws the audience's attention upward and away from the coins. Take one short step back, just as you finish pointing to the second spot, and before the audience can focus again on your left hand, bring your palm-down right hand to the left hand and apparently pick up one of the coins. In reality, behind the screen of your right fingers, press the tip of the right thumb against the exposed inner surface of the lower coin, and push this coin deep between the inner phalanges of the left second and third fingers (Figure 73).

The tips of your right second and third fingers should be resting on the upper coin as the thumb pushes the lower one into deep back clip. With these fingers, immediately draw the upper coin inward a bit, until it lies over the clipped coin, covering its edge. Slightly cup the left fingers as well, to aid in the concealment. (The deep back clip and this edge masking idea are the conceptions of Dai Vernon.) There must be no undue hesitation as the coin is maneuvered into back clip. The action should imitate as closely as possible that of genuinely picking up a coin.

Now raise the right hand from the left, with the thumb pressed to the fingertips, as if grasping a coin. Focus all attention on this hand. One coin remains in evidence on the left fingers, supporting the conclusion that you have taken a coin into your right hand (Figure 74).

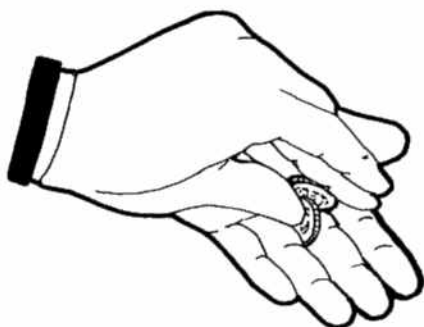


figure 73

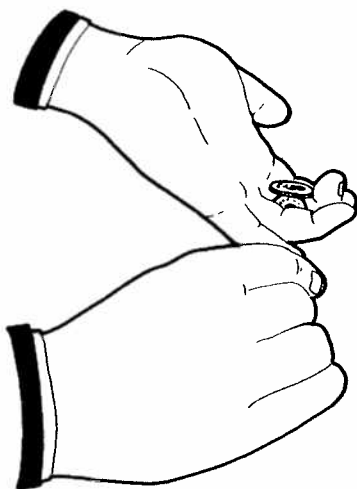


figure 74

Extend your right arm, holding your hand out to the right, near shoulder height, and close the fingers into a fist, apparently enclosing the coin. "If I squeeze this coin, it becomes invisible." Pretend to squeeze, then to knead the coin in the hand. After a few moments of this, open the fingers, one by one in close succession, starting with the fourth finger. As the first finger opens, press the thumb against the tip of the forefinger, as if holding an invisible coin. The hand is seen empty. (The precise reasons for the right hand's actions during this vanish will be clarified when we examine the vanish of the second coin.)

"I'll just hang it right here, on the first skyhook." Pretend to hang the invisible coin in the air, at your right near shoulder height, at the spot you indicated a moment ago. Point at the place where the coin is supposed to be, casually letting the right hand be seen front and back. There should be no air of proving something with this gesture, but there must also be no doubt in the minds of the spectators that the hand is empty.

Bring the right hand beside the left and nonchalantly toss the visible coin from the left fingers into the right. As all eyes follow the coin, relax the left arm and drop the hand to your side, simultaneously curling the fingers loosely inward. The vanished coin remains in deep back clip, but cannot be seen with the hand held in this position.

You are now about to vanish the second coin; but unlike the first vanish, this time the coin rests genuinely in the right hand. As you raise the right hand to shoulder height, let the coin be seen lying on the inner phalanges of the right fingers. Then close the fingers around the coin and give it a visible squeeze. When you close the hand, bend your thumb inside the fingers and, under cover of the squeezing action, use the thumb to push the coin between the second and third fingers to the back of the hand. Wiggle the fingers in a kneading action to work the coin into deep back clip. The rim of the coin should be pressed as tightly as possible against the webbed fork of the fingers.

Now hold the right hand still for a moment, bent back a bit at the wrist, before you slowly open the fingers one by one, from fourth finger to first. The very deep placement of the coin at the web of the fingers allows the independent motion of the fingers, an action that will deceive even those who might suspect a finger clip. Each finger should be bent back just a bit farther than the one above it, and the thumb should touch the tip of the forefinger (Figure 75), as if holding an invisible coin. This posture of the fingers, in addition to their independent opening, gives the hand an appearance of complete emptiness. Yet, the coin is concealed behind the

hand, clipped at the base of the second and third fingers (Figure 76). The bending back of the hand at the wrist further ensures that the coin is hidden from the spectators.

Move the right hand to a spot in the air a few inches to the left of the place where you pretended to hang the first coin, and leave the second invisible coin there. As you separate the thumb and forefinger, any magicians in your audience will likely become more baffled than the laymen, because they have to this point probably harbored the suspicion of a Downs palm. The illusion is further strengthened by the earlier display of the empty hand, after the vanish of the first coin. Having seen the hand empty then, its emptiness now is questioned less critically. In this manner, the first vanish benefits the second.



figure 75



figure 76

"Now I have one coin here..." As you say this, point with the right forefinger to the place in the air where you hung the first coin, keeping the hand turned palm outward.

"...and one here." You now point to the second invisible coin, a few inches to the left of the first. As you do this, casually turn the right hand back toward the audience. To conceal the back-clipped coin, it must be transferred to the front of the hand. This is accomplished in the following manner:

Bend the fourth finger back and up, until it can contact the far edge of the coin (Figure 77). Then, with this finger, revolve the coin around the back of the third finger to a clipped position between the third and fourth fingers, inside the hand (Figure 78). The action is exactly that of the steeplechase flourish, in which a coin is made to roll or topple over the knuckles. If you have ever practiced this flourish, bringing the coin from deep back clip to the desired position inside the fingers will not prove difficult. The transfer is concealed by the larger motions of turning the hand and pointing.

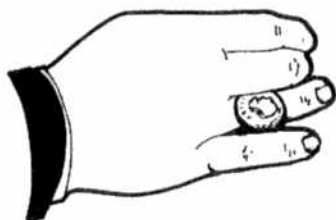


figure 77

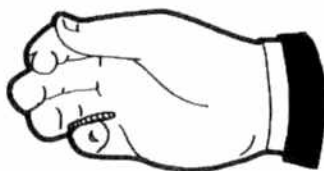


figure 78

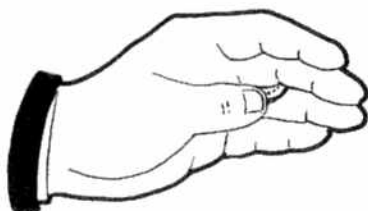


figure 79

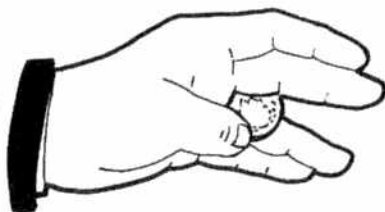


figure 80

The thing to strive for in this action is a seemingly innocent display of the hand, without a sense of *proving* it empty. The last thing you wish to do here is to fall into the trap of the average stage manipulator, who more often succeeds in impressing his audience with his cleverness at hiding objects in his hands than he does in convincing them that the objects are really gone.

Pause briefly to let the second vanish register. Then, with your right hand, pretend to pluck the first coin from its spot in mid-air. As you move the hand to do this, secretly place your thumb on the edge of the clipped coin and fold the coin flat against the second and third fingers, where it can be finger palmed. Then continue to move the thumb toward the tip of the forefinger as you pretend to take the invisible coin from the air. Drop your right hand a few inches, to about chest height, turning it palm-up. The loosely curled fingers hide the finger-palmed coin from the audience's sight (thus exercising the Ramsay subtlety).

While your right hand is carrying out these tasks, raise your left hand as you secretly transfer its back-clipped coin to finger palm. This is easily done by pressing the tip of the left thumb against the upper side of the coin where its rim protrudes slightly between the fingers (Figure 79). If you then separate the second and third fingers, the coin will tip flat against the inside of the third finger (Figure 80) and can be easily adjusted by

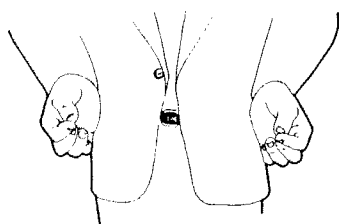


figure 81

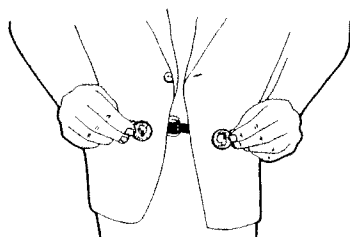


figure 82

the thumb into finger palm. All this is the work of a split second, as the hand is raised. The palm adjustment might be made earlier, while attention was captured by the vanish of the second coin; but the danger, even though slight, of having this finger motion detected is unwarranted when the movements can be entirely concealed as the hand is raised.

With the palm-down left hand, pretend to pluck the second invisible coin from its spot in space, holding the tips of the thumb and forefinger pressed together, and permitting the audience to see your empty palm (Figure 81).

All that remains is to make the coins visible again. You do this by simultaneously giving the hands a small shake as you use the thumbs to push the coins into view at the fingertips (Figure 82). John makes a short, sharp sound — *whewew!* — at the instant the coins appear. The sound is produced by forcing air between the parted lips — sort of a toneless whistle — then slapping the tongue suddenly against the roof of the mouth. This sound punctuates the moment of magic, and actually makes the sudden appearance of the coins even more surprising.

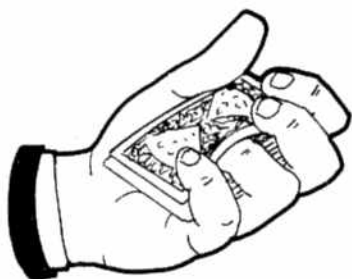
Particularly notice John's method for concealing a coin while showing both sides of the hand, during the second vanish. This is a tremendous improvement over traditional methods, as there is absolutely no sense of manipulative concealment. The front and back of the hand are displayed in a most natural manner as the hand performs a seemingly innocent gesture. There are no stiff poses or suspicious gyrations.

Many magicians tend to avoid work with the deep back clip, as it seems awkward to recover the coin from this position. However, if you work through the above trick with coins in hand, you will find that John's solutions to this problem are natural in appearance and not that difficult to perform. Of course, practice is necessary to attain smoothness and to eliminate unnatural hesitations, but the piece is easier to master than might be expected; and the result is truly magical. In John's hands this is a genuinely astonishing mystery. ☺

VERSA SWITCH

The versa switch is an original method of secretly adding cards to a packet, generally (though not always) with the intention of switching all or some of the initial cards for others. If the goal is to add cards to the top of a packet, it is my opinion that John's versa switch is far superior to the popular approaches invented by Fred Braue and J. K. Hartman, in which the cards are displayed in a mannered fashion; eccentric might be a more honest description. In John's sleight, the secret addition is accomplished quickly in a motion that appears completely fair and natural.

The versa switch was inspired by an addition move of Edward Marlo's, which appeared in Alton Sharpe's 1968 book, *Expert Card Conjuring* (see pp. 37-38). In this sleight, four cards were secretly loaded behind a fan of aces as it was brought over the deck and flipped face-down. Ten years later Doug Edwards inadvertently reinvented this idea (see *Cardmania*, pp. 28-29), though in the Edwards description the positioning of the fan and its closure on the deck differ somewhat from those described by Mr. Marlo. Working from the description in *Expert Card Conjuring*, John developed the versa switch, which is distinguished from the Marlo technique by several salient points. He eventually contributed his switch to the October 1982 issue of *Genii* (Vol. 46, No. 10, p. 667). That same year John Mendoza published his handling of the Marlo sleight in a booklet titled *Throwing the Switch*. Roughly eighteen months after this, Mr. Marlo contributed four new variants of his 1968 addition technique to *The New Tops* (Vol. 24, No. 7, July 1984, pp. 8-14). The fourth of these bears a much closer resemblance to John's versa switch than the original Marlo sleight, though the cover actions are quite different. Finally, in 1985 Chris Kenner's variation of the Mendoza handling appeared in *The Right Stuff* (see p. 1). Harvey Rosenthal has devised several variations of the Marlo switch as well, which have yet to be published. As can be seen, a number of fine minds have worked on the idea. All the published handlings are bedeviled by angle problems, to a greater or lesser extent —

*figure 83**figure 84*

all, that is, but John's. Thanks to the cover action he has adopted, the addition of cards is invisible from all sides. With this history disposed of, we can proceed to the sleight itself.

For the purposes of explanation, let's assume that you wish to add two indifferent cards onto the four aces, for the purpose of switching out two of the aces in a slow-motion ace routine. Begin by placing the four aces, face-up and spread from right to left, on the table. Hold the deck face-down in left-hand mechanic's grip and form a third-finger break under the top two cards. This break is not the usual flesh break, but the type employed by Paul Curry for his popular turnover change: the third finger digs into the break up the middle knuckle, and the tips of the other fingers curl onto the deck, pressing the two separated cards down onto it (Figure 83). This causes the cards to warp over the third finger.

If you now open the fingers, while maintaining their tension on the cards trapped between them, the cards can be raised to a perpendicular angle (Figure 84). This motion is the basis of the versa switch. Lower the cards back onto the deck, and hold the left hand and pack in a relaxed position at your side. This last instruction should suggest to you that you stand when executing the switch. This type of break can be successfully hidden when standing, but is prone to exposure when seated, and proves awkward to conceal. While the versa switch can be done seated, standing performance is recommended.

When the moment comes for the switch, reach out with your right hand to the spread aces on the table, and pick them up by slipping the fingers under the right side of the lowermost ace. The right thumb goes on top. As the right hand begins to pick up the aces in this manner, swing

the left hand toward them, starting the swing at the hip. This hand, with the deck, moves in a swift yet relaxed fashion, and reaches the fanned aces just as the right hand grasps them. At the instant the left hand reaches the fan, open the fingers, moving the top two cards away from the pack. At this point the left hand is tipped palm downward, the face-up deck is held with its left edge tilted down, and the separated cards lie at the fingertips, parallel to the table top.

The separation of the cards from the deck happens quickly and these cards are slipped beneath the aces in almost a scooping action (Figure 85). I say *almost* because there must be no visible suggestion of scooping cards beneath the spread. All this happens very close to the table surface, and if your timing is correct the loading of the cards under the fan is invisible.

Without hesitation, rotate both hands outward at the wrists, turning the inner ends of the fan and deck downward (Figure 86). At the same time, continue to bring the hands together, roughly squaring the fan and the added cards into a packet. The back of this packet is broadside to the audience.

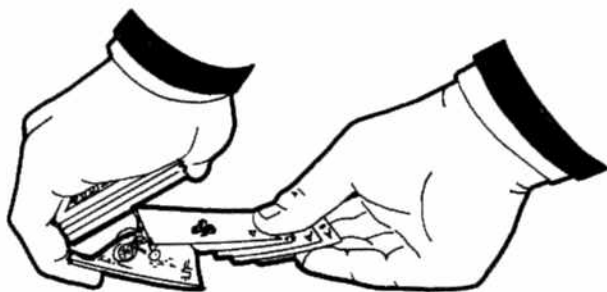


figure 85

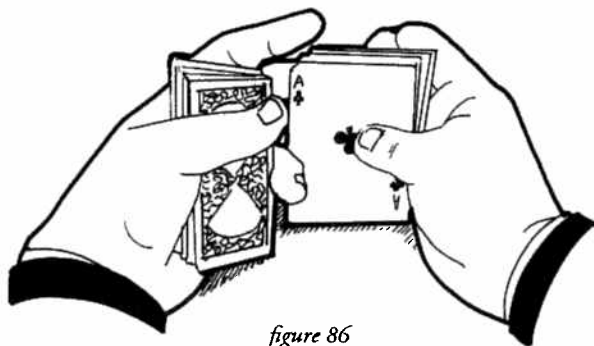


figure 86



figure 87

Bring the hands downward, squaring the packet with a short, sharp tap on the table. Then move the left hand and deck away from the packet and inward. The right hand retains the packet — fingers on the back, thumb on the face — and rises casually to a palm-up position. The secret addition has been completed, and is totally concealed by the quick and natural action of gathering the cards and tapping them square against the table.

To switch out two aces, all you need do is flip the right hand's packet face-down onto the deck and instantly spread over the top four cards. John has found that this substitution is made more deceptive if, as the left thumb pushes over the four cards, the right hand immediately takes the first two and carries them away to the right. In a continuing action both hands drop to the table and smoothly work in unison to release the four cards into a row: first the bottom card of the right hand's pair and the top card of the pack are simultaneously placed side by side; then the right hand's remaining card and the next card from the pack are laid to the right and left, respectively, of the first two cards (Figure 87). This procedure is far more expedient than dealing the cards singly from the pack into a row. It also enhances the illusion that the aces never come square with the pack before they are laid down.

Now that the mechanics of the versa switch have been discussed, we can turn to the psychological details that strengthen the deception. Though the versa switch, when done properly, is undetectable, even when keenly observed, John agrees with many masters, past and present, that whenever possible, a sleight should be done on the offbeat or with misdirection. Consequently, he recommends that the addition be done casually, at a time between effects when the audience's attention is relaxed. When you execute the sleight, you should not look at your hands — if

you don't want the audience to watch the cards, then don't do so yourself. Do not worry about squaring the cards perfectly as you tap the packet on the table. It is not necessary that they be square. Actually, things appear more natural if the packet is slightly ragged.

John also believes that time misdirection is desirable between the secret addition and the switch on the deck. Here is a simple example that illustrates how both of these psychological points are implemented in a routine:

You have just performed a trick that concludes with the four aces spread face-up on the table. The effect is over and the audience is responding to the climax. While their concentration is relaxed, you gather the aces, doing the versa switch addition. You pause now, with the ace packet in one hand and the deck in the other, waiting for the audience's attention once more to focus on you. "Let me show you something still odder with the aces," you say, sharpening the focus. Now flip the packet face-down onto the deck, and thumb over the top four cards, completing the switch. Because the first part of the procedure was performed some moments before, at a time when attention was lax, even if observed it will be perceived as unrelated to the later actions; and even knowledgeable spectators will believe that you have had no opportunity to do anything.

In the beginning it was stated that the versa switch holds wide utility both as an addition technique and as a switch. An example of this versatility will now be offered in a neat transposition effect called "Kings and Aces Change Places". ♣

KINGS AND ACES CHANGE PLACES

Effect: The title nearly tells it all. The kings and aces are removed from the pack and the remainder is put aside. The performer lays the aces face-down on the table while retaining the face-up kings in his hands. He then passes his hand over the kings, causing them to change visibly into the aces. When the four cards on the table are turned up, they are found to have transformed into the missing kings.

The reader will appreciate that only eight cards are used, the kings and aces; and no gaffed cards or extras are required. The action is extremely direct and the transposition rewardingly visual.

Method: Remove the aces and kings from the pack and set the remaining cards to one side. Lay the four aces face-up on the table, spread from right to left. With your right hand, grip the four face-up kings at their outer ends and fan them widely, the foremost king being farthest to the left. Tip the right hand palm-up to display the kings clearly to the audience. Call attention to them, then lower the face-up fan to a horizontal position onto the left fingers.

With the tip of the left third finger, contact the back of the uppermost king near the inner end, and immediately close the fan into the left hand. If you keep the left third fingertip pressed lightly to the back of the card, a third-finger wedge break will be created beneath it (Figure 88). Without



figure 88

a pause, tip the kings face-down into the left hand. As you turn the packet, close the left fingers as well, maintaining the third finger's position between the cards. As the packet is settled into the left hand, the wedge break becomes a Curry-style break held below the top three cards. You are now prepared for the versa switch. Drop the left hand casually to your side to conceal the break. Through the fingers a king can be seen on the face of the packet.

With your free right hand, gesture at the aces on the table, make some comment about them and begin to gather them. As you pick them up and square them, execute the versa switch, secretly adding three kings behind them. This leaves one king in the left hand. For the short time that this card must stand in for all four kings, hold it in a "deep" dealing grip, with the left forefinger stretched along the front edge to hide the thinness of the supposed packet.

Let the audience see the aces at the face of the right hand's packet, then flip it face-down onto the left hand's card. At this point the spectators believe that the aces rest above the kings. In reality the packet reads, from top to face: king-king-king-ace-ace-ace-king.

Immediately on flipping the right hand's cards onto the lone king, you apparently count off the top four cards. Actually you take only three. John uses a standard false count here, dealing the cards from the top of the packet into the right hand, and taking each under the last. As the third card is dealt over, the right hand pretends to take it beneath the first two, but the left thumb secretly pulls it back onto the packet. On the fourth count a card is taken legitimately below the others and these cards are set face-down on the table. The secret to performing this count deceptively is the use of a regular rhythm throughout. Place the counted packet just to your left and near the table edge. These cards are thought to be the four aces, but are in fact three kings.

Flip the left hand's packet face-up. The fourth king shows at its face, making everything look as it should. With the palm-down right hand, grasp the packet by its ends, freeing the left hand to gesture toward the tabled cards as you again mention the aces. This gesture, or some other, is necessary to set up for the next secret action. John will often push back his sleeves to provide some reason for passing the packet from hand to hand.

Now bring the left hand back to the packet in the right hand, and restore it to left-hand dealing grip. However, in doing this, execute the

standard side slip, secretly pushing the rear card to the right and into right-hand classic palm (see p. 37-38). When the side slip is completed, pause briefly; then gracefully wave the right hand over the packet and drop the palmed card onto its face, in the time-honored color-change fashion. The king changes visibly to an ace.

With the palm-down right hand, grasp the packet by its opposite right corners, while the left fingers draw the lower three aces to the left, forming a face-up fan. The king remains hidden behind the foremost ace. Retain this double card in the right hand as the left hand carries the other aces a few inches to the left. Simultaneously turn both hands over and back, displaying backs and faces. Then slip the left hand's three aces over the right hand's double card and place the packet into left-hand dealing grip while squaring it.

To conclude the effect, all that remains is to palm the king from the back of the packet and add it to the face-down tabled cards as you turn them up to display the four kings. John uses a left-hand bottom palm to accomplish the task:

When the packet is placed onto the left hand, that hand slides inward in a squaring motion along the edges. However, in this motion the left forefinger drags over the back of the packet, causing the outer end of the rear card to swivel to the right, under cover of the right hand, which still holds the packet by its ends. The right thumb acts as pivot post for this maneuver. Figure 89 shows the action from below.

The left hand now moves forward and repeats its apparent squaring action; but in doing so it palms the angled card. The card waits in perfect position to be palmed. The tip of the left third finger contacts its outer end, near the right corner, and pulls gently inward, buckling the card downward and into the left hand (Figure 90).

The left hand moves smoothly inward, again squaring the sides of the packet. It then rotates palm-down to hide the palmed card as the right



figure 89



figure 90

hand moves rightward with the aces. (The pivoting dynamic employed in this palm was originally described by Edward Marlo on pages 18-19 of his booklet, *The Side Steal*, in the context of a side slip to the right hand. Its application to a left-hand bottom palm was an obvious step, which Mr. Marlo and others have since taken.)

As the right hand tables the aces and spreads them face-up, the left hand descends directly onto the face-down kings and draws them back to the edge of the table, where they can be grasped. In doing this, the palmed king is added to the packet. The left hand turns palm-up with the packet and fans it to display four kings. The transposition is complete. ♣

FRUIT CUP

Effect: The performer borrows a bill from someone, tears one corner from it and gives that corner to the person as “a receipt”. The rest of the bill is crumpled into a ball and set on the table. A common coffee cup is now shown and set mouth down. A table knife is also introduced, which the performer uses as an impromptu wand.

The crumpled bill is picked up and made to vanish from the performer’s hand. When the coffee cup is raised, the bill is found beneath it. The bill is then visibly passed through the solid bottom of the cup twice. The empty cup is once more set mouth down on the table, and the performer places the bill in his pocket. Yet, when he raises the cup, the bill is back. He pockets the bill again, then raises the cup. This time, instead of the bill, he finds a lemon.

Taking the knife, he cuts the lemon down the center — and inside the fruit he finds the crumpled bill. When the bill is straightened and the corner retained by the spectator is tried, it fits perfectly. ♡

Method: During the first half of the 1800s, Bartolomeo Bosco, the great Italian conjurer, performed a one-cup version of the Cups and Balls, using a tea cup and sugar cubes. Considering the age of the Cups and Balls, there might well have been others before Bosco who did a one-cup routine. Indeed, in antiquity, the Cups and Balls conceivably might have begun with but a single cup.

The Bill in Lemon is commonly attributed to Emil Jarrow, though the effect is unquestionably a variant of the Card in Lemon, which dates back to the mid-1800s. Around 1980 John came up with the idea of combining these two classic effects of magic into a logical and surprising piece of magic. It should also be mentioned that the ingenious Ray Grismer has made a cunning meld of the Bill in Lemon with another ancient plot, Two in the Hand, One in the Pocket. He published his routine in 1981 under the title *Limey*. With these antecedents acknowledged, let’s dissect John’s excellent routine.

*figure 91*

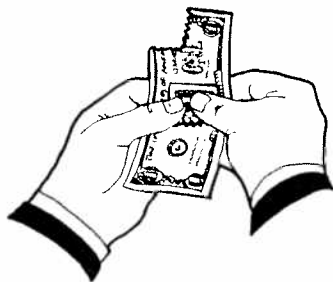
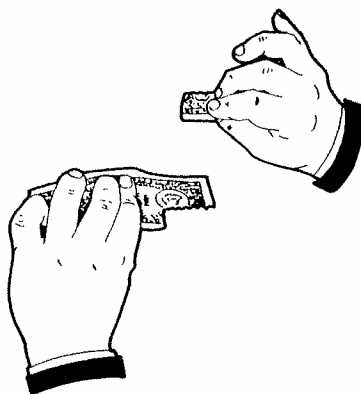
You will require an opaque coffee cup or a mug, a table knife with a serrated blade, two one-dollar bills and a lemon. The lemon must be of a size that easily fits inside the cup. The necessary preparation takes only a minute or two. With the knife, pierce the lemon and cut a slit

measuring an inch to an inch and a half along its girth, as shown in Figure 91. Cut deep into the pulp of the fruit, past its center. Then hold the lemon, slit downward, over a saucer or bowl and squeeze most of the juice from it.

Next take one of the dollar bills and tear off one corner in the shape of a rectangle that is approximately an eighth of the bill. Place this corner in your right-side coat pocket, where it can easily be had when needed. Crumple the remainder of the bill into a ball and force it into the slit in the lemon. Use the blunt tip of the knife to push the bill completely into the fruit. Now carefully press the slit closed. When this is neatly done, the slit in the lemon becomes almost invisible. Wipe the skin of the lemon dry and place the fruit in your left rear trousers pocket. By squeezing most of the juice from the lemon you have guarded against its weeping while in your pocket.

Crumple the second dollar bill into a ball and lodge it near the top of the inside left breast pocket of your coat. Also place the table knife in this pocket, point downward. This finishes the preparation.

When ready to perform, have the cup sitting mouth up on the table, and secretly palm the torn corner of the bill from your right coat pocket. Ask for the loan of a dollar bill and, on receiving it, lay it over the finger-palmed corner in your right hand. Then openly tear the corresponding corner from the borrowed bill, making it approximately the same size and shape as the hidden corner. Lay the newly torn corner onto the bill, roughly over the spot where the pre-torn corner lies hidden. In the same action, adjust the bill and corners to the right fingertips, and use the right thumb to hold them in place.

*figure 92**figure 93*

With your left hand, gesture to the person who lent you the bill and reassure him: "Don't worry. I'll return your bill in a minute. But in the meantime, here is your receipt." These comments draw the audience's attention away from your hands for a moment, providing mild misdirection as you do Don Alan's "Big Deal" switch, substituting your torn corner for the spectator's:

Bring the palm-up left hand to the bill and grasp it near center, thumb on top, fingers beneath. The left thumb should also lie on the torn corner of the borrowed bill (Figure 92). Without a pause, rotate the left hand inward, turning the upper surface of the bill toward yourself and just beyond the audience's line of sight. Simultaneously move the right hand to the right, bringing the corner of your bill into view at the right fingertips (Figure 93). The illusion created by these simple actions is one of the right hand drawing the torn piece of the borrowed bill away. In reality, the right thumb slides over this piece, leaving it behind, and the right fingers draw the hidden corner into view. When the actions are performed smoothly and are properly timed, the corner never seems to leave one's sight. Yet the genuine torn corner now lies hidden behind the bill. (If you are working with spectators at your extreme left and right, turn your left hand fully palm-down to hide the corner.)

Hand the corner in your right hand to the lender of the bill. Then use both hands to crumple the bill into a ball, similar in appearance to the prepared bill in your breast pocket. As you do this, roll the loose corner piece into the center of the bill, concealing it. This neatly disposes of the extra corner and leaves the hands obviously empty of everything but the borrowed bill.



figure 94

Place the balled-up bill onto the table and, with your right hand, reach into your inside left breast pocket for the table knife. As you get this, secretly finger palm your own crumpled bill. "I forgot my magic wand, but I think this will do the trick." Lay the knife down in front of you.

"I've also borrowed a coffee cup, which I'll set over here." As you say this, pick up the cup and show it empty by holding it in the left hand and turning the cup mouth toward the audience. Casually pass the cup to the right hand, turning it mouth inward and gripping it by the rim in the circle of the first two fingers and thumb (Figure 94). The palmed bill is held in the curl of the third and fourth fingers, very near the mouth of the cup. Without hesitation, casually tilt the bottom of the cup downward slightly, and let the bill roll inside. Then revolve the right hand inward, turning the cup mouth down, and set it on the table, forward of the knife. Do this in a nonchalant fashion, but just swiftly enough to prevent the bill from dropping into view.

After setting down the cup, direct the audience's attention to the borrowed bill. Pick it up in the right hand. Then bring the left hand to the right and execute a false transfer, apparently taking the balled bill into your left hand, but really retaining it in right-hand finger palm. Any convincing pass will do. John uses a French drop. (See p. 63 for handling tips on this sleight.)

With your right hand, immediately pick up the knife and, using it as a wand, make a magical pass around the closed left hand, then give it a tap. "All I have to do is give your bill a tap and say a magic word like *polyolly-atras-satras* — and it disappears from my hand, and flies under the cup." Open your left hand to disclose the vanish of the bill and, as attention is focused there, casually lay down the knife. Then, with the left hand, pick up the cup to reveal the crumpled bill beneath.

Without hesitation, transfer the cup to your right hand (Figure 94 again) and load the palmed bill into it. With your left hand, pick up the

bill on the table and display it, while the right hand casually sets down the inverted cup.

"Not only will the bill fly to the cup, it will pass right through the bottom. Watch." You now perform Charlie Miller's ball through cup move (ref. *The Dai Vernon Book of Magic*, pp. 188-189):

Form your right hand into a fist and plant it firmly on the inverted cup, with the curled fourth finger lying against the bottom. Into the circle of the forefinger and thumb set the balled bill. Then, with the left hand, grasp the cup by its handle, which is turned leftward (Figure 95). Now several things are done in close succession. The right fingers uncurl just enough to allow the ball to drop inside the fist and

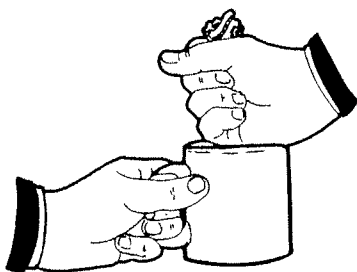


figure 95

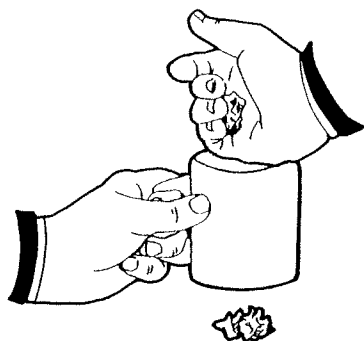


figure 96

out of sight; and the left hand raises the cup to reveal the second ball beneath it. As this is done the right hand also rises, remaining perched on the bottom of the cup (Figure 96). The illusion created is one of the ball penetrating straight through the cup.

Two details are vital to the success of the illusion. First, the dropping of the ball into the fist, and the raising of the hands and cup must be correctly timed. You must imagine the time it would take for the ball to fall, if it could genuinely pass through the cup, and then approximate that period. Second, as you raise the cup, use the rim to give the ball beneath a forward nudge, so that the ball is in *slight* motion as it comes into view. If either of these points is neglected, the illusion will not be a convincing one. However, the knack is not difficult to acquire once one understands the procedure.

When the bill under the cup has been revealed, move the right hand away from the cup, holding the palmed bill in the curl of the third and fourth fingers. Momentarily set the cup mouth down on the table. This allows you to change the left hand's grip on the cup: turn the hand thumb down and grasp the cup by its bottom in the circle of the thumb and first

two fingers. The loosely curled third and fourth fingers should lie just beyond the bottom of the cup.

With your right hand, pick up the bill on the table, holding it at the tips of the thumb and forefinger. "Isn't it weird how the bill can go right through the solid bottom of the cup." As you mention the bottom, tap the visible bill against it. Tip the bottom of the cup downward and to the right as you do this, and secretly retain the bill under the cup, palming it in the curled left third and fourth fingers.

Without hesitation, drop your right hand away from the cup, while you relax the right fingers and let the finger-palmed bill roll outward to the fingertips; or toss it into the air and catch it again in the right hand. In this manner the visible bill is loaded under the cup, and the palmed bill is substituted for it.

"I'll do it again." Turn the cup mouth up and hold it about six inches above the table. Bring the right hand directly over the cup and apparently drop its bill inside. Instead, let the ball fall or roll behind the fingers and out of the audience's sight, but catch it in the loosely curled third and fourth fingers. There must be no obvious contraction of the fingers as they palm the ball.

Almost immediately release the second palmed ball from the left fingers, letting it drop to the table, as if it has fallen through the bottom of the cup. (This penetration is almost identical to that used in "Soft Glass".)

Casually turn the mouth of the cup outward, permitting the audience to see that there is nothing inside, and pause briefly to let the effect register. Now turn the cup mouth toward you and smoothly transfer it to the right hand, in position to load the palmed bill (Figure 94). Do so and set the cup mouth down on the table. At the same time, reach out with the left hand and pick up the bill from the table.

"If I put your bill away, that should bring everything back to normal..." Place the left hand's bill into your rear trousers pocket, and at the same time palm the prepared lemon there. "...unless I say polyolly-atras-satras. Then the bill comes back." With your right hand, pick up the knife and tap the cup. Then lay the knife down again and lift the cup, exposing the bill underneath.

As the right hand raises the cup, bring the left hand from the pocket with the lemon. While all attention is momentarily on the uncovered bill, move the left hand forward around your hip, keeping it close to the body; and at the same time bring the right hand and cup to the left hand,

meeting it near the left hip. There transfer the cup to the left hand, mouth inward, and grip it in the circle of the thumb and fingers, just forward of the rim (Figure 97). This is the same loading grip you've used for the bills, but the left hand stays closer to your side to guard against exposure of the lemon. This is the final-load technique recommended by Dai Vernon in his Cups and Balls routine.

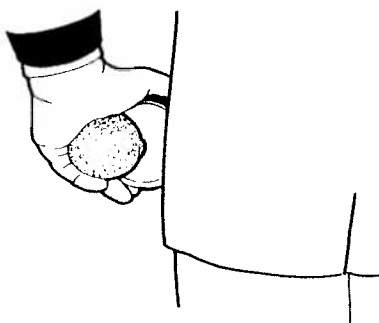


figure 97

Leave the cup in the left hand and, with a slight tilt, let the lemon roll into it. Then bring the cup forward and set it mouth down on the table. In doing so, extend the left fourth finger across the mouth of the cup to stop the lemon from falling out (Figure 98). This familiar



figure 98

maneuver allows you to move at a more relaxed pace when setting down the cup. (John often tosses the cup from his left hand to his right before he sets the cup down. The bottom of the cup is tilted forward as the toss is made, so that the lemon remains securely inside. This additional touch is disarming, and may be included at the performer's discretion.)

Pick up the bill and place it in your rear trousers pocket as you say, "I'll get rid of it again, but if I tap the cup..." Let the left hand be seen empty as it comes from the pocket; then pick up the knife in the right hand and tap the cup. "...and say polyolly-atras-citrus. *Oops!* I screwed up. I said the wrong magic word." Set the knife again on the table and, with your left hand, lift the cup, revealing the lemon. In this action use the rim of the cup to kick the lemon gently rightward toward your waiting right hand. The closed slit in its side will not be discerned by the audience, thanks to two factors: the lemon is in motion, and the spectators' eyes require a second to adjust to the unexpected appearance of the fruit. However, you know the slit is there, and can quickly locate it as you catch the lemon in the right hand. Turn the slit toward you as you hold the lemon up for display.

“What luck that I have this knife for a magic wand. Now let’s see...” Set the cup on the table, pick up the knife and draw the blade firmly over the center of the lemon in a slicing action. As you simulate the actions of cutting into the lemon, turn it outward, bringing the slit to the blade. Once the blade has entered the slit you can finish cutting the lemon neatly in half. Slowly separate the halves, dramatically revealing the crumpled bill inside. Remove it from the lemon, while dropping the halves in the cup, and open it to show the missing corner. Have the lender of the bill fit the corner he holds into place. In doing so, he finds that the tears match perfectly, which identifies the bill as his, and successfully concludes this surprising series of events.

Two further pieces of advice should be offered to the reader, one concerning the opening actions of the routine, the other dealing with the concluding protocol.

Regarding the opening, John will sometimes arrange the props a bit differently. If circumstances are such that the spectators cannot see into the cup as it sits mouth up on the table, he will place the crumpled bill and knife in the cup, rather than in his inside breast pocket. To get the bill into right-hand finger palm, the left hand takes the knife from the cup, as it is introduced as a makeshift wand, and the right hand casually picks up the cup, tipping its bottom toward the audience. With a gentle tilt of the cup, the bill is made to roll from the cup into the curled and waiting right fingers. The actions for stealing the bill from the cup are precisely the reverse of those used to load it. The routine now proceeds as described.

Concerning the finish, John observes that, while the wet and torn bill can be given to the lender, the considerate performer will more graciously repay his helper’s kindness by offering to trade the wet bill for a fresh, dry one. Better yet, one could magically dry and restore the bill, employing some method like the popular Kozłowski thumb tip switch. For a time John used an inexpensive plastic money-printer to restore the bill. This is the apparatus that resembles a miniature clothes wringer. He put the wet bill and corner between the rollers of the unit and ran them through, changing them to a whole, dry bill. It doesn’t matter that this prop has become a joke-store novelty. Those not familiar with it will be fooled, and those who know it will accept it as an amusing civility.

It is long overdue that magicians stop forcing the refuge from their tricks onto spectators as “souvenirs”. It is the rare person who regards a torn card or bill as anything other than rubbish, but they will generally accept such

stuff out of politeness, since the magician apparently believes that his powers have imbued his trash with some special charm. It is my opinion that most people would prefer that you clean up your own mess rather than foist it on them. This is particularly applicable when working with an item like a wet bill. What person wishes to place such a thing into their wallet or purse? ☺

NATURAL SELECTION

Effect: A card is chosen, noted and lost in the pack. The performer then runs quickly through the cards and eliminates roughly half. He hands the remaining cards to the person who made the selection, and asks that the packet be shuffled.

“I’ve narrowed it down. My intuition tells me that your card lies somewhere in that group.” Taking back the packet he springs the cards into the air, reaches into the rain of falling cards and catches one in mid-flight — the selection. ♪

Method: The feat of plucking one or more selections from a falling pack has been performed by magicians for at least a century and a half. It is normally considered a platform or stage trick. One seldom sees it performed under close-up conditions. John’s method has been designed for intimate performance. One of its strengths lies in the obvious emptiness of the hand that catches the selection. No palming is involved.

The secret is a length of fine human hair or thread. If thread is used, it should be of the sort that is invisible even at close range. It must be thicker and stronger, however, than the extremely fine thread used for floating a bill or cork, as it must stand up to more demanding use. Magic shops carry different weights and strengths of invisible thread, from which you should be able to find one that fulfills the requirements of this trick. You will need approximately an eighteen inch piece. The length will vary depending on your height and whether you are standing or seated when performing. A little experimentation will determine the correct length.

One end of the thread is fixed to the waistband of your trousers; the other end is embedded in a small bead of magicians’ wax. John uses a simple device for carrying the thread in his wallet. It consists of a piece of business card roughly three inches by one and a half, folded evenly in thirds, Z-fashion, to make a packet about one inch wide and one and a half inches tall. One end of the thread is taped securely to the center panel of the card, then the thread is wound around this panel, The end with

the wax bead is stuck lightly to the same panel (Figure 99). The outside flaps, when folded flat against the center panel, protect the thread when in the wallet. To prepare for performance, all you need do is unwind the thread from the card, then tuck the card under your waistband in front. Anchor the waxed end of the thread to a shirt button or your belt buckle, where you can secretly and easily obtain it.

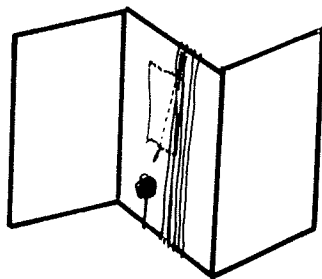


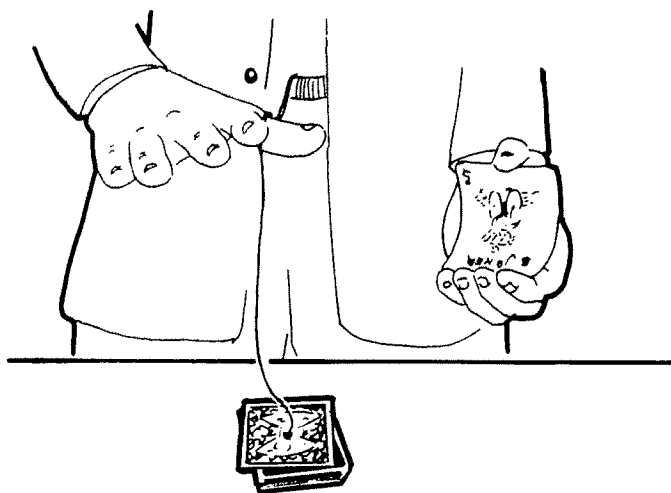
figure 99

When about to introduce the trick, procure the waxed end of the thread, sticking it to the nail of the left second finger. You will find this “hook-up” allows a wide range of movement, as the thread hangs below the hand and doesn’t interfere with the handling of the cards.

Spread the face-down deck between your hands and have a card selected. After the spectators have noted it, have it returned to the middle of the spread and, as you square the cards into the left hand, obtain a left fourth-finger break above the selection. You must now secretly maneuver the chosen card to the top of the pack. There are several ways this can be done: You can perform an overhand shuffle, shuffling off to the break. Shifts and side steals are also feasible options. Since you will next be turning the cards face-up, John feels that a turnover pass is the most economical and appropriate sleight for the circumstances.

Having brought the selection to the top, and with the deck now face-up in your left hand, explain that you will quickly eliminate about half of the cards. During this explanation, use the right second finger to scrape the waxed end of the thread off the left fingernail and onto the back of the selection at the rear of the deck. This is a small motion, quickly done, and will go unobserved, given a bit of misdirection. Once the thread is securely attached to the card, begin to spread the face-up pack between your hands, rapidly outjogging random groups of cards. Stop before the selection is exposed. During this quick sort, try to outjog approximately half the pack.

Close the spread back into the left hand and, with your right hand, strip the outjogged cards as a group from the rest. Place the left hand’s packet face-down before you on the table, near the inner edge. The selection lies atop this pile, and the thread hangs slack between the cards and your body.

*figure 100*

As you set down the packet, focus your attention on the right hand's cards. Explain that you are certain the spectator's card is among these. Hand the packet to him and ask that he shuffle it. While he does this, make a show of rolling up your sleeves, letting your hands be seen empty.

Take back the shuffled packet in your left hand, holding it face-down by its ends from above, in preparation to spring the cards in a stream into the air. As you pointedly assume a stance for the forthcoming catch, step back a few inches to stretch the thread loosely between your body and the table. Now raise the right hand, palm downward and fingers slightly spread, poised to make the catch. In doing this, it is an easy matter to hook the middle of the thread over the right thumb (Figure 100).

After a pause designed to create dramatic suspense, bow the left-hand packet and shoot the cards into the air, aiming for a spot roughly eighteen inches over the tabled pile. As the cards begin to fall — and not an instant before — raise the right hand sharply outward and upward to a position about a foot above the tabled pile, thrusting the hand into the midst of the scattering cards. This action pulls the selection from the pile up to your waiting hand (Figure 101). Catch it and freeze as the cards shower to the table. The cascade of falling cards completely covers the sudden rise of the selection to your hand. Dramatically display the caught card and accept the applause.

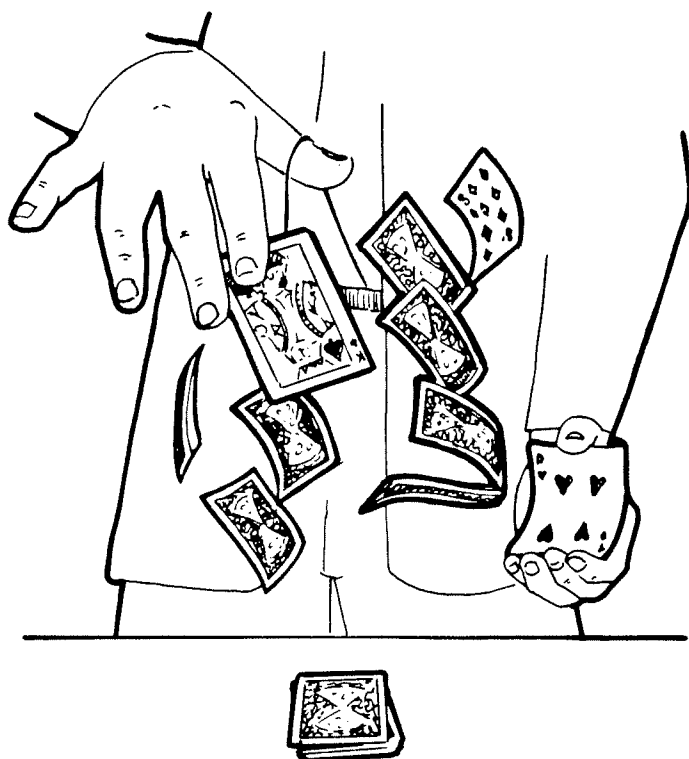


figure 101

When the audience's attention is relaxed, scrape the waxed thread from the back of the selection, toss the card to the table and either drop the thread, letting it hang along your trousers leg, or affix the waxed end once more to a button or your belt buckle.

This trick is unquestionably impressive and wonderfully visual. The illusion created of catching the card in mid-flight is so convincing, most people will accept the effect as a genuine feat of extraordinary skill. Yet, as a few trials will confirm, it is not difficult to master. ☺

AUSTRALIAN ACES

Effect: Someone shuffles the deck, then freely chooses four cards from it. The performer deals a pile of cards behind each of the selections, using the value of the selection to determine how many cards are dealt. The audience is reminded that one of their group shuffled the pack and chose the four random cards on the table; and that those selections governed the number of cards dealt into each pile. He then turns up the four dealt piles to show an ace on the face of each. ♣

Method: The plot is a venerable one, and the underlying method, if not that originally proposed, is surely among the earliest solutions: the aces are palmed while the deck is shuffled, then returned to the bottom and, through the subterfuge of bottom dealing, one ace is placed at the face of each dealt pile. Given this, the reader must wonder why space is being allotted to such familiar territory. John's psychology and management are the things that prompt its inclusion, for they not only hold concepts of much wider utility, but also teach how the bottom deal, admittedly a difficult sleight to do well, can be used effectively even if one's technique is somewhat ragged.

John began doing this trick purely to give himself a vehicle for practicing the bottom deal. But as he performed it he discovered that, for all its outward simplicity — or more likely because of it — it elicited a reaction of strong astonishment from audiences.

Begin by secretly managing the four aces to the bottom of the pack and, using a bottom palm, steal them from the face. Hand the balance of the cards to someone for shuffling. When he has finished, retrieve the pack and secretly replace the palmed aces on the bottom.

Now spread the deck for four cards to be chosen. The selections are free, with one obvious restriction: the aces at the bottom cannot be among them. Have the spectator designate cards by pointing to them, and lay them into a face-down row, without showing their faces. (Alternatively, you could have the spectator remove four random cards from the deck and place them face-down on the table before he returns the shuffled pack

to you.) When four cards have been chosen, square the deck into left-hand dealing grip, in readiness for a bottom deal. The mechanics of the bottom deal will not be described here, as they are readily found in numerous basic texts on card manipulation. John uses the standard method taught by Erdnase in *The Expert at the Card Table* (pp. 52-56).

With your right hand, gesture at the row of four cards on the table, while stressing that the spectator shuffled the pack and drew any four cards he wished. No one, including yourself, knows what those cards are. Reach out, again with the right hand, to the card at the left end of the row and turn it face-up in place. Let's assume it is a five.

"The first card you chose is a five. This means that I must deal *five* cards from the pack." While your right hand is turning up the first card and you are commenting on it, your left hand prepares the first ace for a bottom deal: the thumb pushes the top card approximately three-quarters of an inch to the right; then the third finger pushes out the bottom card for roughly half an inch. The top card hides the projecting bottom card from view, and if anyone was to look at the deck now, all they would notice is that the top card has been pushed over in preparation for dealing. However, no one will be looking at the left hand or the deck, everyone's attention has been captured by the exposure of the first card in the row. The misdirection is strong here.

The right hand, having turned up the left-end card, moves back to the deck and bottom deals the ace face-down onto the table, directly behind the face-up card. As you make the bottom deal, count, "One." Then deal four cards from the top onto the ace, counting them aloud, to form a pile of five (or whatever number is demanded by the value of the selection). Deal slowly and deliberately, giving an appearance of the utmost fairness.

It is the staging of the bottom deal that is John's contribution to the trick. The use of misdirection allows you to break the action of the bottom deal into two parts — the get-ready and the take. It also provides ample time for the get-ready, making the false deal relatively easy to perform. More importantly, the misdirection covers a less than perfect bottom deal in a fascinating way: You have lured the spectators' eyes to the first selection as you turn it up. The spectators must now shift their gaze from the card and your right hand to a point behind the row where your left hand waits, holding the deck. As you deal the first card onto the table, behind the face-up selection, the eyes are just focusing on the pack. Consequently, they are not yet ready for critical observation. Here is one time when, in a sense, the hand is quicker than the eye.

This does not mean that you must rush the deal. To the contrary, the slowness of the eye to focus fully on the dealing action permits you to deal the bottom card in a relaxed manner, without the sleight being detected. This all may seem rather theoretical, but I assure you it is wholly practical. If you were to perform a bottom deal at any time after the first card is dealt, a far greater demand would be placed on your skill, and the tendency to hesitate at the moment of the bottom deal would be greater. That is why the false deal is done on the first card instead of the last. This misdirectional technique can put the bottom deal into the repertoires of magicians who would otherwise never hazard performing such a sleight in public. This should not be mistaken as encouragement or absolution for sloppy technique; on the contrary, it is an opportunity to gain the all-important confidence before an audience necessary for a good bottom deal, as you move toward a mastery of the sleight. It is also just good sense to choose the most favorable moment to execute a sleight, or to create that moment, as Erdnase counsels. That is what John has done here.

Having dealt the first pile face-down behind the first selection, turn up the next card in the row and point out its value. As you focus attention on this card, your left hand can again prepare for a bottom deal, setting the top and bottom cards into position. And the principle of slow focus works just as well the second time, and the third, and the fourth. In this way, an ace is positioned at the face of each pile as it is dealt behind the governing selection.

All that remains is to turn the four piles over and reveal the aces. Here John offers one further bit of valuable advice. Do not clutter your working surface unnecessarily, as doing so only confuses the final visual image you wish to convey, thereby diminishing the overall impact of the effect. In the context of this trick, clutter is avoided by laying each pile onto the selection in front of it as you turn the pile face-up. Thus, in the end there are only four face-up piles on the table, with an ace at the face of each. Since it is the production of the aces that is the point of the effect, it is the aces that you wish to stress, and simplifying the final layout in this way does exactly that.

Whenever possible, never leave extraneous items on the working surface. If the card case serves no function in the trick you are doing, put it in your pocket, not on the table. When doing an Okito box routine, put the deck used in the previous trick away. If your climax consists of producing the four aces, end with just the aces on the table; do not ribbon-spread the deck face-up behind them as a final "artistic" fillip. By doing

so you only muddy the picture you wish to leave in your spectators' minds. It is such considerations as this one that separate the true craftsman from the herd. ☺

WIRED

Effect: The performer tells his audience of a particularly vivid dream he had the night before. He woke from it suddenly, in a cold sweat, and all he could remember of the dream was a number that held no meaning for him, though he had a vague sense it had to do with money. He had the foresight to reach for a pencil and an index card on the nightstand, and wrote down the number so that he wouldn't forget it. Then he fell back into a deep slumber. In the morning he found the card with the number written on it. Though he still could not recall any details of the dream, a strong sense of portent remained; so he folded the card in half and stapled it closed around the edges, to eliminate any possibility of tampering. He displays this stapled index card to the group.

He now asks someone in the audience to remove all the change on his person and to count it. When a total is reached he announces it to the group. "I thought you might be the one," the performer mutters. "Let me show you." He tears the center from the stapled card and opens it to expose the writing inside. A number is found there — a number that precisely matches the amount of change produced by the spectator. ♡

Method: Offered here is a fresh refinement on nailwriting technique, which can be adapted to many other presentations than the one given above. We will assume for this description that the gimmick is worn on the right thumb, though the handling can be easily altered to accommodate left-handed nailwriting. Any style of swami gimmick can be used.

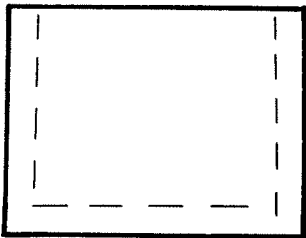


figure 102

The only other thing you require is a three by five inch index card that is blank on both sides. White cards are best for the purpose of legibility; and lined cards cannot be used, for a reason that will soon be apparent. Fold the card in half along its width, and staple all three open sides shut (Figure 102).

As you relate the story of your nocturnal premonition, bring out the stapled card and casually display it, before taking it into the right hand. When it is passed to the right hand, hold the card creased edge downward, in position to nailwrite on the center, near the fold (Figure 103). When you have led the spectator to announce the amount of change he has, secretly write the amount on the card. As you do this you should, of course, be directing attention away from the right hand and card.

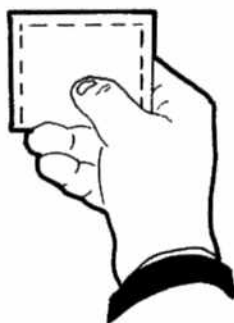


figure 103

When you mention your prediction again, look at the card in your right hand, focusing the audience's attention on it. Place the left hand briefly into your left coat pocket, as if searching for something. Withdraw the hand from the pocket, obviously empty. Transfer the card to the left hand and place the right hand briefly into your right coat pocket, again searching. While the hand is there, dislodge the swami gimmick from your thumb and let it drop to the bottom of the pocket. Bring forth your left hand, casually letting it be seen empty. This search of the pockets is done very quickly as you continue to talk to the audience. You then say, "I seem to have misplaced my staple remover. Oh well, we can open it this way."

With that, tear a large tongue-shaped piece from the center of the folded card (Figure 104), taking care not to expose the number on the backside. As you finish the tear, grasp the stapled outer frame in the left hand and the center piece in the right hand. Nonchalantly drop the frame piece into your left coat pocket as you focus attention on the right hand's piece.

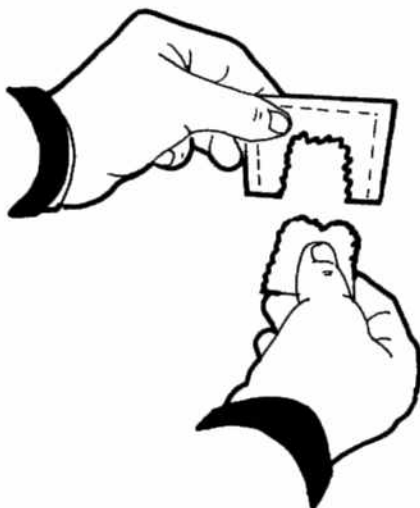


figure 104

The right hand should hold the center piece by its folded edge, pinched between the tips of the thumb and forefinger.



figure 105

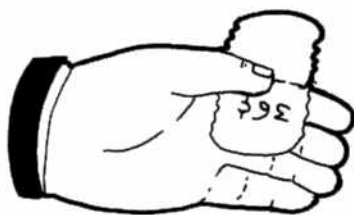


figure 106



figure 107

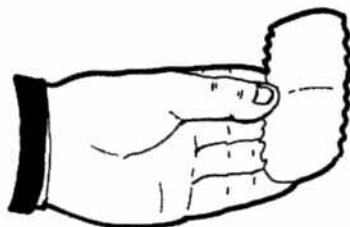


figure 108

Because of the natural spring of the card, if the finger and thumb slightly relax their pressure on the piece, the bottom torn edges will separate a bit. Insert the side of the left forefinger between the two flaps of the folded center and slide it all the way up to the fold (Figure 105). Simultaneously bring the left thumb down on top of the opening fold, pressing it flat against the forefinger (Figure 106). This completely opens the center piece. The number is on the upper surface, but the left thumb conceals it. Also raise the outer edge of the center piece slightly, tilting the upper surface just beyond the audience's view.

You now transfer the center piece to the right hand, apparently turning it over in the process. The turnover, however, is false. The left thumb moves under the left edge of the piece (Figure 107) and flips it rightward, toward the fingertips (Figure 108). At the same time, the left hand revolves palm-downward, this larger action concealing the smaller one. (Many readers will recognize this false turnover. It is often mistakenly credited to Francis Carlyle, though it appears in a Douglas Dexter trick, "The Mystic Star", in Will Goldston's 1931 book, *Great Magicians' Tricks*, pp. 203-204.)

As the left hand performs this turnover, bring the hands together and set the center piece onto the fingers of the palm-up right hand. In doing

so, use the right fingers to brush the lower half of the piece forward, reversing the direction of the fold (Figure 109). This action need not be pronounced, as you require only a slight reversal of the fold to create the desired effect.

With these actions you appear to have opened the center piece and turned the inside surface upward to reveal the writing. In reality, it is the outer



figure 109

surface that is presented to the audience. Immediately extend your right hand, offering the piece to the spectators to read. Let the person who takes it announce to the rest of the group the number he finds there.

One final note: The frame piece is pocketed after the center is torn from the card to ensure that no trace of the secret can later be discovered. If someone were to compare the reversed center with the frame piece, scrutiny would reveal small discrepancies in the torn edges, which would provide a clue to the method. Therefore, the frame is disposed of before anyone can think of matching the pieces. ☺

BULL SESSION

Effect: A large piece of black tissue is laid over the table top, and the four aces are arranged in a face-up square formation on the paper. Two of the aces are covered with squares of cardboard, and one of the uncovered aces is taken below the paper. From this position the card is made to pass magically upward through the paper, and when one of the covers is lifted, two aces are found. The second visible ace is taken beneath the paper and passed through it, to join the first two aces under the cover. Then the fourth ace, which has resided under the second cover from the start, is made to fly invisibly across to unite with the other three.

As the reader will have discerned, the plot is another classic, the Sympathetic Cards. Since its invention, sometime prior to 1908, by Harry Stork (who was almost certainly inspired by Yank Hoe's coin assembly), a number of solutions, some of them excellent, have been published. John's handling is given space in these pages because we feel it offers some distinct improvements over past methods. Among its assets are these: Only the four aces are used; no duplicates, extra cards, or fakes. There is no preliminary covering and uncovering of the cards to effect the first steal, and the action from start to finish is uncomplicated, straightforward and convincing. Other virtues will become apparent as the method is discussed in detail. ☺

Method: The inspiration for this method was "Queens' Soiree" (marketed as a manuscript in 1945) and "Electromagnetic Aces" (*Arcane*, No. 9, Jan. 1983, pp. 105-110), both by Dai Vernon. As will be seen, John's handling is significantly different from these progenitors.

In addition to the four aces, you will need a large piece of paper to cover the table, and two cardboard covers. John uses a sheet of black tissue measuring two feet by three, and rectangles of light blue cardboard measuring five inches by six. The sizes and types of material can be varied. One could use jumbo playing cards, postcards or small magazines for covers, and a sheet of newspaper in place of tissue. However, light blue pieces of cardboard in combination with a black background are visually

striking and aesthetically pleasing. For transportation, John folds the large tissue sheet into a neat bundle, approximately three inches by four. When ready to perform this trick, the sheet can be quickly unfolded and spread over the table top, with one long side lying even with the near edge of the table.

Arrange the aces in clubs-hearts-spades-diamonds order (CHaSeD) from face to back, and hold them face-up and squared in left-hand dealing grip. In your palm-up right hand hold the two cardboard covers by their long right sides, thumb on top, fingers below. The bottom cover should project an inch or more to the left of the top cover.

Open by introducing the props: "For this trick I use the four aces..." With the left thumb and fingers, spread the cards so that all four can be seen. Then, still using only the left hand, square the cards back into mechanic's grip. "...and these two covers." Turn the right hand palm-down and palm-up again, displaying the covers on both sides.

"The aces go in four different corners." As you mention the aces, give them a light tap with the left side of the bottom cover, and in this action secretly transfer the ace of diamonds from the bottom of the packet to the right fingertips, beneath the covers. This is done quickly with a bottom deal action: the left third finger buckles the bottom card, loosening it from the packet, then swiftly thrusts that card to the right, where its right side can be nipped by the right fingertips against the underside of the bottom cover. Do not conceal the packet completely beneath the covers as you make the steal. Only the right half of the packet is eclipsed, and that only for an instant. There must be no hesitation as the steal is made, and you should be mildly misdirecting away from the action by looking straight at the audience as you talk.

(This is the preferred handling for the steal of the ace. Bottom dealing from a four-card packet is not particularly difficult. However, for those daunted by this sleight, John suggests that the left hand can simply spread the aces in a narrow fan, exposing the ace of diamonds at the right side. Momentarily transfer the two covers from the right hand to the left, gripping them by their left sides while leaving most of the fan of aces exposed. As you mention the four corners of the tissue, use the right hand to point to them. This gesture gives a purpose to placing the covers in the left hand. After having indicated the corners, return the covers to the palm-up right hand, and in doing so, secretly clip the ace of diamonds under the covers and carry it away. With the left fingers, simultaneously square the fan of aces to conceal the absence of the diamond.)

The moment the steal has been accomplished, move the left hand forward and to your left with the packet, while the right hand remains stationary near the inner edge of the table.

The ace of clubs goes here — the heart here — the spade gets covered in the front...” Your words suit your actions (for the most part): As you name the club, thumb off the face-up ace of clubs, positioning it a bit to your left and well forward on the sheet of paper. Picture this card at the outer left corner of an imaginary square. Draw the left hand back diagonally to the right and thumb off the face-up ace of hearts about four inches forward of the inner edge of the paper sheet. This forms the inner right corner of the square. Now move both hands forward to the outer right corner and there apparently drop the bottom cover over the ace of spades. In reality, the hands meet briefly at the outer right corner, and the right hand’s covers move above the left hand and its ace of spades. But instead of placing the ace of spades on the table, you secretly drop the stolen ace of diamonds square onto the spade, then move the left hand briskly from beneath the covers as the right fingers release the bottom cover, letting it drop flat onto the table. There must be no hesitation as these movements are made. Since the left fingers naturally frame the double card as it rests in mechanic’s grip, the pair can be instantly and precisely squared. To the audience, everything looks as it should. They see the ace of diamonds in your left hand, as would be expected if the ace of spades had been dealt off, and the dramatic contrast between the spade and the diamond enhance the illusion. (This is the reason why aces are used, rather than court cards.)

“...and the diamond is going to go through the paper...” Shift both hands inward, toward the inner left corner of the square, and in this action dig the left thumb under the left side of the double card and flip it face-down onto the right fingertips (Figure 110). The forefinger, at the outer end, aids in keeping the cards aligned as they turn.

Just as you finish turning the double face-down, the hands meet, and the left edge of the remaining cover passes in transit over the right side of the double card (Figure 111). In a continuation of the turning action, the left fingers push the bottom card of the double (the ace of diamonds) rightward, where the right fingertips can clip it beneath the cover (Figure 112, an underview). This loading procedure is John’s variation of an old maneuver by Dr. Jacob Daley (see *M.U.M.*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 140-143).

Having loaded the ace under the cover, immediately move the left hand forward with its face-down card, to gesture at the ace of clubs as you say,



figure 110

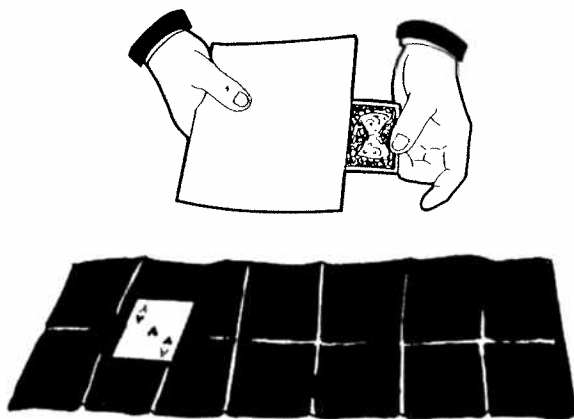
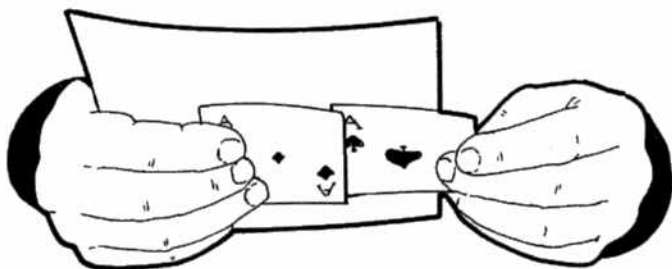


figure 111

“...to join the club there.” Drop the right hand’s cover, and the hidden ace of diamonds, onto the ace of clubs.

This sequence puts you in the standard “one-ahead” position commonly employed in the Sympathetic Cards; but all actions have been direct, with no covering and uncovering of different cards. While one can rationalize the usual stratagem of stealing a card under the pretense of showing how the two covers could hide different pairs of cards, the ruse

*figure 112**figure 113*

never seems wholly satisfying; for the idea is rather too obvious to need such a belabored demonstration, or any demonstration at all. John's method of stealing an ace from under one cover, and of loading an ace secretly under the other, is far more direct, logical and unsuspecting. While the sleights might seem demanding when read, in practice they are not difficult, and if done smoothly and without hesitation, they are entirely deceptive.

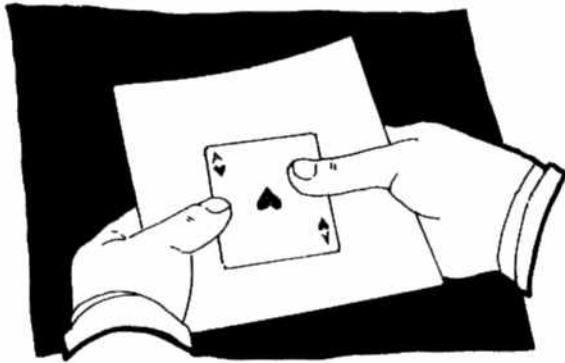
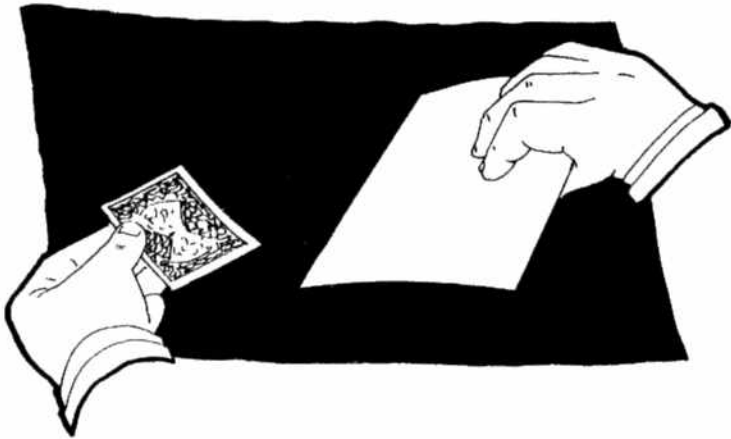
"Watch — it goes underneath the paper." With your right hand, lift the near edge of the paper several inches, gripping it just right of center, thumb above, fingers beneath. Move your left hand, with the face-down ace of spades held at the fingertips, under the paper, just to the left of your right hand. Secretly transfer the card to the right hand, clipping it between the first two fingers (Figure 113), and without a pause, move the left hand forward beneath the paper, until it is below the left cover. "I tap it up through..." With the left fingers, give the cover a little nudge through the paper. Then move the left hand to the left, bringing it from beneath the paper at the left edge. Let the hand be seen empty.

“...and as you can see, it goes right through to join the ace of clubs.” With the left hand, grasp the left cover and raise it, exposing the face-up ace of clubs with a face-down card lying over it. In raising the cover, bring it straight back to the edge of the table and let it rest there, about six inches to the left of the right hand, which still holds the edge of the paper. Pause for a moment as you stare at the freshly revealed face-down card. Only when all attention is focused there, do you move the left hand to the right and transfer the cover to the right hand. In this action you secretly load the face-down ace of spades under the cover as the right hand releases the edge of the paper and moves slightly inward. Notice that the left hand does not lift the cover from the aces and bring it directly to the right hand. Doing so would be less deceptive than this two-step procedure, employing misdirection.

With the free left hand, pick up the face-down ace of diamonds by its outer end and display its face to the audience. Then drop it back onto the ace of clubs, face-down.

“Now the ace of hearts is going to go the same way...” Transfer the right hand’s cover, along with the card beneath it, to the palm-up left hand. Then, with the right hand, pick up the face-up ace of hearts at the near right corner of the square. “...to join the club and the diamond there.” Appear to notice for the first time that you have inadvertently laid the ace of diamonds face-down. Slip the face-up ace of hearts under the left thumb, clipping it to the cover. This momentarily frees the right hand so that it can turn the ace of diamonds face-up on the table. You will now apparently retain the ace of hearts in the left hand while the right hand drops the cover onto the two aces at the outer left corner; but in fact the ace of hearts is switched for the ace of spades. This is accomplished with Don Alan’s “Big Deal” switch. (John has appropriated this application of Mr. Alan’s switch from Derek Dingle’s version of the Sympathetic Cards, “Through and Through” [ref. *Dingle’s Deceptions* by Harry Lorayne, pp. 24-37].)

Bring the right hand to the left hand’s cover and grip it at its right side, thumb above and fingers below. In doing so, also catch the ace of hearts under the right thumbtip (Figure 114). Next the left hand apparently slips the ace of hearts off the cover, while the right hand turns the cover over. In reality, you leave the ace of hearts clipped under the right thumb and instead draw the face-down ace of spades from beneath the cover and to the left. Simultaneously, the right hand turns palm-down with the cover, concealing the ace of hearts from view (Figure 115). If these actions are

*figure 114**figure 115*

properly timed, the illusion is perfect. There is of course a discrepancy: the ace of hearts should logically be face-up in the left hand. However, the turning of the cover confuses the issue, and attention is not fully on your actions. Therefore, the inconsistency is never observed.

(Just recently John has retired the “Big Deal” switch in favor of an even simpler procedure. Return to the position, two paragraphs back, where you hold the face-up ace of hearts in the right hand, and the cover and concealed ace of spades in the left hand. Using just the right fingers, flip the ace of hearts face-down in the right hand. At this point seem to notice that you have set the ace of diamonds face-down in error. As your eyes

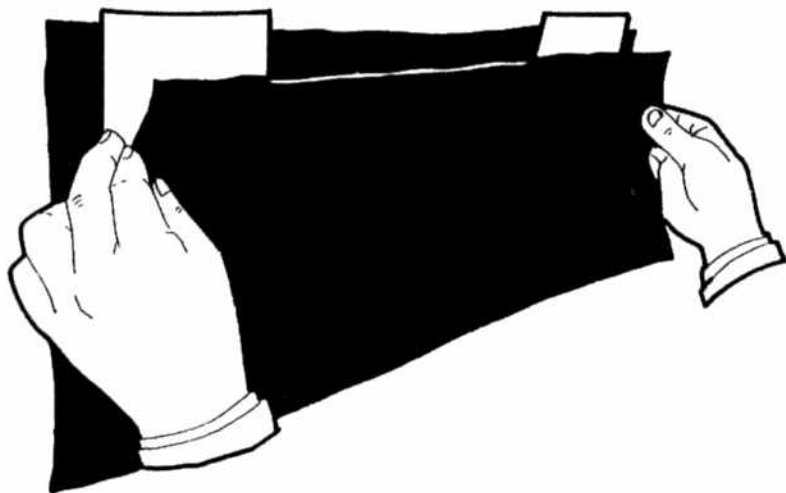


figure 116

turn toward this ace, misdirecting away from your hands, apparently trade the hands' contents, taking the cover into the right hand and the ace of hearts into the left. In truth, the hands meet and the right hand slips its card under the cover, simultaneously gripping the cover at its right side. The right hand continues to grasp the cover and the ace of hearts below it, while the left hand moves to the left, bringing the face-down ace of spades into view. The switch of cards under the cover is simple and at the same time effective. Now use the left hand's card to flip the ace of diamonds face-up in place.)

Move the right hand forward and casually drop its cover over the ace of clubs and diamonds. This adds the face-down ace of hearts to the pair. Move the right hand inward, again lift the inner edge of the paper slightly, and slip the left hand with its card beneath the sheet. Execute the same actions used to pass the previous ace up through the paper, secretly transferring the face-down ace of spades to the right fingers. Bring the empty left hand from beneath the paper and lift the left cover, revealing the face-down card resting on the face-up aces. "And there's the ace of hearts."

Use the two-step action described above to transfer the cover to the right hand and to load the ace of spades under it. With your left hand, turn the ace of hearts over, display it and drop it face-up onto the other aces. Then drop the right hand's cover (and the face-down ace of spades) onto the three aces.

"The ace of spades is last. I make it go by just folding up the corners." With both hands, grip the opposite inner corners of the sheet of paper, fingers above, thumbs below, and double the inner portion of the sheet up and over the outer portion, *partially* covering the two covers (Figure 116). Keep the fingers of both hands obviously away from the covers as you do this, to avoid any suspicion of manipulation.

Snap your right second finger off the back of the first finger, making the paper pop (a gag borrowed from the old Acrobatic Flea stunt); then do the same with the left second finger. The sound travels from right to left, indicating the magical passage of the last ace.

Return the raised half of the sheet to its former position on the table. "The ace of spades is gone from here..." With your right hand slowly raise the right cover, showing that there is nothing beneath it. "...and is now over here with the other aces." With your left hand, remove the left cover, revealing the face-down card. Transfer the left hand's cover to the right hand and, with the left hand, turn up the ace of spades to conclude.

The length of this description may obscure the exceptional directness and deceptiveness of the method. I urge you to work through the handling several times, so that you can appreciate just what an improvement it is over previous versions.

When John performs this trick, he follows it with Dr. Herschell's card stab, using the black tissue to cover the scattered deck, and stabbing the chosen card through the paper. The creases in the folded tissue perfectly disguise an added paper pocket, which conceals a duplicate to a card that you force. It is this duplicate, at a known location in the paper, that you stab and tear free. Milt Kort has located what seems to be the earliest description of Dr. Herschell's card stab. This appears in the December 1914 issue of *The Magazine of Magic* (p. 89). A more convenient description can be had in *The Tarbell Course in Magic, Vol. 3* (pp. 284-286). The method is quite good; and these two tricks, employing the same piece of paper, make a strong combination. ♣

SUICIDE MATCH

Effect: As the performer waves his hand over a box of matches, the drawer glides mysteriously open. Then a match slithers out of the drawer, in an act of self-sacrifice.

The animated matchbox, an invention of G. W. Hunter, dates back to the 1920s. Variant methods and handlings have appeared over the years, most notably by Amedeo Vacca and Martin Gardner. In the mid-1970s John Kennedy added the embellishment of having a match rise from the drawer of the box. He has since marketed two methods for achieving this effect. The method about to be explained has one advantage over past solutions: it can be done impromptu with almost any matchbox, given a minute's time to prepare it. There are no threads, wires, springs, rubber bands or mechanical devices; just the matchbox and matches. ♡

Method: As stated above, almost any matchbox will serve the purpose. John most often uses the thin matchboxes one finds in finer clubs and restaurants. In fact, he makes it a point to perform with the matchboxes supplied by the establishment where he is working.

The preparation of the box is quite simple. A triangular piece must be cut from the underside of the box sleeve at one end. The removed section is approximately half an inch wide at its base and five-eighths of an inch tall. See Figure 117. This can be cut away with scissors or a knife blade, if either is handy. Otherwise, you can simply tear a roughly triangular piece from the sleeve.

Now empty the drawer of its matches. Grip one of them near center and, with the bottom of the match, punch a small hole in the drawer, about a quarter of an inch from one end. If you like, you can start this hole with the point of a knife blade, scissors or ball-point pen. Run the shaft of the match

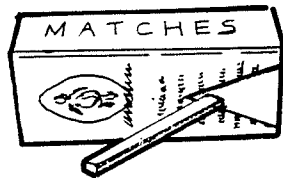


figure 117

back and forth several times through the hole, to ensure that it slides freely. However, do not enlarge the hole so much that the head of the match can pass through it. You want the match to hang loose in the hole without dropping out.

Insert one match into the hole, so that it hangs from the bottom of the drawer, and replace the rest of the matches in the drawer, heads at the prepared end. You may wish to discard a few matches, if there is any danger of the matches causing the drawer and sleeve to bind. Then insert the drawer into the sleeve, fitting the triangular notch at the end where the match protrudes (Figure 117 again). The hanging match, because of the pressure of the other matches above it, will tend to lie at roughly a thirty degree angle to the box when the drawer is closed. As will be seen, preparing the matchbox is the matter of a minute, and can be done secretly under the table or away from it, while your companions' attention is elsewhere.

With this preparation accomplished, place the matchbox in your coat pocket or set it on the table where you are working, with the prepared end lying slightly past the table edge, and the match hanging straight down.

When you are ready to perform with the matchbox, casually pick it up without exposing the protruding match, and grip it at the right fingertips, with the prepared end of the box to your right and tipped slightly upward. The hand should be held palm outward, with the tips of the fingers directed toward the audience. The first three fingers are aligned along the far side of the box, with the forefinger at the outer right corner. The thumb rests opposite, on the inner right corner; and the tip of the fourth finger is curled slightly inward to contact the base of the match (Figure 118). In this position the top of the matchbox sleeve will be tilted toward the audience. The protruding match can be observed from your right side and behind you, so guard those angles.



figure 118

Bring the left hand, open and palm-down, over the left end of the matchbox, but several inches above it, and wiggle the fingers in the fashion of a magical gesture. At the same time, slowly push rightward with the right fourth finger on the match. This forces the drawer to emerge from the

sleeve in an eerie manner (Figure 119). If you have positioned the right thumb and forefinger as described — at the very corners of the matchbox — the fourth finger should be able to push the drawer somewhere between half and two-thirds of the way open. The size of your hand will to a degree affect the distance you can open the drawer. The left hand, stationed as it is above the left end of the box, helps to cover the absence of the right



figure 119

fourth finger beside the rest, and the opening drawer captures the attention of the spectators, further assuring that the finger's position won't be noticed. Resist the natural tendency to bunch the right fingertips more tightly together as the drawer moves out, as this movement can be seen by the audience.

To cause the match to slither from the drawer, the position of the box must be adjusted slightly. First relax the fourth finger's pressure on the end of the match, letting the match swing away from the box. Then pull downward with either the right second finger or third on the outer side of the sleeve, causing the box to pivot between the forefinger and thumb, and the right end of the drawer to rise a bit. This action swings the end of the hanging match directly over the forefinger, where it is engaged by the side of the middle phalanx (Figure 120). It may also be necessary to twist the box very slightly counterclockwise to position the match correctly

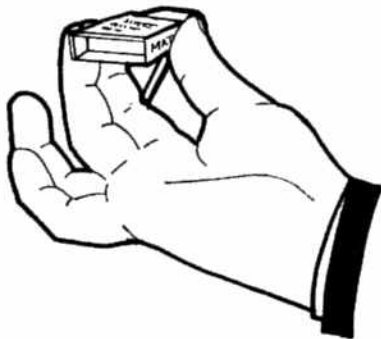


figure 120



figure 121

on the forefinger. These small adjustments will become obvious to you as you work with the props.

If you now push slowly upward with the third fingertip on the side of the box, the projecting end of the drawer can be made to descend imperceptibly. Since the end of the match is perched on the forefinger, it will be forced upward, through the bottom of the drawer, as the drawer is lowered. Do not push the match upward by raising or extending the forefinger. It is more subtle to lower the end of box instead. Also, strive to make the match slide forward over the edge of the drawer, at an oblique angle to the other matches (Figure 121). Avoid the temptation to force the match straight up, perpendicular to the box and matches. Doing so can only make the method transparent.

When about eighty percent of the animated match has crawled from the drawer, grasp it with the left hand and remove it completely. With the right forefinger, push the drawer closed; then light the match on the side of the box while using the right second finger to conceal the notch in the cover. The box can be casually displayed on both sides, as you put it away, but it is not recommended that you make a point of exhibiting it. Instead, keep the audience's attention focused on the match.

John frequently performs an old, balancing match stunt after lighting the match. He does this not only for the entertainment, but also to maintain the audience's interest in the match, while steering their attention away from the matchbox. For those unfamiliar with this little balancing stunt, it is quickly explained. When lighting the match, hold it near the bottom, gripping it securely between the left thumb and second finger; and firmly press the end of it against the tip of the forefinger (Figure 122). This forms a small indentation in the flesh, in which the match will stand.



figure 122

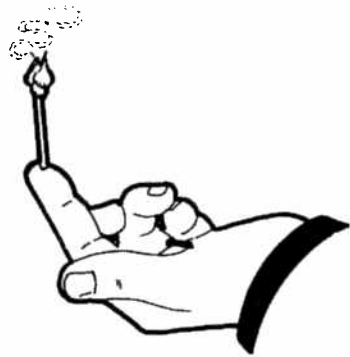


figure 123

When the match is lit, hold the hand palm-up and the match fully upright; then extend the forefinger with the match sitting on it (Figure 123). Thanks to the dimple in the skin, along with natural moisture, the match will stand for an indefinite period on the fingertip. However, to avoid making the stunt look too easy, move the hand back and forth a bit, as if you are genuinely balancing the match on end.

After using the match to light whatever it was that first prompted you to pick up the matchbox, you can vanish the match to conclude the sequence. John uses a vanish associated with Slydini. It is bold but most effective. As the spectators' relax their attention, thinking the magic is over, shake your hand briskly up and down to extinguish the match. As you shake the match up and down a second time, secretly release it, letting it fly over your shoulder. Do make sure the match is out before you toss it, or the effect will be something less than wished, as well as dangerous. Continue to shake the hand several more times, decreasing the size of the hand's arc and gradually slowing to a stop. Then hold the hand still for a moment and dramatically open the fingers, revealing that the match is gone.

This impromptu version of the animated matchbox is extremely good. It is even more admirable for its ingenious simplicity. When you are practicing the actions, it is easy to lose sight of the spooky visual illusion created. Attention to your mirror will fully confirm the effectiveness of the trick as your audience perceives it. ☺

SECONDS ON JACK SANDWICH

Effect: The two red jacks are placed face-up on the table, and a random card is selected from the pack. The card is noted, then lost in the deck. The performer makes the gesture of throwing an invisible card from the deck into his empty hand. When he passes that hand over the two jacks on the table, a face-down card appears between them. This card proves to be the selection just buried in the deck. It is shuffled back into the pack; then, as the performer cascades the cards into a pile on the table, the two jacks are tossed through the stream. When the jacks land, a face-down card is once more between them. They have captured the chosen card once again, this time in mid-flight. ♣

Method: John devised this remote sandwich effect and encore when he was fifteen years old. Over the years he has refined the handling, adding finishing touches here and there. This trick and its underlying construction are first rate, and can stand beside the best in this obsessively explored genre of sandwich effects.

Begin by openly culling the two red jacks (or any other pair of mates you like) to the top of the pack. Settle the deck face-down into left-hand dealing position and flip the two jacks face-up on top of the pack. As you do this, push over the next card slightly and form a left fourth-finger break beneath it. Immediately push over the upper jack so that both can be seen. Explain that the jacks are special cards, a claim that will be substantiated shortly. Meanwhile, with your right hand, square them onto the deck and immediately pick off all three cards above the break, grasping the packet from above by the ends.

As the right hand moves the three-card packet to the right, use the left thumb to retain the uppermost jack on the deck, rightjogged for roughly three-quarters of its width. This leaves the right hand holding a double card: the second jack with a face-down indifferent card hidden under it. Smoothly bring the right hand over the deck and pick up the single jack beneath the double card, jogged about half an inch to the *right*. (This now standard loading procedure for sandwich tricks is, to the best of my

knowledge, an invention of Edward Marlo's.) Carry the spread of jacks away from the pack and flex them gently, bowing the centers upward (Figure 124). This forms a mild convex crimp, which aids in keeping the two cards of the double aligned when they are set on the table. It will also serve another purpose in a



figure 124

moment. All this is done in a few seconds, with no attention placed on the procedure. The actions are treated as incidental.

Set down the spread jacks just in front of you and turn your full attention to the audience, misdirecting away from the tabled cards. Ask someone to call stop as you dribble the face-down pack from your right hand into your left. Honestly halt the dribble when told to and neatly slip the right hand's cards under the left's, cutting the pack at the point you were stopped.

Do a double turnover, apparently displaying the top card: the spectator's selection. Turn the double card face-down again and immediately remove the top card. Insert this into the front of the pack near center. Then bring the right hand palm-down over the pack and push the protruding card flush. You have apparently buried the card just shown, but in fact, that card is still atop the deck.

After carefully squaring the card into the pack, the right hand is perfectly positioned to grasp the deck by its ends from above, fingers lined along the front, and the thumb at the left inner corner. Gripping the deck in this manner, lift it from the left hand. (The method of control was purposely chosen to reach this position smoothly, with a minimum of adjustment.)

"Once your card is lost in the deck, I can make it invisible and shake it out." Hold the empty left hand palm-up below the pack and give the cards one brisk shake, pretending to toss an invisible card into the left hand.

"To make your card visible again, all I have to do is touch it to the jacks." Position the palm-up, empty, left hand beside the spread jacks on



figure 125

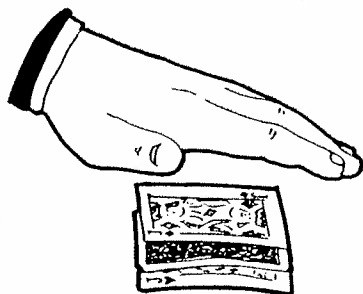


figure 126

the table, with the length of the fourth-finger adjacent to the left edge of the double card. Then turn the hand palm-down over the spread, using the fourth finger and edge of the hand as a hinge. While doing this, bring the tip of the fourth finger into contact with the outer left corner of the double card and secretly slide the upper card (a jack) leftward about half an inch (Figure 125, an exposed view). Immediately lift the hand away from the spread, exposing the face-down card between the two jacks (Figure 126). Notice how this procedure eliminates any obvious sliding of the upper jack under the hand: the slide is hidden by the larger motion of the hand turning. Thus, the face-down card seems to appear between the jacks, instead of being simply uncovered.

As all eyes are captivated by the appearance of the card, your right hand moves to set the deck on the table, and in that motion you execute a one-handed top palm. Since the hand holds the deck in perfect position for this sleight, it may be accomplished in a split second, and is covered by both strong misdirection and a larger motion. As you set the deck to your right, keep your eyes fixed on the sandwich cards, continuing to focus everyone's attention on them. Bring the palm-down right hand to the spread and press the base of the forefinger lightly down on the exposed surface of the lower jack. This action traps the left side of the palmed card

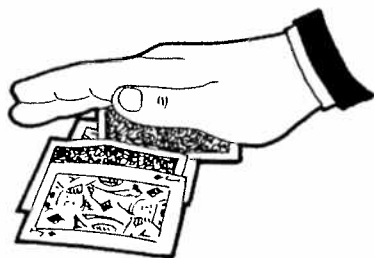


figure 127

between the forefinger and the face of the jack. At the same time, rest the edge of the left hand on the table, just to the left of the spread. Without hesitation, move the right hand leftward, sweeping all the cards along with it and butting them roughly square against the left hand. Figure 127 gives an exposed view of the card being slid

into the spread. This action smoothly and efficiently loads the palmed card between the center card and the lower jack (Figure 128). And here is the second instance in which the convex crimp in the cards comes to your aid. When, at the start of the loading maneuver, the right forefinger presses the lower jack lightly to the table, a narrow but valuable gap is opened above

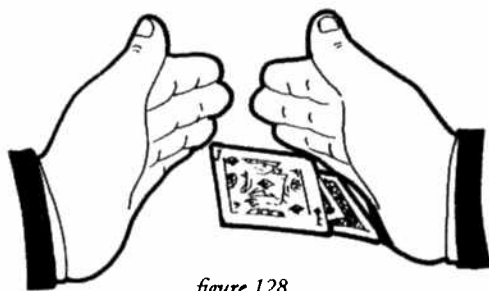


figure 128

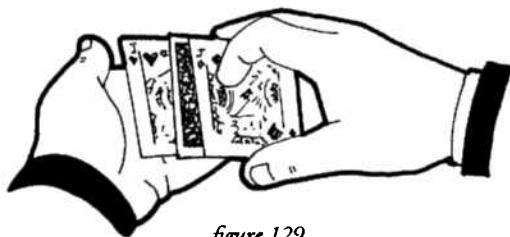


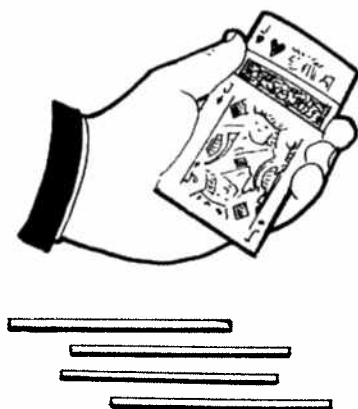
figure 129

that card; and this gap ensures that the selection slides effortlessly under the indifferent card. Working on a soft surface, like a close-up pad, while not necessary to the success of the sleight, does make the loading easier.

This loading maneuver should be done as one fluid motion. While it may seem daunting on the page, a few trials will prove it simpler than expected; and with moderate practice it can appear like a perfectly natural and unsuspecting gathering action.

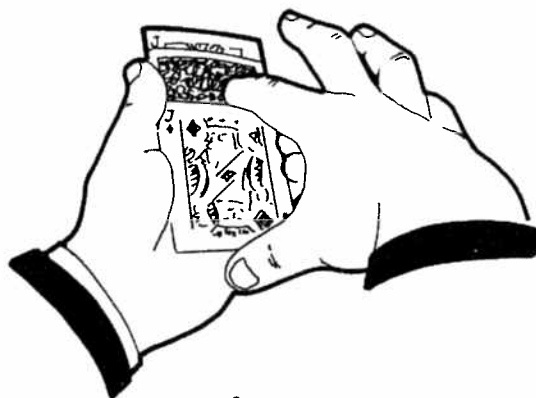
Without a pause, pick up the squared pile by its ends in the palm-down right hand and, with the fingertips of the palm-up left hand, backspread the lower two cards, exposing the face-down selection between the jacks (Figure 129). The face-down indifferent card remains hidden beneath the upper jack. The right hand, which still grips this double card by its ends, now uses it to flip the selection face-up onto the lower jack in the left hand. Display the selection, then flip it face-down again in the same fashion. When turning the card down, injog it approximately three-quarters of an inch. You can do this as you flip the card over, or you can use the left thumb to pull the card back as it settles onto the jack.

Place the right hand's double card directly over the injogged selection, but very slightly forward of it — no more than an eighth of an inch. Then press the tip of the right forefinger to the center of the upper jack and, with a light touch, slide the jack inward about three-quarters of an inch,

*figure 130**figure 131*

exposing the back of the face-down indifferent card as you form a vertical spread. Apply firm pressure with the left thumb and fingertips to the edges of the cards as you injog the jack, to ensure that the cards below do not shift. Figure 130 depicts the resultant spread, and offers a schematic sketch of the cards in this configuration, as viewed from the right edge.

With the palm-up right hand, grip the spread at its right side near center, and turn this hand palm-down, rotating the spread end over end to expose its underside. The audience sees the face of the selection between the two jacks (Figure 131). Because of the slight offsetting of the two center cards, only single edges can be seen on either side of the spread. (This is a Dai Vernon idea.) Turn the right hand palm-up again and replace the spread in the palm-up left hand.

*figure 132*

Move the right hand, palm-down, over the spread. Once there, place the tip of the thumb against the inner end of the upper jack, and the tip of the extended forefinger onto the back of the indifferent card (Figure 132).

You will now do Dai Vernon's alignment move (with a minor change in fingering). Push the top two cards forward as a unit, sliding them over the packet. The left fingers once more exert pressure on the edges of the cards to prevent the lower two from moving — until the right thumb hits the inner end of the selection. When this happens the right hand continues to move without interruption, now pushing the top three cards forward, until the thumb strikes the inner end of the bottom jack. Here you stop, with the face-down indifferent card outjogged from the center of the packet. The spectators have been given every reason to believe this card is the selection.

With your right hand, grasp the outjogged card by its outer end, clipping it between the first two fingers, and draw it smoothly from the packet. This leaves the other three cards squared in left-hand dealing grip. With the right hand, flex the packet, bending the ends upward while bowing the cards concavely to remove the widthwise crimp. Then turn the left hand palm-down and casually drop the packet onto the table, just in front of you, giving the cards a very gentle forward toss. As the packet hits the table, landing long edge forward, it will spread slightly. Thanks to the mild lengthwise bridge usually present in cards, the face-up selection will remain squared below the upper face-down card, and only two face-down cards will be evident (Figure 133). This principle is known as Dan Tong's pad spread. There is a knack to the toss, a certain touch that will be found upon experimentation. For more information on this spread, see Mentzer's *Card Cavalcade* for the original description (pp. 106-110).

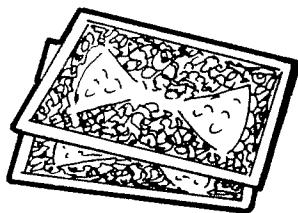


figure 133

Treat the dropping of the packet as completely unimportant. Look up, drawing the audience's gaze upward as you say, "That is only one trick the jacks can do. I'll show you another. First, I'll bury your card in the deck." With your empty left hand, lift the top half of the deck, place the right hand's card onto the bottom half and drop the top half onto it.

"To ensure that it's lost, I'll even shuffle the cards." Pick up the pack and give it a quick, casual overhand shuffle. As you do this, work in front of the tabled sandwich cards, continuing to direct attention away from them. In addition, you are now physically screening them from the spectators' view as much as is possible without appearing awkward. This

constant misdirection is designed to cover any slight misalignment the upper jack and the selection below it may have suffered during the toss. Performed correctly, the Tong spread is fairly reliable, but the cards can occasionally split; and if they do, your subsequent actions contribute greatly to concealing your misfortune. (If you prefer not to take any chances, the Tong spread can be eliminated and the sandwich cards can be casually set on the table.)

On finishing the shuffle, set the deck face-down at the center of the table, broadside to the audience. Let both hands be seen empty as they leave the pack. With your palm-down left hand, slide the sandwich cards toward you and to the table edge, where you can pick them up. Then turn the left hand palm-up, holding the cards squared in dealing grip. A jack is seen at the face of the packet.

Transfer the packet to the palm-down right hand, grasping it at the inner end, thumb at the left corner, second finger at the right corner, and forefinger curled onto the face. Then, with the left fingertips at the outer left corner, pull out the lower jack at an angle, forming a two-card fan, with the indices of both jacks visible. The face-down selection remains hidden beneath the upper jack.

Now move the left hand palm-down over the tabled deck and grasp it by its sides. Lift the deck about three inches and dribble the cards slowly back onto the table. With the left fingers, square the pack, lift it and begin to dribble the cards again onto the table. Hold your right hand, with the fanned jacks, poised just behind the deck (Figure 134); and when you have released roughly half the pack, move the right hand's fan swiftly through the falling stream of cards in a tossing motion. You do toss the sandwich onto the table, but you do not actually release it until it is safely

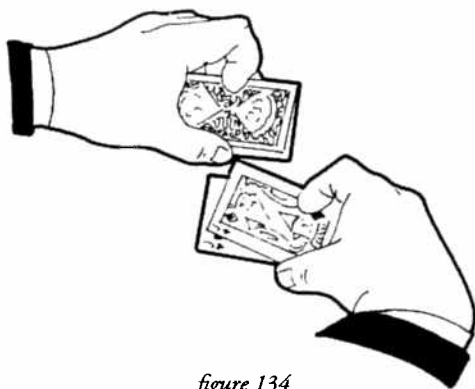


figure 134

through the cascade. You will find it advantageous to interrupt the dribbling of the cards briefly as the packet is passed through the stream. Otherwise, you risk knocking cards from the cascade and spoiling the desired visual impression of the jacks catching just one card neatly between them.

On hitting the table, the sandwich cards will spread, revealing the face-down card between the face-up jacks (Figure 135). Ask the spectator to turn up the face-down card. When he does, it is seen to be his selection, trapped once more by the fleet-footed jacks. ♣

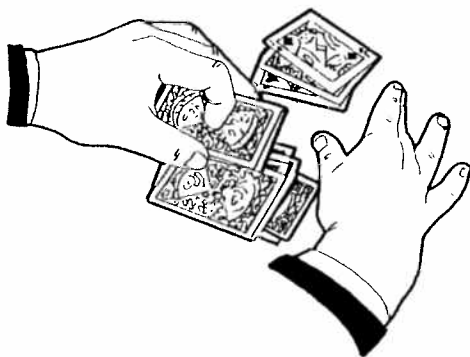


figure 135

THE LOGICAL BILL TRICK

Effect: The performer shows a dollar bill front and back, while his hands are seen otherwise empty. The bill is rapidly folded and from the folds a half dollar mysteriously emerges. The bill is opened and shown, then folded a second time — and another half dollar slides slowly from the folds.

The bill is once more displayed, then folded in an even slower and more deliberately fair manner. Yet, when the performer gently flexes the bill, a third half dollar rises from the folds.

He attempts to squeeze one more coin from the bill, but failing that, instead transforms the dollar into a hundred dollar bill. ☺

Method: John considers this to be one of his best creative efforts. He looked long and hard for a method of producing coins from a bill, but found none of the existing solutions wholly satisfying. In most cases noise from the hidden coins proved a problem when working under truly close-up circumstances. John also recognized that the productions had no effective climax: the coins were produced, then you simply began another trick with them. “The Logical Bill Trick” arose from John’s struggle with these problems. His solution completely fulfills the stated aims. The trick now is a complete piece of magic unto itself, and the coins have been silenced by use of a simple holder that in turn is produced as the final effect, leaving you with nothing to hide.

“The Logical Bill Trick” originally appeared in John’s first book, *Carney Knowledge*. Since then John has heard from many magicians that they admired the trick, but had difficulty understanding the method of folding the bill that holds the three coins. This fold is extremely simple, but such things are often hard to teach on the printed page. We will have another go at it, and in the process John’s revised and simplified handling of the trick will be described, along with thoughts, details and patter that have not appeared in previous descriptions.

Let's begin with the folding of the bill that will hold the coins. John believes that a hundred dollar bill makes the most impact when produced at the finish. However, during less affluent times, he admits that a fifty, a twenty or even a ten dollar bill will do. The formation of this bill into a container for the three half dollars is simple enough that it can be stated in two sentences: one coin is laid onto one corner of the bill, and the bill is rolled around it, forming a flat tube with the coin lying at one end. The tube is then folded in half and the remaining two coins are slipped into separate folds. This is hardly an origami nightmare. With the basic idea understood, let's fill in the details.

Set the bill before you on the table, face-down (i.e., green-side uppermost) with the left end of the bill turned toward you. Then lay one half dollar on the near left corner of the bill, its circumference even with the left and inner edges of the bill (Figure 136). Now, with both hands, grasp the near end of the bill, along with the coin. Lift this end and the coin as a unit, and fold them forward onto the bill. You have just made a U-fold the height of the half dollar, with the half dollar inside at the left (Figure 137). Repeat this forward fold three times, until you have reached the far end of the bill. This folds the bill jellyroll fashion around the coin, forming a flattened tube. The coin should still lie even with the left edge of the bill. Figure 138 shows how the coin rests inside the tube when the rolling is finished.

Pick up the rolled bill without permitting the coin to shift, and turn it over sidewise. This brings the outer end of the bill into view. If this end is not reasonably even with the edge of the tube, adjust it the short distance necessary. This is easily done. Using the thumbs above and forefingers beneath, roll the tube like a loose skin around the coin, until the outer end comes even with the edge of the tube. You will find that the bill will move around the coin like the caterpillar track on an army tank.

Take the second half dollar and lay it onto the end of the tube, directly over the first coin. Now fold the empty end of the tube up and over the second coin (Figure 139). This doubles the tube in half along its width, with the outer indices of the bill folded inward.

There is one last fold to be made. Hold the bill with the folded center of the tube nearest you. Now lift only the upper section of folded bill at the outer left corner and fold it up and back diagonally, as shown in Figure 140. Do not fold back the index corner of the bill that lies under this section. That single corner must remain flat, covering the second coin (Figure 140 again). The diagonal fold creates a pocket into which you

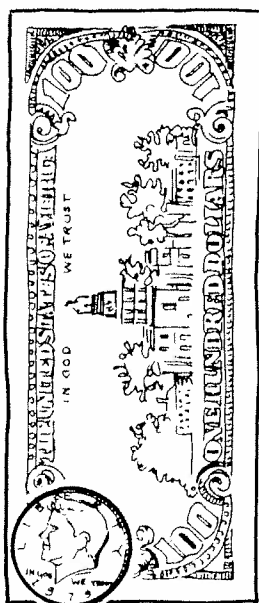


figure 136

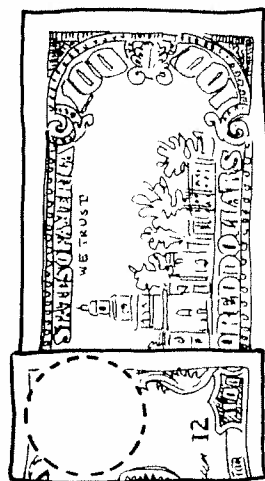


figure 137



figure 140



figure 138

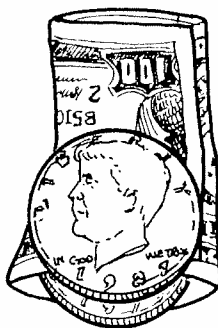


figure 139

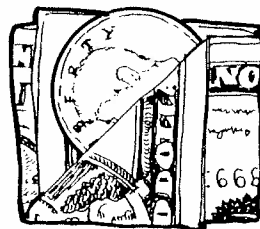


figure 141

slip the third half dollar (Figure 141). A single layer of bill lies between the second and third coins to prevent "talking". The holder is now complete, with the coins in place.

When ready to perform, the folded, loaded bill is finger palmed in your right hand. If you examine the packet you will see that there is only one side on which the edges of all three coins are visible. This same side is the only one of the four consisting of single edges, rather than folds. This "open" side must be positioned inward, nearest the right fourth finger; and the diagonally folded pocket is turned downward against the fingers.

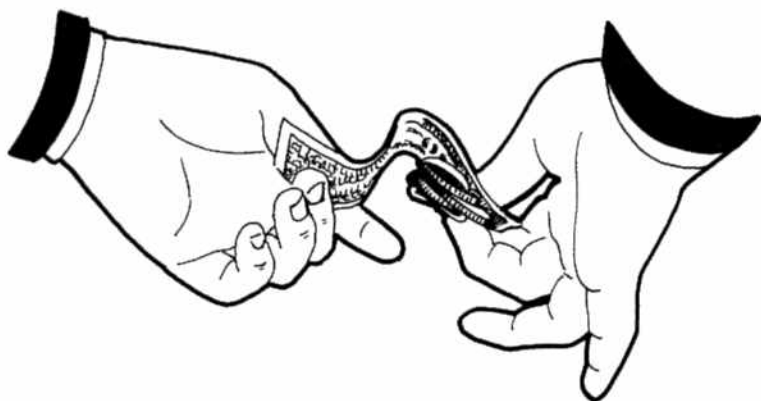
Bring out a crisp dollar bill from your pocket or wallet. Hand it to someone or toss it casually onto the table. "How much do you think that's worth?" With your left hand, recover the bill, taking it by one end and holding it front-side (president) up. Then, with your right hand, grasp the opposite end, covering the finger-palmed packet as you hold the bill horizontally between the palm-up hands. In this action, adjust the coin packet from finger palm to the tips of the right second and third fingers. Do not alter the orientation of the packet as you make this adjustment: throughout the trick, the open edge of the packet remains pointing toward you. It is wise to tip the front side of the bill downward slightly whenever it is held stretched between the hands, to ensure that the edge of the coin packet is not accidentally exposed.

Raise the right fingertips slightly, and let the center coin slide roughly half way out of the packet from the right side. It is the only coin that can slide from this side of the packet, for the upper coin is trapped within the folded bill, as is the lower coin.

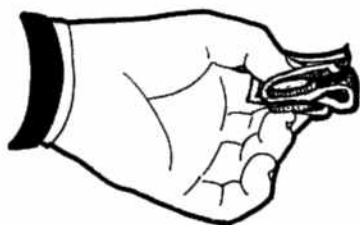
"It says one dollar, but with inflation, it's worth a lot less. I've worked out a way of beating inflation, though." As you are saying this, look up at the audience, drawing their attention away from your hands as you perform the following, seemingly unimportant actions: Move the hands toward each other, causing the center of the bill to buckle upward (Figure 142), and stop when the tips of the fingers can touch under the bill.

Now pass the coin packet from the right fingertips to the left, letting the center coin remain behind. This secret transfer of the packet is the work of an instant. Immediately separate the hands, drawing the bill taut again between them. It can be snapped open briskly, but John prefers to use an action a bit less "crisp". Snapping the bill loudly would call attention to it. At this moment it is wiser to capture the audience's interest with your words rather than with your actions. The snapping of the bill, if not stressed, will pass as a common gesture, something often done when holding money as you talk about it.

"They say it takes money to make money, and they're right. I'll show you how it works. All you have to do is fold it and snap..." As you say

*figure 142**figure 143*

this, shift the left forefinger from beneath the bill to a position over and behind its outer left corner. Then move the hands toward each other again, while raising the right slightly above the left. Because of the left forefinger's position on top, the bill is folded into an S-shape. This zigzag fold is shown in Figure 143, where it can be seen that the right hand's coin is automatically introduced into the upper fold, while the coin packet remains beneath the bill. The folds are not flattened or creased. Instead, the folded bill, along with the hidden coin and packet, is taken into the left hand, thumb above, fingers below (Figure 144). This method

*figure 144*

cally introduced into the upper fold, while the coin packet remains beneath the bill. The folds are not flattened or creased. Instead, the folded bill, along with the hidden coin and packet, is taken into the left hand, thumb above, fingers below (Figure 144). This method

of folding the bill is near instantaneous, and superior to the more labored folds often practiced in these sorts of coin productions.

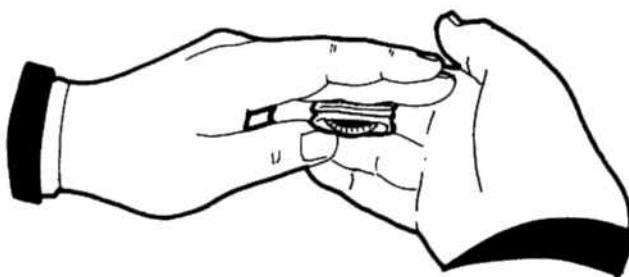
Now rub the bill back and forth between the left thumb and fingers, as you snap your right fingers once for effect. Gently work the coin within the folds to the front edge of the bill and let it emerge slowly, until it drops to the table. "...and look — you've made fifty cents, half of your original investment."

Bring your right hand to the folded bill and grasp the upper end, thumb on top, fingers beneath. As you establish this grip, also press the right fingertips against the coin packet from below. Then separate the hands, straightening the bill between them. In this action retain the packet beneath the right end of the bill, while the left fingertips hold back the lower coin beneath the left end of the bill. This is made easy, as the left fingers naturally contact the bottom coin resting in its diagonal pocket.

"I'll try it again. Just give it a little rub and..." Here you refold the bill zigzag fashion, but this time the left end goes over the right. That is, the right forefinger is brought over the right end of the bill, and the left hand rises slightly as the hands approach one another. This causes the bill to fold in a reversed S-shape. Once more the loose coin is secretly introduced into the upper fold, and the coin packet ends up beneath the folded bill. Grasp everything in your right hand and gently rub the bill back and forth, working the coin forward and into view. Let it drop from the bill and onto the table with the first coin.

"Hey, there's a whole buck there!" With both hands, snap the dollar bill open, then toss it casually to the table, while you retain the coin packet in right-hand finger palm. Pause a moment; then say, "Let's see if I can get one more coin out of there." With your left hand, pick up the bill by its outer end and, as you lift it from the table, turn it end over end, letting both sides be seen. Lay the bill back (green-side) upward across the right fingers, covering the palmed packet. The inner end of the bill should lie directly over the fingers, while the outer end hangs down over the side of the forefinger. These simple actions convincingly show both sides of the bill, making any other concealment-displays unnecessary.

"I'm going to fold it very slowly...everything is fair..." As this is said, you fold the bill into a packet the size of the hidden one. The left hand begins by folding about half an inch of the inner end of the bill up and forward (Figure 145). It then folds this end forward again, this time doubling over about an inch. Repeat this one-inch fold, rolling the bill

*figure 145**figure 146**figure 147*

once more over on itself. Just as you complete the third fold, twist the bill ninety degrees counterclockwise and bring the inner edge of the bill even with that of the finger-palmed packet. Roughly an inch of the outer end of the bill projects beyond the folded portion. Bring the left thumb up under this end and fold it over and onto the rest (Figure 146).

Finish the folding by doubling the far edge of the rolled bill upward and inward onto the near edge. This places the visible one-dollar indices inside the packet. The dollar bill now looks very much like the hundred dollar bill that lies directly beneath it. Bring down the right thumb onto

the packet to stop it from springing open. Throughout the folding of the bill, keep the length of the right forefinger stretched along the front edge of the coin packet, so that it is not exposed as the folds are made.



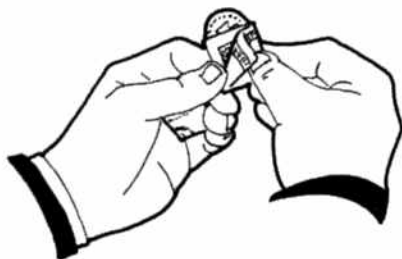
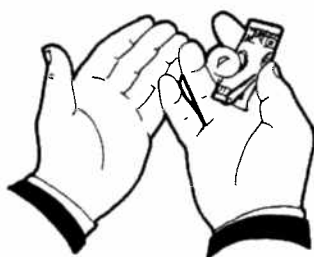
figure 148

Snap your left fingers for effect, then bring the left hand, palm-down, back to the packets in the right hand. In picking them up, you will switch them undetectably. Lay the left fingers over the packets, and slip the left thumb under them (Figure 147). Take them from the right hand in this grip, raising the left hand while turning its back toward the audience. Simultaneously, the left thumb pushes the coin packet rightward, to the fingertips and into view. The folded dollar bill remains hidden behind the fingers (Figure 148) and can be easily adjusted into finger palm. This action is similar to that of a mentalist's billet switch.

"...and right from the center we get another coin." While you are saying this, firmly grip the bottom corners of the coin packet between the thumbs and forefingers, and work them alternately back and forth. This flexing of the packet forces the last coin to rise gradually into view (Figure 149). When the coin has risen for nearly half its height, grasp it between the left thumb and forefinger and remove it from the folds. Display it briefly, then place it into your left coat pocket, leaving behind the finger-palmed dollar bill as well. Be sure to keep the hundred dollar packet prominently in sight at the right fingertips. The audience is intrigued with the coin productions, and will have no thoughts of bill switches. Having so neatly accomplished the exchange, you don't want to weaken the climax of the trick by giving reason for any suspicion now.

As the left hand pockets the coin and bill, comment, "That's fifty cents..." Then, with the same hand, pick up the two coins from the table. "...that's one dollar, and that's a dollar fifty." Drop these into the coat pocket, letting the left hand be seen empty as it comes away. Throughout this, the right hand remains stationary with the folded hundred. Though this bill is in plain view, it will not be recognized as a hundred for two reasons: first, the audience is not expecting a change; and second, the portion of the bill in sight bears no obvious distinguishing marks.

Again pinch the lower left corner of the packet between the left thumb and forefinger. "Let's see if I can get just one more." Flex the packet as

*figure 149**figure 150**figure 151**figure 152*

you did when producing the last coin. When no coin appears, stop. “Hummm! I guess not. Oh well, who wants to mess around with the small change anyway.” With the left thumbtip, straighten out the folded corner on the your side of the packet. While there is no great need to conceal this move, it should go unobserved, as it is a small motion and is done behind the packet. Immediately carry this straightened corner downward, opening the next fold of the bill. A nondescript area of the bill still faces the audience, while the “100” indices are exposed on your side (Figure 150).

Here you can, if you like, casually display the partially opened bill on both sides while concealing its changed value, by performing the so-called Carlyle turnover:

With the left hand, lay the folded bill, indices downward, lengthwise across the inner phalanges of the right fingers. Curl the second fingertip onto the bill and slip the tip of the right thumb under the right edge (Figure 151). Now smoothly turn the right hand palm-down, and at the same time straighten the thumb and fingers, carrying the bill to the fingertips (Figure 152). You have apparently turned the bill over, but in

reality the same side is displayed. Conclude the right hand's action by depositing the bill on the palm-up left hand.

If you use this little maneuver, do it in an entirely nonchalant manner, while you address the audience. No importance should be invested in the move. You are not displaying the bill; it is turned over merely as a consequence of transferring it to the left hand. Turn the right hand palm-up once more; then replace the bill on the open right fingers without turning it over. Pause for only a moment, to exhibit the bill; then close the right fingers as you turn the hand over.

"I'll just give it a snap..." Snap your left fingers and give the right hand a little shake. The shake serves two functions: it defines the moment of the magic, and it gives an impression of the hand accomplishing something more complex than the actions really warrant.

Turn the hand up again and dramatically open the fingers to expose the bill. By closing the fingers you have subtly turned the bill over in the hand, bringing the indices uppermost. When the hand opens, the value of the bill is exposed for the first time to the audience.

"...and the one dollar changes into a hundred. That's more like it!" Slowly and deliberately unfold the bill, display it and drop it to the table, letting the hands be seen completely empty.

Please note how John emphasizes the use of a dollar bill at the beginning of the trick by making a joke concerning its value. It is important that the denomination of the bill is clearly planted in the minds of the spectators, or its change to a hundred dollar bill may go unperceived. Yet, the value of the bill cannot be established too blatantly or the idea of a change may occur to the audience long before you desire it.

Recently John has been toying with another presentation for this trick. Rather than starting with a dollar bill, a five is brought out. Then, from its folds, three silver dollars are produced. When the bill is then unfolded, it has dwindled to a two dollar bill. The presentation is enticing, but the use of silver dollars greatly increases the bulk of the coin packet, complicating its concealment and manipulation — though it is still well within the realm of possibility. Using the smaller Susan B. Anthony dollars eliminates the bulk problem, but the smaller weight and size of these coins makes their extraction from the packet more difficult; and the smaller coin makes a less impressive production. Nevertheless, the merit in the effect should provoke some readers into the experimentation and thought necessary to overcome these problems.

This trick is an exceptionally fine piece of magic. The production of the coins from the bill is mystifying, there is a strong and logical climax to the productions, and the method is elegant yet brilliantly simple. In all, it is a trick worth your full attention. ♡

THE SLIDE TO HOME PREDICTION

Effect: Here is a card prediction along classic lines. The performer writes a prediction on a piece of paper and sets it aside, keeping it prominently in view. He then shuffles the pack and deals the cards into a face-down pile on the table until someone tells him to stop. The dealing is done in a scrupulously fair fashion, and the spectator is given every opportunity to change his mind.

The performer's prediction is turned up and displayed. He has written the name of one card. The spectator then turns over the card he stopped on and finds it to be the very card predicted. ♣

Method: Despite the utter fairness of the dealing procedure, the card is forced. The method of forcing is, to the best of my knowledge, a new idea, and has possibilities for wide application.

You must secretly learn the identity of the top card of the deck. You can glimpse that card, or you can sight the bottom card and shuffle it to the top. Set the deck face-down on the table while you write the name of the top card on any piece of paper that is convenient, or on one of your business cards. Place the prediction, writing-side down, to one side on the table.

Now take up the deck and ask someone to call stop at any time as you deal. Deal the top card face-down in front of you. While this action is casual and unhesitant, the card is specifically placed: its outer end must be canted somewhat to the left, at roughly an eleven o'clock position. The next cards dealt are naturally laid onto the first, but are positioned straight, their outer ends at twelve o'clock. Do not deal the cards in a meticulously squared manner. You want to form an uneven pile that gives you a reason to square it later; but the outer left corner of the first card should be exposed, as shown in Figure 153.

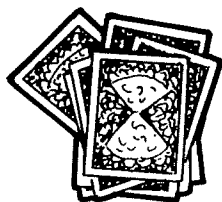


figure 153

To achieve this uneven pattern naturally, and to give an appearance of extreme fairness to the dealing, John recommends that the cards be dropped onto the pile from a height of roughly six inches.

Deal in a clean fashion, making it obvious that the cards are coming off the top. When the spectator calls stop, offer him the chance to go further if he likes. Then ask if he meant to stop you on the card last dealt or that on top of the deck. If he indicates the latter, deal this card onto the tabled pile. Make every effort to assure the spectator and the audience that his choice is utterly fair.

Lay the balance of the pack to your right, letting it spread a bit. "Now, you could have stopped me later, on one of these cards here or here, nearer the bottom." Disarrange the undealt cards further by nudging them with your left forefinger, pointing out various other places the spectator might have stopped you. Your purpose is to create a reason for squaring the pack. You now do this quickly and casually, in the following manner:

Bring the open hands to their respective sides of the disheveled deck and use the heels of the palms (the hypothenars) to push the sides of the cards square (Figure 154). In a similar action, using the fronts and backs of the open fingers, push the ends of the cards square (Figure 155). The squaring of the tabled pack is done in a fashion that should display both casualness and deliberate fairness. Be sure to let the hands be seen empty as they leave the pack. This procedure has been staged with the deck to establish the actions, as they are necessary to the sleight about to be executed.

Move to the dealt pile and square it in a similar fashion. However, as your hands slide together against the sides of the pile, the left hand steals the angled bottom card. This is done by digging the left fingertips under

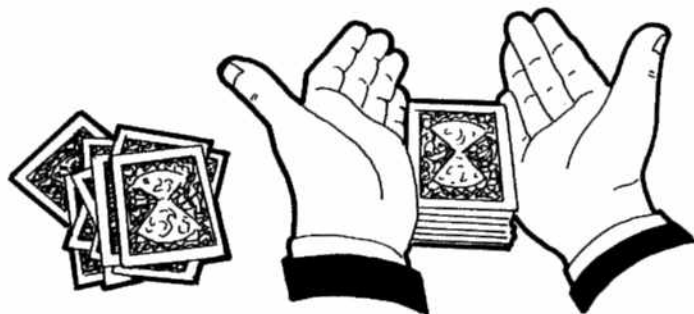
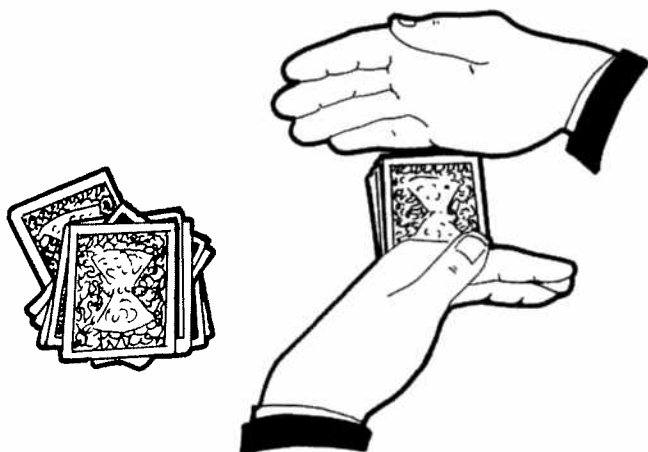


figure 154

*figure 155**figure 156**figure 157*

the outer end of the cards as the hands come together, and trapping the exposed left corner of the force card in the curl of the left fourth finger (as in Figure 156). The action is facilitated by a soft working surface. As the left hand moves smartly back to the left, it slips the bottom card from beneath the pile, and the curled fingers press the outer end of the card to the fleshy pads at their roots (Figure 157, an exposed view). The card remains hidden in this grip — often called the master palm — for only a moment. The hands make a second squaring motion, coming together against the sides of the pile, and the left hand secretly drops its palmed card onto the others (Figure 158). This hand, it should be pointed out,



figure 158

is not placed flat over the cards — rather, it remains palm-right and drops its card onto the others. The dropping card is completely hidden by the larger action of squaring the pile.

The hands separate, turning partially palm up as they leave the pile. They are thus purposely shown empty, though without pause or empha-

sis, as they move to the ends of the pile and push them square. All this is the work of a couple of seconds. The force card has been secretly shifted to the top of the pile, and awaits the spectator's hand. Bring the sequence to a close by first turning up your prediction to display the name of the card; then ask the spectator to turn up the top card of the pile, the card he chose at random. The revelation of the match should provoke pleasing gasps of surprise.

The sleight on which this trick is based is closely related to certain "hand mucking" techniques used by card cheats. As mentioned, the steal is easier on a soft surface, like that of a close-up pad. However, it can be done on a hard table top, if you first install a concave bridge through the width of the pack. When you later square the dealt pile, if you press down with the heels of the hands on the inner end of the cards, the front end can be rocked upward slightly, thanks to the bridge, forming a narrow space to permit the left fingers to move under the cards.

It will be obvious that this sleight can be used in other ways; for example, to effect a Stop trick, to force a card for other purposes, to add a card or cards secretly to the top of a tabled pile, or to accomplish a displacement. It will take practice to achieve the neat casualness required, but those who put in the necessary effort will have a valuable and deceptive tool at their disposal. ♣

THE YENRAC PACKET SWITCH

While considering the now classic palm-to-palm change of Professor Robert Hellis (ref. Hoffmann's *Modern Magic*, pp. 33-34), John devised a variant packet switching procedure that has a number of points to commend it. These will be addressed as the sleight is explained.

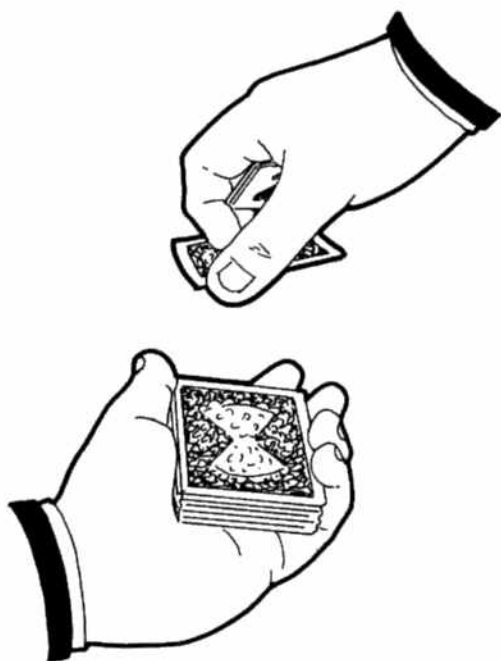
To illustrate the utility of the Yenrac switch, it will be described within the context of a simple trick. Someone freely chooses four cards from the deck. These cards are shown to be random selections, after which they are handed to the spectator. However, when they are next examined, the four indifferent cards are found to have changed to the four aces.

Begin by secretly bringing the four aces to the top of the deck. Ask someone to touch any four cards he wishes at four different positions in the pack. As you begin to spread the face-down pack for him to do this, slightly injog the fourth card from the top (the fourth ace). As he touches each card he desires, outjog that card widely in the spread. When four cards have been outjogged, close the spread back into the left hand, forming a left fourth-finger break below the injogged ace as you push it flush.

Now, with your right hand, strip the four outjogged cards as a group from the pack, and turn them face-up, laying them onto the deck, but outjogged for at least half their length. Spread these cards to show four random selections. Then square the four and, with your right hand, grasp the packet by its outer end. Turn the packet face-down and take it by its sides at the left fingertips, holding it well above the deck and widely separated from it. The packet should lie somewhat forward of the pack, with the left



figure 159

*figure 160*

second finger centrally located at the right side, and the left thumb similarly placed at the left (Figure 159). The left fourth finger continues to hold a break below the aces on the deck.

Ask the spectator to extend one hand, palm-up. Demonstrate what you wish him to do by holding out your free right hand, twelve inches or more in advance of the pack. As he complies with your request, move your right hand inward and

over the deck, turning it palm-down as it moves. Immediately clasp the elevated packet in classic palm — taking care not to extend the right thumb to the side as the palm is made — and in the same action grip the packet of aces, above the break, by its ends (Figure 160). There must be no hesitation in this.

Without a pause, move the right hand forward, carrying the ace packet toward the spectator's hand, and lay the packet onto his palm.

Notice how, by illustrating with your right hand what you wish the spectator to do, several valuable functions are performed:

- a) as you gesture with the right hand, it provides a motivation for holding the packet of selections at the left fingertips;
- b) at the same time it subtly shows the right hand empty, a moment before the switch is made;
- c) it positions the right hand forward of the pack, which is important to the proper execution of the sleight: the right hand must always move inward toward the pack;
- d) it provides misdirection at the moment the switch is accomplished, by drawing attention to the spectator as he extends his hand.

“Please place your other hand over your cards, so that I can’t get at them.” Again demonstrating what you wish him to do, press your right hand flat onto the top of the deck, at the same time secretly depositing the palmed cards there. To complete the effect, riffle the end of the pack at the spectator’s hands, or make some other magical gesture; then have the spectator look at his cards.

It must be recognized that the Yenrac packet switch sacrifices one point to the original Hellis method: the deck is in the hands as the switch is made. Yet, John’s approach has several points in its favor that more than compensate for this loss in most circumstances. In the Hellis sleight, it will be remembered, the right hand approaches the packet in position to take it by its ends, but the mechanics of the switch cause the substituted packet to be grasped by its sides. This discrepancy is a minor one, which spectators admittedly do not perceive when the sleight is competently executed; but there is no reason not to correct such faults when doing so is possible without overly complicating the maneuver. Also observe how the right hand is casually shown empty immediately after the switch, and for how brief a period the original packet must be palmed.

If the reader gives the Yenrac switch a few trials, I think he will find it not only a simple sleight to master, but also an extremely deceptive one.

Before leaving this sleight, a word of explanation is in order regarding its name. Having learned the Hellis change from *The Expert at the Card Table*, John thought it amusing to imitate the anagrammatic by-line of that book. ♡

TO THE STICKING POINT

Effect: Three coins magically penetrate one by one through a solid table top, to land in a glass held below it. Nothing more need be said about this classic plot. There are hundreds of methods in print for its accomplishment. Few, however, can compare with this one in directness and fairness of appearance; and fewer still can do so without the use of a shell. The method about to be taught can be done with borrowed coins and no gimmicks. It employs a simple but seldom exploited principle to achieve impossible seeming penetrations. John devised this method while in his teens, but its worth does not falter upon its inventor's youth. Indeed, it is a valued item in the working repertoire of at least one full-time performer other than John, himself. ♣

Method: The principle on which this trick is based is one of natural adhesion. Ross Bertram seems to be the first to have explored this principle within the context of a coin vanish (see *Stars of Magic*, pp. 138-139). The principle is this:

Place a quarter on the table and lay your palm-down hand over it, positioning the fleshy pad at the base of the forefinger directly on top of the coin. Now press your hand very firmly to the table; then lift the hand

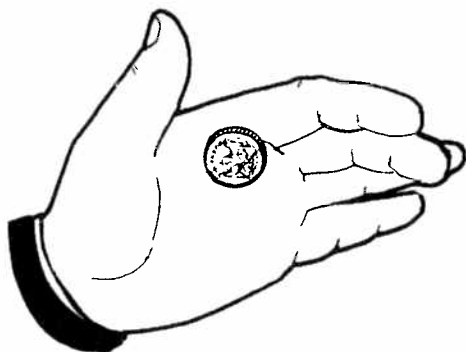


figure 161

straight up. If your skin is at all moist, the coin will stick to your hand (Figure 161), at least for a moment. It does not have to stick for more than a fraction of a second, just long enough for you to raise the hand and turn it palm inward. At that point, when the coin ceases to stick, gravity will keep it

in place on the tilted plane of the hand. Most people will find that their skin is naturally moist enough to pick up the coin from the table. However, if your skin proves to be too dry, you can surreptitiously moisten the correct spot on the hand as you cover a cough or move an iced drink. Do not get the skin wet, though, or the coin will not adhere; you want the skin only moist, not damp.

To perform John's coins through table sequence, you will need four identical coins and a short clear glass. An "old fashion" or "rocks" glass, like that used in "Soft Glass" (pp. 25-32), is well-suited to our purpose. The coins can be half dollars, but quarters will work more surely for most performers, as their lightness aids in the success of the pressure pick-up. In addition, if working impromptu, you can usually borrow three quarters, while secretly supplying a fourth yourself; but the chances of borrowing three half dollars these days are next to nil in any group other than magicians.

You must be seated at the table for this trick. Three of the quarters are on the table, along with the glass. The fourth quarter is in your lap. Casually display the three quarters and toss them onto the center of the table, making it clear by these actions, to those who know of such things, that no shells are in play. When you toss the coins to the table, contrive to have one of the coins overlap the edge of another. (Figure 162 shows a sample configuration of the coins.) While this overlap is not strictly necessary, the added height of the top coin does aid in making it cling to the hand during the pressure pick-up.

Show the glass empty and take it into the right hand, grasping it by the rim in the circle of the thumb the third finger. Carry the glass around the right side of the table and underneath, apparently positioning it directly under the coins at the center of the table. In reality, press your



figure 162



figure 163

upper arm against the edge of the table and secretly bend the forearm and wrist inward, bringing your hand to your lap, where you can pick up the extra quarter. Clip it between the tips of the first two fingers and hold it over the mouth of the glass (Figure 163). You can then move the hand back to the center of the table — but no hint of this movement should be perceptible to the audience.

Bring your left hand, palm-up, to the left of the three coins on the table. Then, using the edge of the hand as a hinge point, rotate the hand palm-down over the coins, bringing the pad at the base of the forefinger down on the raised coin. Press the hand firmly down, flat on the table, and at the same time drop the coin from the right fingers into the glass. Since you are pretending to pass the coins through the table top, you needn't worry about the spectators noticing that the left hand presses down, as this action is in accord with the effect.

Raise the left hand straight up, performing the pressure pick-up, and expose the two coins on the table. Smoothly move the left hand to a position of rest on the table, very near the inner edge. The coin rests, out of sight, on the tilted, partially palm-up hand. Simultaneously bring the right hand from beneath the table and display the coin in the glass.

The next actions follow in quick succession. As you bring the glass into view and rattle the coin inside, all attention will be focused on it. Under this strong misdirection, rotate the left hand inward an inch or two, tossing the palmed coin into your lap. Immediately raise the hand a short distance from the table, turning it palm-up; and, with your right hand, throw the coin from the glass into the left hand. All these actions blend together into a flowing whole.

Display the coin briefly on the left hand; then toss it back into the glass and move the right hand and glass back below the table. At the same time, move the left hand forward, display the two coins on the table by flipping them over, and in the process maneuver one coin over the other, so that they lie slightly overlapped. Then rotate the left hand palm-down onto the coins, just as you did earlier.

As this is done, double the right hand back to the lap and clip the coin there between the first two fingers (Figure 163 again). Then move the glass under the center of the table. If you need a little extra time to procure the coin, say, "No, I didn't do anything yet," and raise the left hand from the table, letting the two coins be seen. Then lower the hand back onto the coins.

Press the left hand to the table and drop the coin from the right fingers into the glass. Raise the left hand, doing the pressure pick-up, and reveal only one coin left. Then execute the lapping move described above as you pour the two coins from the glass into the left hand.

Drop the two coins back into the glass and carry it once more beneath the table. Secretly obtain the lapped coin between the right fingers, as before. While you do this, use your left hand to slide the coin remaining on the table toward yourself. Leave it resting about three to four inches from the inner edge of the table as you move the left hand forward and gesture at the central table area, saying to a nearby spectator, "I'll pass the last coin through any spot on the table you want. Where would you like it to go?"

As the spectator moves to point to a spot, and attention is drawn to her, move your left hand back to the coin and apparently pick it up. However, in reality you lap it. As you move the left hand inward toward the coin, hold the thumb lightly against the fingertips in a relaxed posture. Bring the fingertips down onto the table, just in front of the coin, and move the thumb inward, apparently to grasp the coin. Actually, the nail of the thumb hits the forward edge of the coin (Figure 164) and sends the quarter sliding over the edge of the table and into your lap. The fingers screen the flight of the coin from the audience's view, though everyone's attention should be focused mainly on the spectator at this moment. Immediately bring the thumb and fingertips together, as if grasping the coin, and raise the hand several inches while moving it forward to the place on the table where the spectator is pointing.

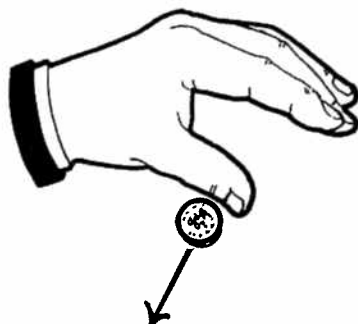


figure 164

Separate the left thumb and fingers over the chosen spot, as if you were dropping the coin, and pause, letting the hand be seen empty. Simultaneously release the coin from the right fingers, letting it fall into the glass. Then bring the glass from beneath the table and pour the three coins from it to conclude the effect.

Notice how all the penetrations are staged at the center of the table, well away from the edge. This is done purposely to eliminate thoughts of lapping in the minds of the spectators. Also notice how all handling of

the coins has been kept to a bare minimum. There is no extraneous counting and transferring of coins from hand to hand. The coins lie on the table until the moment they are passed through it. If you could genuinely cause coins to pass through a table top, it would look just like the illusion this method produces. It is an exceptional solution to a classic effect.

One last note: The pressure pick-up is a fine principle that has long been overlooked by magicians. It is perfectly suited not only for Coins Through Table, but for other classic effects as well. John has devised an extremely clean version of Chink-a-chink using the pressure pick-up; and other applications are waiting to be discovered. ♡

TRIUMPH RIP-OFF

Effect: A card is selected, noted and returned to the center of the pack. One half of the deck is turned face-up, and the two halves are woven into each other, face-up cards into face-down. The thoroughness of the mix is obvious, and the cards are honestly squared. The performer now announces that he will attempt a difficult, perhaps impossible feat: he will, with one swift action, separate all the face-up cards from those face-down.

He brings his free hand over the pack, lowers it rapidly and, with a quick motion, pulls all the face-up cards upward, through the others. Both halves are spread to display the complete success of the separation, but it is seen that one card has been missed. This lonely reversed card is the spectator's selection. ♣

Method: The Triumph effect has received more than a little attention during the last half of this century. The further inflation of such a bloated corpus should not be lightly undertaken. Yet, because of its striking visual element, as well as its straightforward action, we feel that John's variation is a worthwhile addition to the genre. It is decidedly impressive in performance.

A simple setup, done on the offbeat between tricks, is necessary. The bottom half of the pack must be secretly reversed, and a break formed one card above this half. John executes a half-pass, maintaining a right thumb break between the faced halves as the sleight is completed. He transfers the break to the left fourth finger, then uses the tip of that finger to push the face-down card above it slightly to the right. To cover this quiet preparation further, he sets the deck on the table for a time, before commencing the trick. In doing this, he applies the concealed-jog stratagem explained in "Predictable Surprise" (pp. 11-12). That is, the top portion of the pack is swayed rightward to hide the jog, and the deck is set down, its right side angled away from the audience, further concealing the protruding card. Later, the right hand can casually pick up the deck by its ends and place it into left-hand dealing position. As the deck is squared, the left fourth finger presses downward and inward on the jogged card to form a

break above it. Beginning the effect in this offhand manner will perplex the most wary onlooker.

This preparation makes possible a one-shuffle Triumph handling. There are two schools of thought on the matter of shuffling within a Triumph effect. The theory that John and I subscribe to postulates that the degree of magical content in a Triumph effect diminishes with each subsequent shuffle past the first, and is replaced with a growing suspicion of mere skill with the cards. Since John's goal is the portrayal of magic, rather than skill, he prefers a one-shuffle handling.

With the deck again in hand, and a break held at center above the lowermost face-down card, spread casually through the top portion of the pack as you have a card selected. Stop spreading just short of the break, and when a card has been drawn, square the spread back into the left hand.

Have the spectator note her card and show it to those around her. Then take the selection from her, making it clear that you do not look at its face, and insert it just below center into the outer end of the pack; that is, somewhere in the upper portion of the face-up block. Neatly push the card flush. Then casually lift the cards above the break and immediately dribble them back onto the pack, again catching a left fourth-finger flesh break beneath them. If this is done casually, an illusion is created of the entire deck being loosely dribbled, subtly implying that no control is being exercised over the selection, and that all the cards are face-down. This understated flourish should be given no importance when it is done. Therefore, you look up from the pack as you perform it.

Now nonchalantly spread over all the cards above the break and flip this group face-up into your right hand. With the right fingers, quickly square the face-up cards and replace them on the face-down portion, outjogged for roughly half their length. With your palm-up right hand, smoothly grasp the stepped pack at its right side. Then move the left hand from beneath the pack and point at the two sections as you comment on their face-up, face-down condition. Now turn the deck ninety degrees and adjust your grip on the packets, preparing for a faro shuffle. (Note how John has interrupted the change of grips by pointing at the packets, thus breaking the procedure into two actions. Doing this makes the readjustment of the cards less awkward to the eye, and therefore more natural in appearance.)

Weave the two halves into each other, apparently interlacing face-up cards into face-down. It will relieve many readers to know that this weave need not be perfect, so long as it is reasonably even. The only fast

requirement is that the face-down card that covers the original bottom half must end up on top of the pack. (If the faro shuffle is anathema to the reader, a tabled riffle shuffle can be substituted, so long as the interlacing is fairly even and the true condition of the pack is not exposed.)

Display the edge of the woven packets to emphasize to the audience the thorough mixture of face-down with face-up cards. Then slowly and neatly push the packets flush. Do not use a waterfall flourish to square the deck, as this is likely to expose the face-up cards beneath the face-down one.

Take the deck once more into left-hand dealing grip. At this point the condition of the cards is this: the deck is face-up, but for two cards — that on top, and the selection, which lies somewhere near the center of the upper half. If the deck has a natural bridge in it, as almost all decks do, you should be able to cut to the reversed selection with little or no trouble. If the bridge isn't easily found, riffle the right thumb up the inner end of the pack and take a left fourth-finger break above the face-down selection when you spot it.

You will now quickly press home the topsy-turvy condition of the cards. This is done by dividing the pack at three different points. With your right hand, lift a small block from the deck, then simultaneously revolve both hands over and back, exhibiting both sides of the packets. Replace the right hand's portion and cut the deck directly above the face-down selection. Again revolve the hands, this time showing backs on all sides. Replace the right hand's portion and cut off a larger packet. Revolve the hands once more to display the condition of the cards; but this time, when you return the right hand's cards, slip them under the left's. Hold a left fourth-finger break between the packets as you complete the cut.

You now explain that, through the aid of a super-sensitive touch, you will attempt to separate all the face-up cards from the face-down ones in the blink of an eye. Cut the deck at the break and complete the cut as you talk, bringing the face-down indifferent card back to the top. During this cut, face-up and face-down cards are once more seen, providing for the audience a final bit of conviction regarding the mixture of the cards. Perform this cut nonchalantly, making no mention of it. At this point, subtlety is more persuasive than proclamation.

As you square the pack in preparation for the next action, form a fourth-finger break somewhere near center. Then position your right hand about ten inches above the pack, poised for a deft grab. Hold this pose for a moment or two, instilling a bit of suspense; then rapidly lower the right

hand to the pack, grip the cards above the break by their ends and pull this packet sharply upward. (The break ensures that there is no hesitation or fumbling as the packet is removed.) During this quick motion you perform a slip cut: the left thumb, which lies across the back of the top card, holds it back as the right hand carries away the rest of the top half. However, do not perform the usual slip cutting action; rather than moving the top packet to the right, strive to lift it straight up.

The top card will snap loudly when this rapid action is made. In this context, that is excusable, as you are pretending to pull the face-up cards up through the face-down ones. Freeze for a moment, letting the audience see that you hold a face-up packet in your right hand, and in the left hand below you have a face-down packet — or so it appears.

With your right hand, reach to your left and forward, then slowly ribbon spread the face-up packet. “Here are all the face-up cards.” Somewhere in the spread a face-down card will be seen, but pretend not to notice it for the moment. While the right hand spreads these cards, the left thumb digs under its packet and secretly flips it over. The right forearm screens this action from the audience as the ribbon spread is begun, and the motion of making the spread simultaneously misdirects from the left hand (Figures 165 and 166).

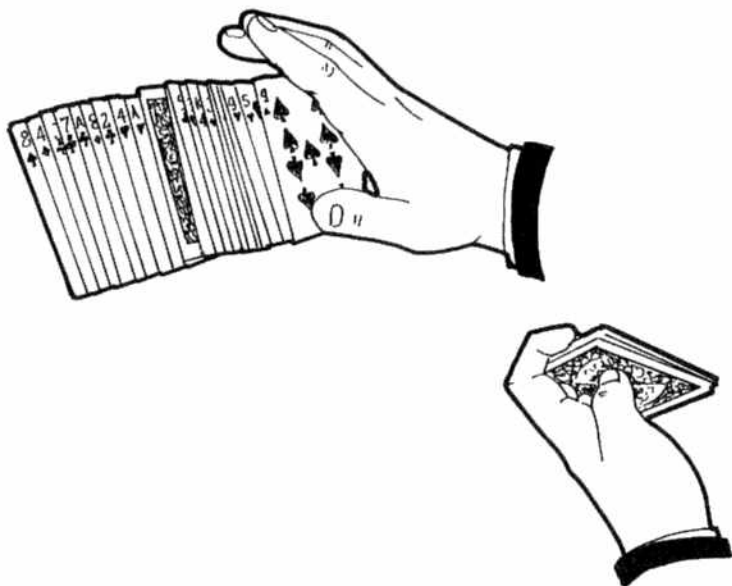


figure 165

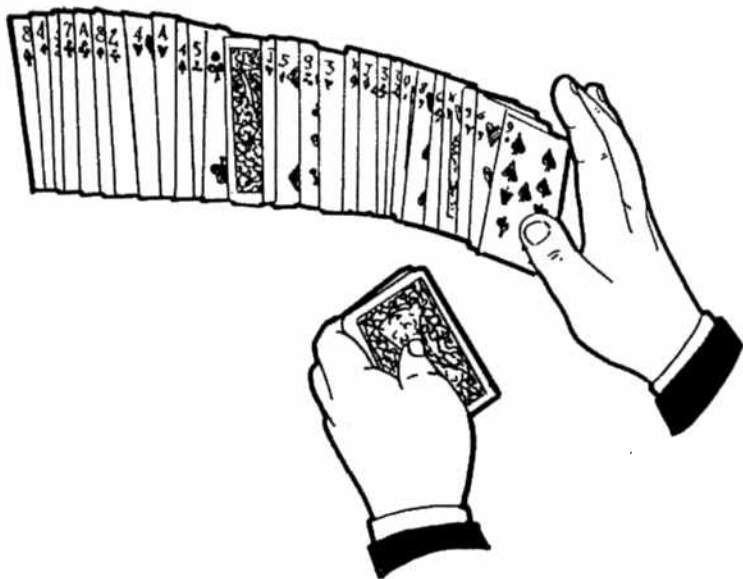


figure 166

"And here are the face-down cards." Casually spread the left hand's packet between the hands, showing face-down cards but stopping before the face-up bottom card is exposed.

"Oops! Missed one." Point out the reversed card in the face-up spread. "When I miss a card, there's usually a reason. What card did you pick?" When the card is named, turn up the face-down card in the tabled spread to reveal the selection, and conclude.

There is one reversed card on the bottom of the face-down packet. This can be used to advantage in your next trick. Or you can secretly right the card. This can be done with a half-pass. Or you can simply drop the face-down packet onto the face of the tabled spread; then notice your error as you gather the cards, and casually turn all the face-down cards face-up.

There is one alternative outcome that should be mentioned. If, as you replace the selection in the pack, you insert it too low in the face-up section, it is likely to turn up reversed in the face-down packet after the slip cut is made, rather than in the face-up packet. Drama is better served if the selection appears face-down in the ribbon spread; but should the card appear in the face-down portion, the effect is only slightly lessened. By inserting the card in the upper half of the face-up section and shuffling with reasonable evenness, the preferred outcome can be assured. ♣

BULLET TRAIN

Effect: As I've mentioned before, in his examination of classic effects, John has an uncanny talent for identifying the essential magical elements and trimming away the chaff. Here is another fine example of that insight. Cards Up the Sleeve has been an extremely popular plot with magicians since it was first explained by Robert-Houdin in 1868. John has developed a minimalistic approach to the plot, founded on the theory that if only a few known cards are employed, an audience can better follow and appreciate the effect. He uses only four cards, the aces. One by one they vanish from the hands and travel magically up the sleeve and under the coat. The last ace journeys not only up the sleeve, but also completely across the body and visibly down the other sleeve. ♣

Method: This trick is structured primarily for platform or parlor performance, with no one behind you. However, with proper management of circumstances it can also be done under close-up conditions. Cull the four aces from the pack and put the rest of the cards away. As you remove the aces, arrange them, from top to face, in spade-diamond-club-heart order. (The order of the red suits is not important, but we will use this particular sequence for teaching purposes.)

Holding the cards face-down, spread them and take the top two cards (spade and diamond) into the right hand. Then turn both hands palms-down to display the faces of the cards briefly. Make it clear by your handling that you hold only the aces and nothing more. Turn the hands palms-up again and smoothly replace the right hand's pair onto the left's. As you do so, catch a left fourth-finger break beneath the top two aces. These actions are calculated to exhibit the aces, but to make the precise order of the suits difficult to follow. The stratagem is borrowed from Dai Vernon's "Twisting the Aces".

Bring the right hand over the packet in a squaring action, and top palm the two cards above the break. John uses Erdnase's first method, taught

on pages 83-85 of *The Expert at the Card Table*, but any method with which you are comfortable can be employed. As soon as the two cards are palmed, your left fingers and thumb twist the remaining packet a quarter turn counterclockwise, allowing the right hand to grasp the packet by its sides from above, near

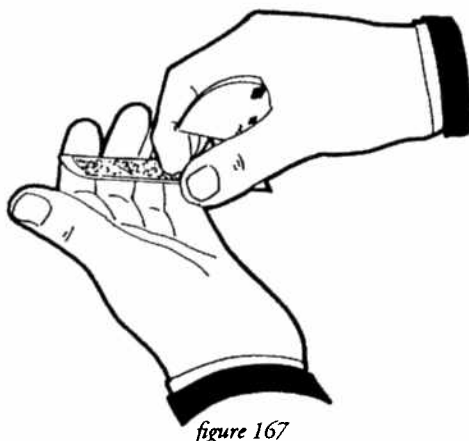


figure 167

the right end (Figure 167, palmed cards purposely exposed). This is another Vernon subtlety: any thoughts of palming from the packet are made all the more remote when the packet is held in this fashion, crosswise to the palm.

While you are squaring the packet and palming the cards, misdirect away from your hands by telling the audience that you will make the aces travel one at a time by magic. It is as you explain this that you take the packet by its sides into the right hand, and extend your empty left hand to your left, pointedly showing it front and back. By this gesture you indicate, without having to say as much, that the left sleeve will be the route of passage. Return the packet of two cards to left-hand dealing position and hold the left hand once more out to your left, poised for action. Pause a moment to build tension; then give the left hand a small, sudden shake, and snap the corner of the packet, making a noise, as if you were, in some impossible manner, propelling a card up your sleeve.

"There goes the ace of spades." With your right hand, rapidly reach beneath your coat to your left shoulder. By this quick motion you wish to imply that the right hand is catching the ace at your shoulder before it can fly any farther. This is superior to suggesting by your actions that the card is lodged at the shoulder, waiting to be taken.

Using the right thumb, quickly push the card farthest from your palm (the ace of diamonds) between the shoulder and your coat, lodging it there. Then bring the ace of spades from the coat, holding it face-outward at your fingertips. Having clearly displayed it, drop it onto the table.

"That leaves one, two, three aces." Here you false count the two aces in your left hand as three in the following manner:

Bring the right hand to the packet and, with the right fingertips, draw the bottom ace to the right and away from the second ace. Holding this card, thumb on top and fingers below, turn the right hand palm-inward briefly, flashing the face of the ace of hearts. Turn the ace face-down again and bring the right hand back to the left. On the second count you will apparently pick up the ace of clubs under the ace of hearts; but in reality the two aces are exchanged. Slide the red ace smoothly onto the ace of clubs, and draw away only the club while the left thumb holds back the heart. Briefly display the face of the club in the right hand, just as you did the heart. Then turn the club face-down again and bring the right hand to the left for the third count. This time you honestly pick up the left hand's remaining card, taking it beneath the ace of clubs. Flash the face of the packet, and return the cards face-down to left-hand dealing position. The mechanics of this false count are simple to master and — if performed without hesitation, to a steady, relaxed rhythm — the illusion of counting three cards is completely deceptive. Because the faces are shown only in passing, and the suits are never mentioned, the repeated display of the red ace will pass without notice.

Bring your right hand over the packet and grasp it by its ends. With the left fingers, draw the bottom ace away from the one above and openly glance at its face. "Watch the next ace go, the ace of diamonds." Here you miscall the left hand's card, naming the other red ace instead.

Hold your left hand out to the left, back of the card toward the audience. Then, with a short, sharp tossing motion, back palm the ace. As you do this, retract the left arm and shoulder, making it appear that you have somehow thrown the card up your sleeve. Hold the position for a moment to let the vanish register. Then bring the right hand and its card to the left hand. Just as the hands meet, curl the left fingers inward, bringing the back-palmed ace forward, and add it to the face of the right hand's card. If your timing is correct, it looks as if you have done nothing more than transfer two cards from the right hand to the left and spread them. Display the two cards, widely spread and with their backs toward the audience, in the left hand. If you like, you can take one ace in each hand and flick them smartly off one another, emphasizing that there are only two. Then, with the aid of the right hand, square the cards and leave them in a high dealing grip; that is, with their lower left corners deep in the fork of the left thumb (Figure 168).

Drop the left hand to a relaxed position in front of you, near waist level, with the face of the packet tilted toward the audience. At the same time,

*figure 168**figure 169*

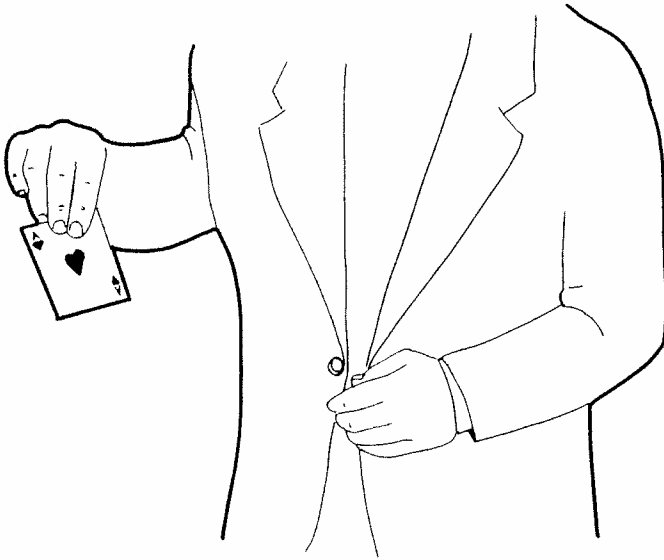
show your right hand empty, then reach under your coat for the ace lying at your left shoulder. When you have it, do not bring it straight out. Instead, drop your hand to your inner breast pocket. "Oh, that one went all the way to my pocket." Pretend to remove the ace from your breast pocket and display it at your right fingertips. "The ace of diamonds."

The production of the second ace from beneath your coat provides strong misdirection. Taking advantage of this, execute the Lowey palm: with your left thumb, swivel the top card of the pair (the ace of clubs) downward, behind the left fingers and parallel with them (Figure 169).

Drop the right hand's ace to the table. Then, with the right hand, grasp the forward card of the left-hand pair (the ace of hearts) by its outer end and carry this ace away. This leaves the ace of clubs hidden in left-hand classic palm. Lower your left hand to a relaxed position near waist level while you hold your right hand and its card (which the audience believes to be two aces) before you at chest height (Figure 170). Note that the card is held at its upper end, with the first two fingers on the face and the thumb on the back.

"Let's try the right sleeve." Give the ace a sharp shake and snap it with the right third fingertip to indicate another magical passage. "There goes the ace of clubs." With your left hand, reach under your coat, up to the shoulder, and bring out the palmed ace at your fingertips. Display it, then discard it.

"Only one ace is left." Take the final red ace into your left hand, grasping it at the fingertips by its lower end. As you transfer the card, make it clear that it is really only a single ace. Now hold out your right hand, palm-

*figure 170*

down and open, at about waist level, and place the left-hand's ace under the right palm. When you do this, let the inner right corner of the card protrude a bit past the right edge of the hand, as shown in Figure 171. Then curl the right fingers around and under the card, taking it into the closed hand. The closing fingers, on hitting the outer end of the card, will swivel the ace parallel to the palm, so that it is completely concealed by the hand and wrist (Figure 172, an underview).

"The ace of hearts." As you name the remaining ace — apparently as an afterthought — turn the right hand palm-up, while opening the

*figure 171**figure 172*

*figure 173**figure 174*

fingers, to display the face-up card in your hand. The placing of the card into the right hand has been a feint, performed to set up the forthcoming vanish of the card.

With your palm-down left hand, grasp the ace by its inner end, hold it up, face toward the audience, for one last display, then repeat the actions just described, taking the ace back into the palm-down right hand, its inner right corner passing slightly beyond the hand as before. However, as the right fingers begin to close, the left hand steals the card. This is done by curling in the left fingers, under cover of the right hand, and sliding the card along the length of the left thumb until it lies against and parallel with the left palm. Figures 173 and 174 expose the action from below. From this position, the card is easily adjusted to gambler's flat palm, its outer corners caught between the edges of the thumb and fourth finger (Figure 175). The adjustment is made as the left hand moves away from the right hand and to a position of rest near waist level. Done smoothly, this false transfer is entirely convincing.

Drop your right hand to your side, holding the arm straight and stiff, with the back of the hand to the audience. Hold this pose briefly, focusing all attention on the right hand; then raise the right shoulder sharply, in a sudden shrugging action, and snap your right fingers. These actions are performed to parody the snapping or throwing of the card up the right sleeve. Keep the right shoulder elevated as you open the right hand and show it empty.

"The ace goes up my sleeve..." Now, with the right hand, grasp both coat lapels, pulling the coat closed at your chest, and alternately raise and

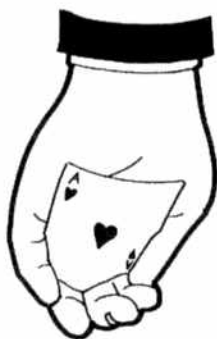


figure 175

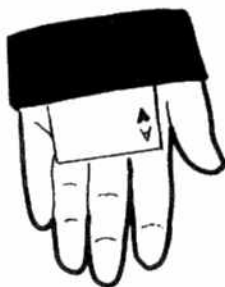


figure 176

lower your left and right shoulders in an undulating fashion. "...across my chest..." Interrupt your writhings while your left shoulder is raised and your left arm is hanging at your side. By elevating the shoulder, the left arm is drawn several inches farther into the coat sleeve than normal, and the upper end of the palmed card can be easily introduced an inch or more into the sleeve while retaining the card in gambler's flat palm. Note that the card is not sleeved in the usual sense of the word.

"...and down my other sleeve." Slowly turn your left hand palm-outward, simultaneously raising the hand several inches while opening it flat and spreading the fingers (Figure 176). The last ace is seen lying half on the palm and half in the sleeve. Immediately lower your left shoulder, extending the arm from the sleeve, and let the card slide slowly over the hand and off the fingertips onto the table.

Some readers may consider the possibility of actually sleeving the last card, before turning the left hand to show the ace falling from the sleeve. Resist this temptation. The illusion of the ace falling from the sleeve, as described above, is entirely convincing, and the finger motion necessary to sleeve the card might be perceived. The extra action of sleeving the card is theatrically unproductive and possibly counterproductive.

This is a fast, entertaining sequence, full of magic. It is admittedly rather demanding on one's palming skills, as are all Cards Up the Sleeve routines; but every palm, excluding that in the final vanish, is covered by misdirection. The final impact reaped in performance more than repays the effort required to master the necessary sleights. ♣

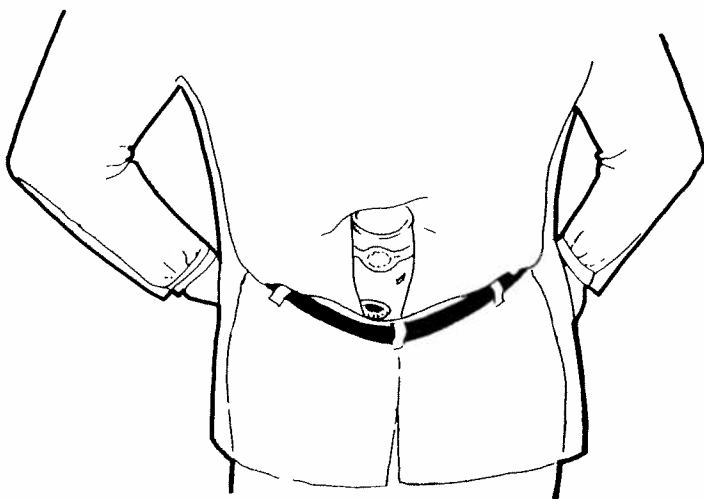
QUARTER SPIN

Effect: This is John's handling of the well-worn standard, Coin in Bottle. A borrowed quarter is twice passed into and removed from an unprepared Perrier bottle, in a brisk and baffling fashion. This bald description does nothing to distinguish John's version from several other fine handlings of this trick already in the literature, but a study of the particulars will explain why he gets gasps even from magicians when he performs this effect. Thanks to the widespread sale of folding coins in joke shops, the number of individuals familiar with the gimmick grows greater year by year. John's handling is designed to convince such persons that a folding coin could not be responsible for what they see. ☞

Method: Required are a standard folding quarter and an eleven and a half ounce bottle of Perrier mineral water, which has been emptied, rinsed out and dried. John has determined that the size and gently sloped shape of this bottle is perfect for the moves he has devised, and the green-tinted glass provides a clear view of the coin when it is inside. On occasion, when an eleven and a half ounce bottle was not available, he has used the next size smaller Perrier bottle with reasonable success.

The handling has been designed for walk-around performance. Consequently it is done standing. You must be wearing a coat and have a wrist watch on your left wrist. To prepare for the trick, slip the folding quarter completely under the body of the watch, with the cuts in the coin running from six to twelve o'clock. The coin will remain safely hidden beneath the watch until needed. Turn the Perrier bottle upside-down and tuck its neck down the waistband of your trousers, the bottle resting securely at the small of your back, under the coat. In Figure 177 the coat is made transparent to show the position of the bottle.

When working at close quarters to the audience, in circumstances under which the spectators must turn their heads to take in larger motions, John begins the presentation with a surprise production of the bottle. The method is bold, but entirely effective if performed with the proper

*figure 177*

misdirection. Begin by patting the pockets of your coat and trousers with both hands, as if searching for something without success. Looking around the audience, explain, "I need to borrow a quarter. Does anyone have one?" Wait for a coin to be offered and, when it is received, place it on the table.

Begin patting your pockets again as you say, "Oh, I also need a bottle. Does anyone have a bottle I can borrow?" At this point a hint of tongue in cheek is insinuated into your delivery. Nonetheless, look around the group in a questioning way, while you pat your pockets. In response, the spectators, wondering if you are joking, will look at one another. With both hands, brush back the sides of your coat as part of your search and check your hip pockets. As you reach behind your back and beneath your coat to do this, steal the bottle. With the right hand, grasp the body of the bottle in the circle of the thumb and fingers; then bring both hands forward from beneath the coat, dropping them casually to your sides. At the same time, turn partially rightward, looking at the people on that side. Your right hand holds the bottle, mouth down and parallel to the arm, along the right thigh and reasonably hidden (Figure 178). Your rather flustered search and the appeal to the audience should have misdirected attention away from you.

Now look to your left, saying, "Oh, I'll use this." Simultaneously turn fully forward and raise your right arm, bringing the right hand palm-up in front of you, near waist level. As you do this, spin the bottle on the palm of the hand and focus all attention on it. The spin is a bartenders' flourish

that looks very skillful, but is reasonably easy to learn. The bottle rotates a half turn (one hundred and eighty degrees) on the open hand, but the average observer, for some reason, will perceive the turn as a complete revolution. The technique is this:

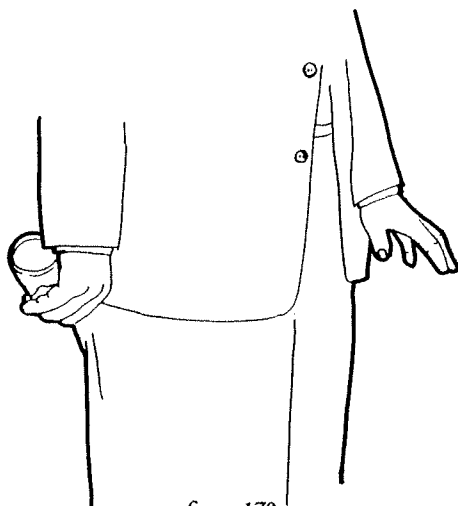


figure 178

As you bring the palm-up hand to a horizontal position, sharply cock the hand rightward at the wrist, imparting to the bottle a clockwise twist. Simultaneously open the fingers and thumb as far as you can, arching them backward. If the bottle, as it rotates, hits the fingers, it will fall from the hand. If the fingers and thumb are out of the way, the bottle will spin on the base of the fingers (not the palm), making a half turn (Figures 179, 180 and 181). The fingers, at the proper time, curl in to catch the bottle and stop it, with the bottom of the bottle pointed toward the audience. There is of course a knack to this flourish, but it is not hard to acquire. Master it, as the spin serves an important function at several points in the routine, including the one currently being discussed.

If the timing is correct, an illusion is created of your having plucked the spinning bottle out of thin air. To embellish this appearance, snap the left fingers loudly at the instant of production.

“Okay, here — take the coin and place it inside the bottle.” Hand someone in front of you the coin and bottle. His attempts to do as you suggest make it clear to everyone that the coin is much too large to enter the bottle. During this trial, clearly but casually let your hands be seen empty. The strength of the following penetrations is derived in part from the audience’s conviction that nothing more than a bottle and a borrowed coin are in play.

“It won’t go in, huh?” Reach out with your right hand for the return of the coin. Apparently transfer the quarter to your left hand, but actually retain it in right-hand finger palm. (John uses the somersault vanish described on pages 26-27.) Reach out again with your right hand and



figure 179



figure 180

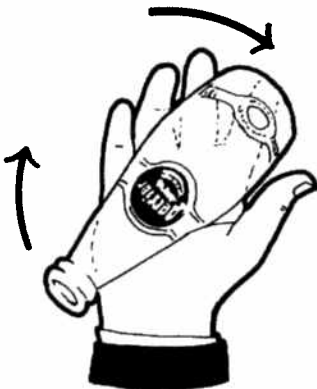


figure 181

reclaim the bottle, grasping it as you would to drink from it. Keep the third and fourth fingers curled slightly away from the side of the bottle, so that the palmed coin doesn't clink against it.

"What you have to do is make it really tiny — so tiny that you can drop it inside." As you say this, look at your left hand and rub the thumb and fingertips together, as if you were rubbing the quarter into dust. Then hold the left hand just above the mouth of the bottle, thumb pressed to fingers, and pretend to drop the coin inside. Simultaneously flatten the right third and fourth fingers against the side of the bottle, clinking the coin against it. This should be a small, sharp movement that is hardly noticeable. The little clink this makes is in accord with the tiny size of the coin you claim to be dropping. When properly timed, the combination of action and sound create an illusion of the coin entering the bottle.

Immediately perform the bartenders' spin, rotating the bottle on your right hand. Because the coin lies on your fingers, it will strike against the turning bottle, giving a convincing auditory illusion of the coin rattling inside. Stop the spinning bottle with its bottom toward the audience.

"Then you can just shake it out, like that." Turn the bottle upside-



figure 182

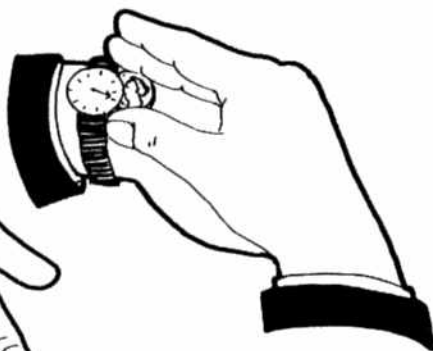


figure 183

down over the palm-up left hand. Though the bottle is inverted, it should be tipped downward at a forty-five degree angle, its bottom toward you. Give the bottle a short, sharp, downward shake and release the quarter from your right fingers. Do not drop the coin directly into the hand. Let it slide rapidly down the neck of the bottle and hit the ridged lip (Figure 182) before it falls into the left hand. This creates a deep hollow *thunk* that imitates the sound one imagines a coin would make when passing through the neck of a bottle. Give the bottle another bartenders' spin, then set it down with the coin before the spectator.

You have just completed the first penetration of the coin into and out of the bottle. The whole thing is a bluff, but it is a convincing one. During the second phase of the trick, you will repeat the feat in a way designed to alleviate any doubts about the matter.

"Here, you try it. Put it inside. I'll give you five seconds." With your right hand, push back your left sleeve to expose your watch. "One, two, three, four, five. Time's up." Count off the seconds rather quickly, instilling a bit of humor into the by-play while you keep the pace brisk. This gentle kidding has another, more serious purpose, though: while you count off the time, and while everyone's attention is on the spectator, you steal the folding quarter from beneath your watch. Do this by first pressing the watch back slightly on the wrist, using the tips of the right second finger and thumb at the points where the band joins the watch case. This exposes roughly half the coin: just enough to permit you to grip it between the second finger and thumb by its opposite edges (Figure 183). Maintain

this edge grip as you move the coin to the right and drop the right hand casually to your side, letting the coin fall into a loose finger palm. Once the hand is at rest, use the thumb to fold the outer section of the coin back onto the center section.

"I'll tell you what — I'll do it for you again." Reach out with your left hand for the borrowed coin. When you have it, bring the right hand up to the left, and transfer the quarter to the right fingertips. "Here's the quarter." Note that the right hand swings up to the left hand from a state of rest to take the coin. Since the thumb is pressing the partly folded gimmick to the fingers, it cannot move, and any other method of bringing the hands together would make the right hand's posture look unnatural. (This same blocking strategy was explained in "A Current Classic", p. 4.) In taking the borrowed coin at the right fingertips, slip it between the folded gimmick and the thumb. The right thumb and coin now fully conceal the gimmick from all angles. However, do not draw attention to the coin by pointedly exhibiting it on all sides. There is no need to prove anything here.

Reach out with your left hand for the bottle. Turn the hand palm-outward, thumb down, as you grip the bottle around its neck. Then move the left hand inward, near stomach level, while turning it partially palm-up. This tips the mouth of the bottle toward you and points it a bit rightward. "And here's the bottle. The trouble that most people have is



figure 184

that they try to go through the opening here." Illustrating your words, tap the coin against the mouth of the bottle several times and twist it against the opening. On the last tap, use your right fingers to push the folding coin secretly into the opening (Figure 184). Since the coin is partially folded, it can be smoothly and quickly inserted into the mouth of the bottle. Do not push the gimmick entirely inside, or it may prematurely slip down into the bottle. Leave a portion of it projecting from the mouth of the bottle. By curling the left third and

fourth fingers closely around the neck of the bottle, the gimmick is hidden from the audience. If you hold the bottle with its mouth tilted slightly downward, it further assures that the gimmick will not drop inside. There must be no hesitation as you load the folding coin.



figure 185

"But you can actually go right through the side. I'll balance the coin on the side of the bottle..." Turn the left hand palm-down, bringing the bottle to a horizontal position, its bottom pointing toward the right. Balance the borrowed quarter on the side of the bottle and let it rest there a moment. "...and on the count of one, two, three..." Bring your right hand palm-down onto the coin and bottle, apparently trapping the quarter against the glass. However, under cover of the right hand, you let the borrowed coin slip down along the neck of the bottle and into the curled left fingers. In Figure 185 the right fingers have been raised to expose the route of the coin. Do not use the right fingers to move the coin. Instead, tilt the bottle very slightly and let gravity do the rest.

In a continuing action, grip the bottle in your right hand, release its neck from the left hand, turn the bottle mouth upward and give it a short, sharp shake, sending the folding coin into the bottle. Immediately give the bottle a bartenders' spin. The visual illusion created is one of the right hand slapping the coin straight through the side of the bottle. The whole sequence, from the time the right hand comes down on the bottle, takes roughly a second and is performed as one continuous motion.

"...it goes inside the bottle." Jingle the coin in the bottle and display it from several angles. "Can you see it?" Transfer the bottle to the palm-up left hand, taking it mouth toward you, with the paper label of the bottle turned down to conceal the borrowed coin, which rests on the curled fingers. You are now in an admirable position to display the coin inside the bottle while permitting your hands to be seen otherwise empty.

"Now, to get it out you have to hold your hands together as if you were cupping water." Show the spectator what you mean, by bringing the right



figure 186

hand palm-up beside the left, and wait for him to comply. As he assumes this position, adjust your own: First rotate the label on the bottle upward. This is done to discourage thoughts of cleverly concealed trapdoors hidden by the label; the coin will next be seen to penetrate through the clear glass opposite the labeled side. Now close your right fingers around the left fingers, as if the bottle neck were a baseball bat. The bottom of the bottle should be directed

straight toward the spectator. As you make this adjustment, secretly insert the right fourth finger into the bottle, up to the middle knuckle. "Watch — one, two, three!"

On each count, you swing the bottom of the bottle upward about ten inches, then bring it down again to a horizontal position over the spectator's hands. As you do so, press the back of the right fourth finger firmly against the inside of the bottle. In doing this, each time you up-end the bottle, the folding coin will fall between the neck and the fourth fingertip (Figure 186, an exposed view). With the smallest bit of luck it will lodge there with the cuts lying parallel to the channel of the neck. This is what you hope for on the second or third swing. If the coin is correctly oriented, it will give when the fourth finger presses it against the inside of the bottle. Thus, you can tell by feel if the coin is in a position to be withdrawn. Chances are excellent that the coin will settle into a workable position on the count of either two or three. If luck is against you, one further shake should solve the problem. As you shake the coin into the required position, strive to keep a steady rhythm to your actions while avoiding hesitation as you catch the coin and check its position.

Assuming the best (which is almost a certainty), you now press the coin against the glass as you raise the bottle a third time. Bring the bottle smartly down again, over the spectator's cupped hands, and release the borrowed quarter from your left fingers. Do not toss the coin into his hands. Rather, drop the left fingers from beneath the coin, leaving it suspended momentarily in the air; and in that moment, strike the coin with the side of the bottle, knocking it downward and into the waiting

hands. The combination of sound and action creates a very convincing illusion of the coin passing straight through the side of the bottle.

As all eyes are on the borrowed quarter, pull your right fourth finger slowly from the neck of the bottle, drawing out the folding coin, and grip it in the curl of the left third and fourth fingers. Immediately take the bottle into the right hand — while finger palming the folding coin in the left — and perform a bartenders' spin. Then hand the bottle to the spectator and conclude. Everything of course can be examined. The folding coin is disposed of in a pocket when attention is relaxed.

That is the trick, as John did it for many years. However, recently he has made one alteration. This concerns the visible passing of the coin into the bottle during the second phase. The slap-through penetration just taught gives an excellent illusion; but John now prefers to use David Williamson's striking vanish for the purpose (ref. *Williamson's Wonders*, pp. 17-20). Mr. Williamson first suggested the application of his sleight to John's Coin in Bottle handling in Michael Ammar's *Encore II*, (p.44). Detailed descriptions of this vanish can be found in both works cited. The sleight is an even more deceptive penetration than it is a vanish. Here is a brief description:

After loading the folding coin into the mouth of the bottle, smoothly exchange the contents of the hands, taking the bottle by its neck in the right hand, and the borrowed quarter in the left hand. Position the quarter at the base of your left fingers; and cock your right hand upward at the wrist, holding the bottle five or six inches above the coin, poised to come down like a hammer (Figure 187). This it immediately does, though somewhat more gently. As the bottle swiftly descends in a striking action, the left hand turns slightly though sharply inward, making the smallest motion possible while tossing the quarter toward the right hand. Do not bend the left wrist as you make the toss. Instead, move the entire left forearm from the elbow. The right second, third and fourth fingers open briefly to catch the coin in mid-flight (Figure 188), then snap shut on it, trapping it against the neck of the bottle. As the underside of the bottle smartly strikes the left palm, the impact will propel the folding coin into the bottle, creating a perfect illusion of the coin penetrating instantly through the glass.

This leaves the borrowed coin hidden in the right fingers. To conclude the trick, the coin must be transferred secretly to left-hand finger palm. This is easily done as you pass the bottle briefly from hand to hand to



figure 187



figure 188

display the folding coin inside. Just let the palmed coin slip from the right fingers into the cupped left fingers. Then proceed to shake the coin from the bottle as previously explained. ♣

UPSIDE-DOWN

Effect: Someone selects and notes a card in the center of the pack. The performer gives the deck a slap, explaining that this action knocks the chosen card to the bottom. He exposes the face of the pack, displaying the nine of hearts there. The spectator who chose the card denies that the nine is his.

“Are you sure?” asks the performer. “Well, was your card a heart?” The spectator admits that it was. “It wasn’t a six, was it?” Indeed, the selection was the six of hearts. “My mistake. I’m holding it upside-down.”

With this, the performer neatly turns the deck end for end, keeping the face in view, and as the cards are turned, the nine of hearts visibly transforms into the six of hearts. ♡♣

Method: As can be seen, this quick effect is a novelty presentation for a color change. In John’s hands it never fails to entertain, evoking a laugh along with genuine amazement.

A two-card setup is required. A six and a nine of matching suit must be secretly managed to the bottom of the pack, with the six at the face. Obviously, the six must be forced. Any of a number of forces might be adopted. The Hindu shuffle force is a likely candidate. The dribble force is another, and that is John’s choice. He casually cuts the setup to the center of the pack, catching a break below the six, and performs the dribble force, as described on page 12. With either of these forces, the selection is made without removing the card from the pack, and the card ends up buried in the deck. Of course, a break is held below it.

The six and nine must now be brought secretly to the bottom of the pack. A pass is the recommended procedure, as the cards are not openly manipulated, and the selection appears to remain somewhere in the center. However, if you do not number a deceptive pass among your accomplishments, an overhand jog shuffle can be substituted. (Regarding this shuffle, John mentions that its deceptiveness is heightened if you keep it brief but thorough in appearance, and do not look at the cards as you mix them.)

Now explain that by giving the deck a slap, you can knock the chosen card to the bottom. Transfer the face-down deck from the left hand to the right, taking it into dealing position. Then bring the left hand down smartly on top of it. This slap performs two functions: it provides a defined moment for the audience, in which the magic is supposed to happen; and it allows you to alter the left hand's grip on the pack, in preparation for the color change, without the adjustment appearing awkward or contrived.

With your palm-down left hand, grasp the deck from above, taking it by the sides in glide position. Your left thumb should lie at the outer right corner of the pack, and the left forefinger at the outer left corner, with the other fingers aligned along the left edge. The grip should be such that the tips of the second and third fingers can curl onto the face of the pack. You are now in a position to perform John's variant of the hinge color change (see Hugard's *Card Manipulations*, No. 2, pp. 31-32, for the original sleight):

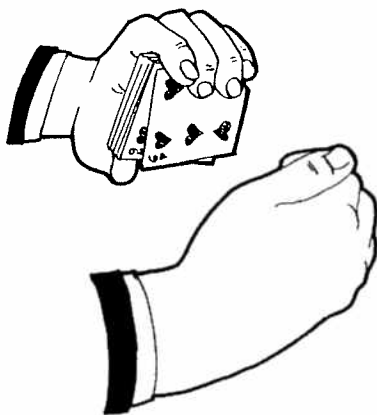
As the left hand lifts the deck from the right hand, make a partial turn to your left and begin to rotate the face of the deck toward the audience. Simultaneously, with the tip of the left third finger, contact the face of the pack and pull the six outward, swiveling its inner end to the left of the pack (Figure 189, an exposed view). In the same action, press upward on the card, pulling it around and onto the left edge of the deck, until the six lies at right angles to the pack. The deck is held securely between the thumb and forefinger at the outer corners, as the other fingers pull the six into position. The maneuver somewhat resembles the Kelly-Ovette bottom placement, done with the deck held by its sides.

As you swing the card to this perpendicular angle, turn the pack to a vertical position, face toward the audience and thumb uppermost. Follow



figure 189

the pack with the right hand, turning the back of the hand outward while holding it forward of the deck (Figure 190, performer's view), in a position low enough to let most of the face be seen, yet to keep the horizontal six hidden (Figure 191, audience's view). Use the back of the right hand and wrist to conceal the card, allowing the fingers to relax and separate slightly.

*figure 190**figure 191**figure 192**figure 193*

The audience sees the nine on the face of the pack, and your error becomes apparent. Coax the spectator into admitting that he chose the six, and not the nine. Respond to this by saying, "My mistake. I'm holding it upside-down." You now rotate the deck end for end, and make the color change as this turn is performed. The details are these:

Revolve the left hand a hundred and eighty degrees clockwise, turning the thumb's side of the deck downward. Simultaneously curl in the left fingertips, folding the six flat once more against the face of the pack. These motions can be done at a moderate speed without the sleight being perceived. The face of the pack leaves the spectators' sight for a split second, as a natural consequence of the hand's turn. The hand at this

point has reached a palm-down position, and the deck is brought face-down, its far end pointed toward the audience. It is now that the card is moved onto the face of the deck (Figure 192).

This position is not sustained; it is merely a moment in the revolution of the hand and deck. Continue to turn the hand in the same direction, until the fingers are uppermost and the face of the deck is once more broadside to the audience. The face is out of view so briefly, it appears as if it never leaves one's sight. The right hand remains stationary, but helps to screen the sleight throughout.

The instant you complete this turn, use your right hand to grasp the right end of the pack, thumb on the face, fingers on the back. Hold the right hand and deck stationary while you turn the left hand counterclockwise, bringing it thumb uppermost (Figure 193), and regrasp the deck by its sides.

Relax the right hand's grip and turn the left hand clockwise, rotating the deck ninety degrees, to an upright position, end uppermost. Stop here. The turning of the deck, from start to finish, should be performed as a smooth and flowing whole, with as little interruption as possible when grips are changed. The visual impression given is one of the nine changing to a six as the deck turns. The color change is instantaneous, deceptive and thoroughly surprising. ♣

TRANSPLANT

Effect: Dai Vernon's "Picking Off the Pip" (ref. *Dai Vernon's Inner Secrets of Card Magic*, pp. 47-48) has long been a favorite quick effect among discerning performers and their audiences. Here, the effect of this modern classic is extended to produce a second surprise.

The performer displays the four of diamonds and places it face-down on the table. He then turns up the deck and finds another diamond card, say the three. He visibly picks the center pip from the face of the three — making it a two — and presses the invisible pip to the center of the four of diamonds, transforming it into a five. ♣

Method: A four-card setup is required. On top of the pack place the five of diamonds. Under this position the two of diamonds, and third from the top place the four of diamonds. On the face of the deck place the three of diamonds. The audience should be unaware of this arrangement.

Begin the performance by holding the deck face-down in left-hand dealing position and, as you talk to the audience, obtain a left fourth-finger break under the top three cards. Now perform a triple lift and draw attention to the four of diamonds. John uses Dai Vernon's push-off technique when doing the triple lift (see pp. 65-66). Replace the triple card face-down on the pack and, with your right hand, point casually to a spot directly in front of you on the table, or move some object out of your way as you say, "I'll place the four right here where you can keep your eye on it." When returning the triple card to the pack, John employs another Vernon technique, his swivel replacement (see p. 66), to give the illusion that the card is never brought square with the deck. Note how the action of replacing the card on the deck is justified by your gesture and comment, when it would otherwise seem illogical, given that your immediate goal is to place the card on the table. Bring the right hand back to the pack, remove the top card (the five of diamonds) and place it face-down at the location you have indicated.

"Now I need another diamond." As you say this, flip the deck face-up in the left hand and begin to spread through it in search of another diamond card. But then seem to notice the three of diamonds resting on the face of the pack. "Oh, there's the three. That will do." With your right hand, roughly square the spread back into the left hand.

Smoothly bring the right hand palm-down over the deck to square it further — and in doing so, side slip the rear card of the pack, the two of diamonds, into your right palm, in preparation for a standard color change. Notice how the spreading of the pack serves two subtle purposes: if acted convincingly, the action aids in establishing in the minds of the spectators that the presence of the three on the face is unplanned; and the consequent necessity of squaring the pack gives good cover for executing the side slip. (While he fully appreciates the advantages of the Cloyes palm, as it is exploited by Mr. Vernon in the original handling of "Picking Off the Pip", John prefers the side slip when performing close-up for larger gatherings, as the classic palm is less critical to exposure from the left side. If working for a small group, the Vernon handling can be restored here to excellent effect.)

"But I only need one of the pips. I'll take the center one," you say, as you do a color change while pretending to pick the center pip from the three:

The right hand sweeps very briefly over the pack and secretly deposits the palmed two of diamonds squarely onto the face. The deck is immediately brought into view again, but the audience's recognition of the change is delayed for several seconds by the pretense of picking the pip off the card. The right hand does not move back to the right of the pack so much as it simply rotates to a palm-leftward position at the right

side of the deck, while the tips of the thumb and forefinger are brought together at the center of the two, obscuring the absence of a center pip as they pretend to pluck it from the card (Figure 194). Also note how the left thumb covers the outer index, while the heel of the right thumb naturally conceals the inner index.



figure 194

Separate the right hand sharply from the deck — as if you were pulling the pip from the card like a cherry from its stem — and let the audience see that the three is now a two of diamonds. Simultaneously move the left thumb aside to expose the outer index of the two. Pause for a moment to let the effect register.

“Now I could put this pip in my pocket...” Keep your right thumb and forefinger pressed together, as though holding a pip, and move the right hand a few inches toward your pocket; then stop. “...but I might loose it — so I’ll tell you what I’ll do.”

With your left hand, set the deck face-down to one side on the table. Then grasp the face-down card resting in front of you, taking it by its near left corner, left forefinger above and thumb beneath. Pick up the card and rotate the left hand palm-inward, turning the card end over end and face-up. Just before the face of the five of diamonds enters the audience’s line of sight, bring the right hand to the card and position the tips of the thumb and forefinger over the center pip. Figure 195 shows the audience’s view of the face of the card as it comes into sight. The left thumb covers the outer index, the right thumb and forefinger conceal the center pip, and the base of the right thumb obscures the inner index, all of which conspire to make the five look like the four of diamonds.

“I’ll just put it on the four over here — making it a five.” Press the tip of the right forefinger firmly to the face of the card, as if sticking the invisible pip to it. Then lift the right hand away, revealing the change of the four to a five. With both hands, regrip the card, grasping it at its opposite sides, thumbs above and fingers below (Figure 196). Then flex the card several times as you display its full face.

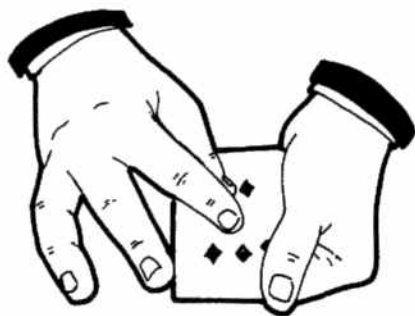


figure 195



figure 196

This extension of Mr. Vernon's charming color change retains all the charm and novelty of the original, guaranteeing a pleasing reaction from any audience. ♡

SLICK PIP

Effect: A card is selected, noted by the spectators and replaced in the center of the pack. The performer snaps his fingers to cause the selection to rise magically to the top. He turns up the top card, but it is not the selection. However, it is close: the selection was the three of spades, and the top card is the two of that suit. On discovering this, the performer places his thumb over one of the pips on the two and slides it forward to create a third pip in the center, visibly transforming the two into the three of spades. ♣♠

Method: This novelty color change bears an obvious thematic relationship to “Picking Off the Pip”, but both the visual effect and the method have little in common with the Vernon trick. To prepare, secretly cull the three of spades to the top of the deck, and directly below it position the two of spades.

Begin by forcing the three of spades. Any of a number of forces can be adopted for the purpose. John often uses the age-old slip force, a sleight that one seldom sees done deceptively or well. However, Edward Marlo addressed this problem years ago (ref. *Kabbala*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Dec. 1971, pp. 30-31), and it is his handling that John uses:

Hold the pack face-down in left-hand dealing position and ask someone to call stop as you riffle your left thumb down the outer left corner of the deck. Stop the riffle when demanded and bring the right hand palm-up to the right of the deck. Revolve the left hand clockwise, tipping the deck onto its right edge while gently propelling the



figure 197

top portion of the pack (that portion above the thumb's break) onto the right fingertips (Figure 197). The packet is not thrown; rather, it drops face-up onto the fingers, like the cover of a book when it falls open. The right fingertips should lie under the inner right corner of this packet.

The left fingertips continue to support the released packet at its left side, and are naturally in contact with the back of the top card. Pause for only an instant as you lower your right thumb lightly onto the face of the fallen packet, near the inner right corner. Then resume the left hand's action, moving it approximately three inches to the left; and simultaneously carry the right hand's packet upward an inch or two. Under cover of these actions, the left fingertips secretly drag the rear card of the top packet (the three of spades) from under this packet (Figure 198, an exposed view) and press it square onto the back of the vertical bottom portion. As the three is brought flat against the left hand's packet, revolve that hand palm-up, bringing the back of the packet into view. In an indicatory fashion, tap

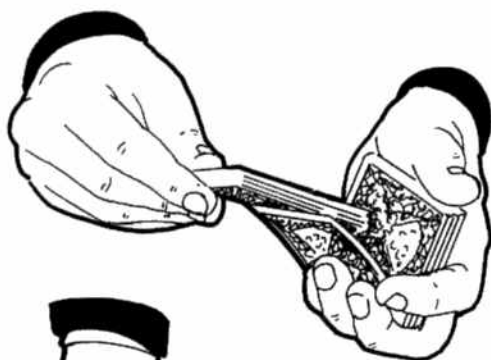


figure 198

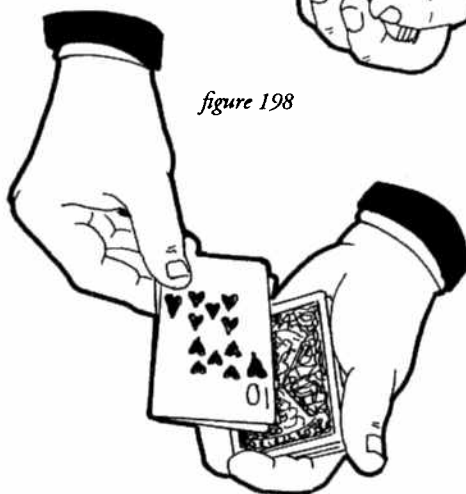


figure 199

the top card of this portion with the right hand's face-up packet (Figure 199) and say something along the lines of "Please look at the card you stopped me on." (Note how the handling of the top packet is used to conceal the crucial action of the back slip.)

With your left thumb, push the top card of its packet forward for the spectator to take. When he has done so, casually flip the right hand's packet face-down onto the left's and square the deck. The two of spades is now on top of the pack.

You must next have the chosen card returned to the center of the deck and, without cutting or shuffling, secretly reverse this card at the bottom. There are several methods of doing this. Here is the one John currently favors:

Have the spectator insert his card somewhere near the center of the pack, or do so yourself. As you push the card flush, secretly angle it, causing the inner right corner to break through the right side of the pack. Form a left fourth-finger break beneath this corner as you push it square.

Remove your right hand momentarily from the deck to gesture as you talk. Then, as you say, "You placed your card somewhere in the middle of the deck," bring the right hand back to the pack and casually spread the cards between the hands. In doing so, execute the Hofzinsler spread pass; i.e., when you reach the selection above the break, with the right fingertips contact the right edge of this card and pull it rightward and under the right hand's cards, disengaging it from the spread (Figure 200). The left thumb contacts the left edge of the card directly above the culled selection, holding it stationary as the card below is drawn under.



figure 200

After the right fingers have extracted the selection, close the spread back into the left hand, loading the culled card onto the bottom. However, in doing this, keep the left fourth finger pressed against the face of the spread, while the other left fingers ease away from the pack. This permits the culled card to slide between the left third and fourth fingers, forming a fourth-finger wedge break (Figure 201). Do not square the deck completely at this point. Leave it in a somewhat ragged condition in the left hand as you gesture again with the right hand.

Now, as you continue to talk to the audience and look away from your hands, bring the right hand over the deck and square it. Under cover of

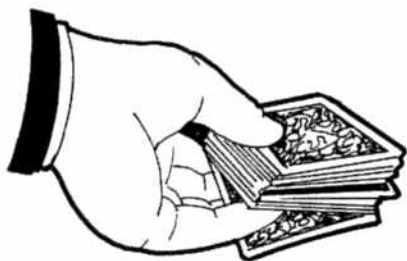


figure 201



figure 202

the squaring action execute Ken Krenzel's mechanical reverse: as the right hand grasps the deck by its ends, bend the left fingers inward (Figure 202). This automatically reverses the card beneath the fourth finger, turning it face-up under the pack. Immediately adjust the deck into bottom deal grip. (Particularly notice here how John removes the right hand from the deck and gestures with it after the cull and before the mechanical reverse. This is done to avoid a prolonged two-handed grip on the pack, which would seem awkward, if not suspicious, to observers.)

Explain that by merely snapping your fingers, you can summon the chosen card to the top of the pack. Snap your right fingers over the deck, then flip the top card face-up on the deck. This is the two of spades. Look expectantly at the spectator who made the selection, and from his reaction determine that you have failed to produce his card. "Oh, your card wasn't the two? Well, how about the three? I'll just move this pip to the center like this."

Push the face-up two to the right and, with your palm-up right hand, grasp it by its outer right corner. Then shift the card backward on the deck until the outermost pip lies directly under the tip of the left thumb (Figure 203). Press the thumb over the pip and, with the right hand, pull the two forward until it is roughly even with the ends of the deck (Figure 204). While you do this, keep the left thumb immobile, exerting moderate pressure, as if you were sliding the pip inward to the center of the card.

You now perform Larry Jennings' T.N.T. bottom deal (ref. Vernon's *Revelations*, p. ii, and Maxwell's *The Classic Magic of Larry Jennings*, pp. 141-142): With your left third fingertip, buckle the bottom card of the

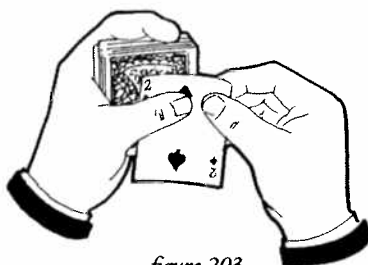


figure 203

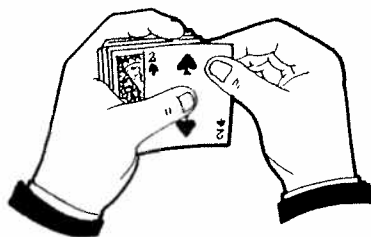


figure 204



figure 205

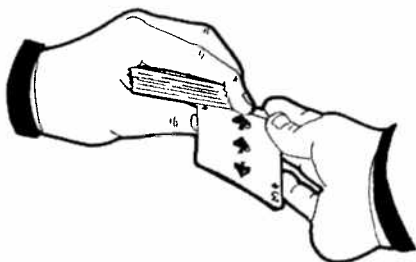


figure 206

pack inward, loosening it; then push this card rightward, so that it lies hidden beneath the rightjogged two of spades. The right hand, which has until this moment maintained its grip on the outer right corner of the two, now moves an inch or so inward, in preparation for a bottom deal.

Without the least hesitation, the right second finger contacts the



figure 207

back of the bottom card (Figure 205), and the left hand moves to the left with the deck, while turning palm-down. In this action the left thumb pulls the two of spades square with the pack. The right hand remains stationary, holding the bottom card, the face-up three of spades. The left hand now moves smoothly forward and grasps the outer left corner of the three, thumb beneath, forefinger above (Figure 206). The right hand releases the three, and the left hand turns back toward audience, bringing the three to a vertical position, face turned fully outward. The right hand then regrips the three by its lower right corner (Figure 207), and the left hand releases the card.

This method of performing the bottom deal provides an excellent retention of vision illusion. When done smoothly, the substitution of cards is undetectable. If you study the sleight in a mirror as you practice, I think you will be surprised at the total deceptiveness of this bottom deal.

You are left with the face-up two of spades on top of the face-down deck. The top of the deck, of course, must be kept tilted beyond the audience's line of sight until the two can be righted. The righting of the card is easily accomplished:

Bring the right hand and its card to the deck and deposit the face-up three of spades square onto the pack. The instant the three conceals the two, you can lower the left hand, bringing the top of the pack into view. Then perform a double turnover as you flip the three and two face-down as one card on the deck.

At first blush the prospect of performing a spread cull, a mechanical reverse and a bottom deal in close succession may seem intimidating. However, if you practice these sleights for a short time, you will find that they fit together remarkably well, producing an economy of motion that is not evident from their description. Were you to see John perform this effect, you would ungrudgingly grant it the practice necessary. ♣

A POLITE PENETRATION

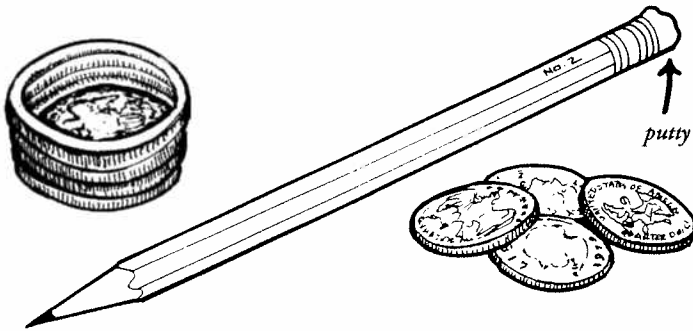
Effect: The performer borrows a dollar bill from someone in the audience and quickly folds it into a tube. He shows the tube to have no top or bottom, but when he tips it over, four quarters come spilling out onto the spectator's hand.

The performer stacks the four quarters on the back of the spectator's hand and covers them with the tube. He then lowers the end of a pencil into the tube and presses down on the stack of quarters. Without warning, the four quarters suddenly penetrate the spectator's hand. The coins and bill can be examined if desired, as they are as ordinary as when they came from the mint. ♪

Method: In January of 1980, Scotty York contributed to Harry Lorayne's *Apocalypse* a trick titled "Modernized Cap and Pence" (Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 289-291). Approximately four months later Mr. York marketed his trick through Busby-Corin, Inc. under the name "Nickel Saver". The trick was a clever revision of the old Cap and Pence, in which a Life Saver mint was used to accent the penetration of a stack of coins through a spectator's hand, much like John Ramsay employed a slice of cork in his "Cylinder and Coins" routine (see pp. 50-64). What follows is John's thoughtful reworking of "Nickel Saver".

Changes have been made to both the handling and the method, though the trick still owes much to Scotty York's original construction. It is John's belief that the introduction of secondary articles like dice and pennies to the Cap and Pence, as it is traditionally performed, only confuses the main effect, that of coins penetrating through the hand of a spectator. Though the Life Saver candy is used differently and more intelligently by Mr. York in his trick, John's impulse to simplify the effect to its essence has led him to discard the mints along with all other superfluous articles. He has also modified the York gimmicks.

You will need four normal quarters and a matching hollow stack of coins. John made his hollow stack from the stack-of-quarters gimmick that is available from most magic dealers. He removed the rivet from the

*figure 208*

stack, discarded two of the “ring” coins, and permanently glued the remaining three rings together in a stack, with the intact quarter glued on top (Figure 208). If you have the tools to drill or turn the centers from three quarters, you can manufacture such a hollow stack from four ordinary coins. In fact, a glued stack of four solid quarters can be used; but, as will be seen, the lightness of a hollow stack is helpful during a critical stage in the handling. John feels that using the six-coin hollow stack, as it comes from the manufacturer, would prove cumbersome for most performers, as one would have to finger palm this gimmick together with six loose quarters, making quite a handful.

You will need one other prop. This is a full-length pencil, sharpened, from which you have broken the eraser. Don’t cut the eraser from the pencil — tear it off, so that a rough surface is left just below the top of the metal sleeve. Then replace the eraser with a similar-sized ball of that rubberized sticky putty sold at stationers for adhering posters to walls. Two common brand names currently available are Fun-tak and Blu-tak. This putty looks remarkably like a pencil eraser, and even at close quarters will pass for one (Figure 208 again). Carry the pencil point downward in your shirt breast pocket. (It is a good idea to dip the lead point in a clear nail polish or lacquer, to avoid making a mess inside your pocket.)

Carry the hollow stack and the four quarters in your right coat pocket. The solid top of the stack should lie outward in the pocket, and the loose quarters should rest against the hollow side of the gimmick. When you are about to perform this trick, ask if anyone can lend you a crisp dollar bill. Enjoying the misdirection this request provides, reach into your right coat pocket and finger palm the hollow stack, together with the quarters. The top of the gimmick is pressed against the inner phalanx of the third

finger and the loose coins are stacked against the hollow bottom of the gimmick (Figure 209).

Bring your hand from your pocket and accept the dollar bill. Fold it in half down its length, with one edge falling slightly short of the other. "I'm going to fold this into a little origami figure. It's the simplest one you can make." Curl the folded bill into a circle and insert about an inch of one end of the



figure 209

bill inside the V-fold of the other end, forming a cylinder (Figure 210). The uneven edges of the bill permit this insertion to be done without fumbling or hesitation. During the folding, you will discover that a wide range of movement is possible to you without exposing the finger-palmed coins in the right hand. In fact, much of the right palm can be casually exhibited, giving a very convincing illusion of the hands being empty but for the bill.

"It's — that's right — it's a *tube*! You don't see one of those every day. It has no top or bottom." As you say this take the tube at your left fingertips and show it at both ends. Then replace it in the right hand, its lower circumference resting in the curl of the forefinger, and the thumb lying lightly on the upper side. As you take the tube into this grip, position the creased edge inward, toward the fingers. If it is necessary to turn the tube end for end to reach the desired position, showing the top and bottom of the tube gives you a natural reason to turn the bill around.

Addressing the spectator who lent you the bill, ask, "Would you please hold out your hand?" Here, extend your left hand palm-up. This not only demonstrates what you wish him to do, it also casually shows your hand empty.

"Watch." Loudly snap your left fingers three times. Then invert the tube over the spectator's hand and let the four loose quarters pour out of it (Figure 211). It is an easy task to loosen the right fingers' grasp on the coins, while retaining the gimmick in finger palm, and let them spill through the tube onto the spectator's palm. (Note that the creased edge of the tube has been purposely turned inward to prevent the coins from catching on the multiple edges at the other end, or from accidentally slipping inside the folds.) Casually drop the tube onto the table.

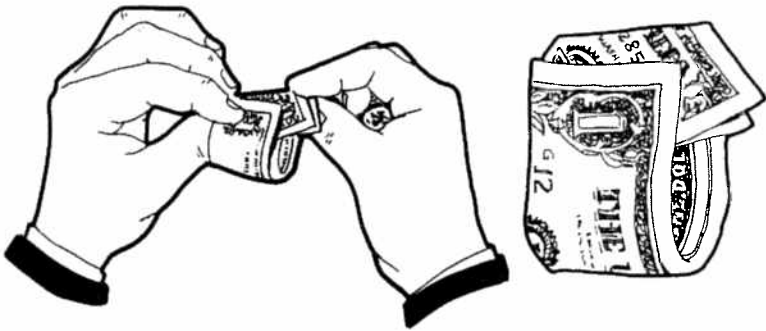


figure 210

This production of the quarters from the bill should be surprising to the audience. Your next task is to emphasize their singularity in a subtle manner. "Please count those into my hand." Hold out your palm-up left hand to receive the coins as they are counted. "One, two, three, four.



figure 211

"Now, if you would please, take this and place it on your right thumb." With your right hand, give the spectator the tube, and at the same time adjust the quarters in your left hand into finger-palm position, but do not palm them yet. While all attention is on the spectator as he places the tube on his thumb, you switch the loose coins for the gimmicked stack. The stack still rests, hollow-side outward, in right-hand finger palm. Move this hand to the left and, in that action, move the upside-down gimmick to the fingertips. This is done by placing the thumb onto the hollow side of the stack and bending the second finger in so that its tip can contact the underside (Figure 212). Then straighten the second finger and thumb, carrying the gimmick outward.

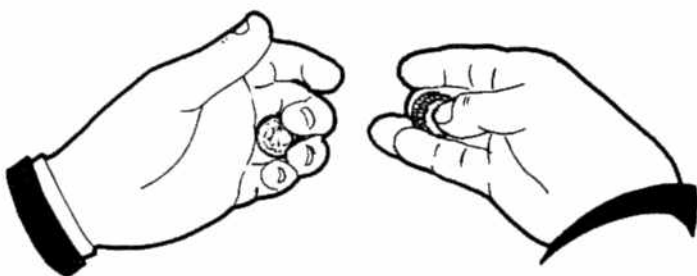


figure 212

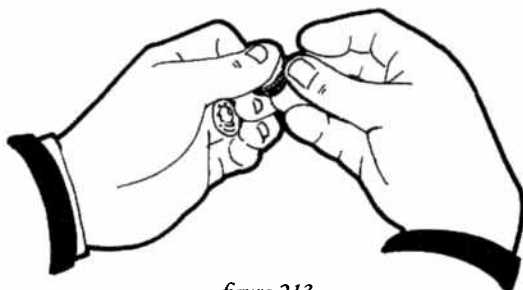


figure 213

Immediately transfer the gimmick to the left fingertips, while curling those fingers slightly to conceal the loose stack of coins in finger palm. Place your left thumb over the hole in the gimmick, covering it (Figure 213). All this is the work of a second, and if anyone *were* watching your hands, it would seem as if you have merely brought the loose coins to your left fingertips. However, if you do not look at your hands as you make the exchange, neither will the spectators.

Without hesitation, move your right hand away from the left and hold it out, palm-down, as you say, "Now hold your right hand out flat, like this." As he does this, transfer the hollow stack back to the right fingertips, thumb on top. "Hold your hand very still." Turn your right hand palm-down and set the hollow stack gingerly onto the back of the spectator's hand. At the same time, with your left hand, gently grasp his hand to steady it, thumb above and fingers below (Figure 214). Adjust the position of the gimmicked stack slightly and pretend to even the coins as you caution, "Hold still — hold still — that's good."

"Okay, I'm going to put this on top." With your right hand, remove the tube from his thumb and drop it over the hollow stack on the back of his hand. "Now don't move your hand at all." Release your grip on

his hand and move your hands away and out of the area of attention, acting as if you had just built a house of cards in a hurricane. "Hold very still. I'm just going to get my pencil." With your right hand, remove the gimmicked pencil from your shirt pocket.

"Now all I do is just tap the top of the coins." Lower the point of the pencil into the tube, tap the top of the stack and remove the pencil from the tube. "Did you feel anything funny? You didn't? Well, you see, nothing happened. They're still there." With the point of the pencil, tip back the tube slightly, giving the audience a glimpse of the stack on the spectator's hand. Then let the tube settle again over the stack.

Just as you do this, pretend to see the spectator's hand waver and, with your left hand, grip it gently, thumb above and fingers below, as you exclaim, "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Hold it steady now." During this by-play, casually twist the pencil end for end in the right hand, so that the eraser-end is downward. Bring the pencil back over the spectator's hand and lower it into the tube, onto the hollow stack. Now things happen quickly.

"I just press..." Press down firmly with the pencil, making the stack adhere to the putty eraser. Simultaneously, slide your right fingers downward along the length of the pencil for a distance roughly equivalent to the height of the stack. This creates an illusion of the coins sinking down through the hand. Synchronized with the pressing action, release the loose coins from left-hand finger palm, letting them fall to the table. "...and they go right through the back of your hand!" As all eyes are drawn to the falling

coins, swiftly raise the pencil from the tube (Figure 215), with the hollow stack stuck to the end, and pivot the stack into the right hand (Figure 216).

Pause briefly to let the penetration register; then use the point of the pencil to lift the tube from the spectator's hand. At the same time, release your left hand's grip on his right hand. Spin the tube



figure 214

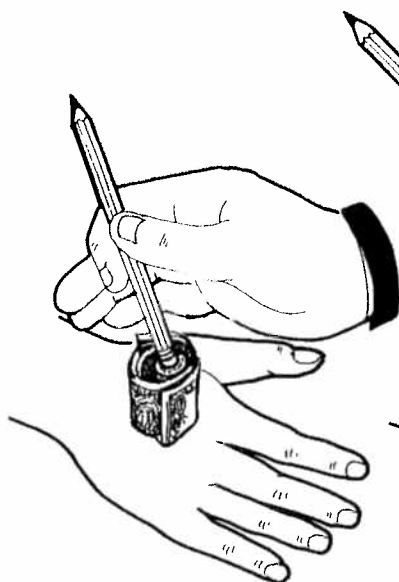


figure 215

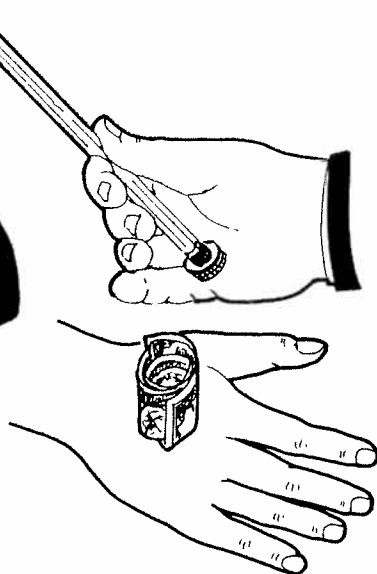


figure 216

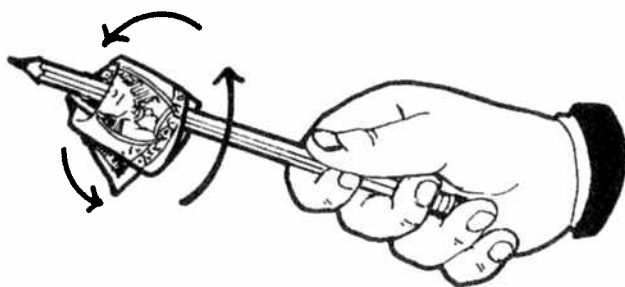


figure 217

several times on the pencil (Figure 217), then let it slide off onto the table. Nonchalantly replace the pencil in your shirt pocket, simultaneously disposing of the gimmick. All clues are thus eliminated, leaving behind a striking mystery.

Particularly note in this handling how John has minimized the performer's physical contact with the spectator. In many cultures — and certainly in the United States and ditto Kingdom — touching between strangers or new acquaintances is socially proscribed. Consequently, when someone grasps another in any context other than a handshake, it is perceived by the contacted party as slightly awkward. As a result, that

person is acutely conscious of the grasp. In the context of an effect like the Cap and Pence, that sharp awareness may well lead the person to surmise that the coins did not pass through his hand, but were released from yours. Magicians in general have ignored this fact for centuries, and continue to hold the spectator's hand throughout the trick.

In the handling just taught, John has done everything possible to minimize physical contact, thereby diminishing any social awkwardness and, at the same time, any chance of the spectator's seeing through the method. The person's hand is held only at two points in the course of the trick: when the stack of coins is first placed on the hand, and just as the penetration of the coins is performed. In both instances, the grasping of his hand is clearly motivated, and therefore becomes acceptable. When you set the stack on the back of his hand, you grasp the hand to show him how he is to hold it and keep it steady; and when you take his hand the second time, it is because you seem to see that the stack and tube may be toppling. Between these two periods, your actions show an awareness of the social awkwardness of holding his hand; thus the use of a pencil as a means of minimizing this contact. This leaves the audience with an impression that you are sensitive and considerate, and that the magic occurred in the spectator's hand, not in yours. In recalling the effect later, the spectators are more likely to remember your use of the pencil to maintain distance than they will the brief moments of physical contact. The issue of socially awkward touching between performer and spectator is quite valid, and one I can't recall having seen raised before in the literature. It is well worth your consideration, as is this powerful version of a classic effect. ☺

TENKAI-ESQUE
A CENTER STEAL HANDLING

Many years ago the brilliant Japanese magician, Tenkai Ishida, devised an exquisite method, both ingenious and economical, for stealing a chosen card from the center of the pack. An incomplete description of this sleight can be found in *Greater Magic* (p. 202). A fuller description appears in *The Magic of Tenkai* (pp. 32-33). I understand that Tenkai executed his center steal with the deck held in two different positions: that given in the texts cited, and from a standard dealing grip. In the 1957 monograph, *The Side Steal*, Edward Marlo teaches a left-handed side steal that closely resembles the Tenkai center steal done from dealing grip (see pp. 16-18 of that work); and Luis Zingone, Jack Hecht and Milt Kort developed quite similar maneuvers based on the published descriptions of Tenkai's sleight.

Rather late in this chain of events, John innocently reinvented the Tenkai center steal, as have others. Eventually he was told of the antecedent sleight. This news, though disappointing to the young inventor, did not stop him from employing the Tenkai center steal in his work; and over the years John has evolved a handling that gives the sleight a more casual appearance. Because Tenkai's center steal is not widely known to magicians, and because John's finishing touches have been praised by several knowledgeable performers, I felt his handling should be recorded.

Begin by having a card drawn from the pack. Square the cards as the selection is being noted, and grasp the pack by its ends from above, in the palm-down right hand. Raise the pack about four inches above the left hand and dribble roughly half the cards back onto the left palm. Quickly square these cards with the surrounding left fingers and thumb as you extend the hand for the return of the selection. When you have received the chosen card directly on top of the left hand's packet, return that hand below the waiting right hand and casually dribble the balance of the cards onto the selection. However, in doing so, catch a left fourth-finger break above the chosen card. Perhaps the surest way of forming this

*figure 218**figure 219*

break, short of curling the fingertip onto the selection, is to drop the first card or two slightly rightward of the rest, so that the right side of those cards comes to rest on the tip of the fourth finger.

Because of the offhand, almost careless manner in which the cards are dribbled onto the deck, the selection certainly appears to be lost; and because of that same apparent indifference, the cards obviously require squaring. Bring the palm-down right hand over the deck for that purpose, and grasp all the cards above the break by their ends. Now, in standard fashion, move the cards forward and back in the left hand, evening the sides and ends. But you do not move the entire deck back and forth, but only the top portion. The right fingers, at the front of the pack, conceal this fact from the audience.

It is during this forward and back squaring action that the selection is swiveled from the pack and into position to be palmed by the left hand. The mechanics of the maneuver are ingeniously simple, but some initial experimentation may be necessary to discover the correct touch:

The right hand first moves the upper packet forward for roughly three-quarters of an inch. This permits the tip of the right thumb, which should lie about half an inch rightward of the inner left corner, to contact the back of the selection (Figure 218). The right hand immediately moves straight inward again with the top portion, and the right thumb maintains light contact with the selection, causing it to pivot to the right (Figure 219, right hand made transparent to reveal the position). The inner left corner of the card, braced as it is against the heel of the thumb, becomes the pivot point; and the outer end of the card swings to the right, bringing

the selection parallel with the left fingers. Stop the swiveling of the card when its outer right corner lies above the tip of the left fourth finger. Your right thumbnail must be rather closely trimmed to execute this maneuver, as the flesh of the thumb must contact the card to move it.

The squaring motions that cover the pivoting of the selection from the pack are performed briskly and without hesitation. The swiveling of the card is accomplished in less than a second. By tightening the left fourth fingertip against the nearby corner of the selection, the card is caught in classic palm, though the lower half of the deck still rests between the hand and the card.

Now adjust the right hand's grip on the pack, moving the thumb onto the back of the deck, near the outer end, and shifting the fingertips onto the face of the pack. Once the outer end is gripped in this manner, hold the deck steady while the left hand moves inward, stripping the angled selection from the center (Figure 220). As the selection clears the deck, it will pop silently into classic palm. (If your hands are somewhat small, you may find that, on pivoting the



figure 220

selection from the pack, its right side comes to rest a bit beyond the inner edge of the left hand. Should this be the case, the card can be adjusted into proper palm position as you begin to move the left hand inward. Simply let the angled card rest in the deck until the left hand reaches the desired position; then grip the card between the tip of the left fourth finger and the thenar and, without hesitation, continue to move the hand toward you.)

The steal of the card is now complete. You should, of course, revolve the left hand palm-down as it leaves the deck, to conceal the stolen card. There is one further detail, though, to consider. While the right hand's grip on the deck looks natural enough as it takes the pack from the left

hand, it becomes rather awkward when one wishes to set down the cards. John solves this problem by applying Dai Vernon's side-grip stratagem. This, the reader may recall, was discussed in "Bullet Train" (p. 170) in the context of a top palm. All it consists of is rotating the deck ninety degrees, so that the free end points to the left. The left hand, which is by now palm-down, regrips the pack by its sides, near the left end, forefinger curled onto the back. The right hand relinquishes its hold on the cards. The left hand can now set down the pack in a more graceful, natural fashion than the right hand could have done.

John's major contribution to this sleight is the use of the dribble replacement and the consequent recovery of the selection under these circumstances. In the Tenkai handling, the squared deck was cut near center, the card was replaced on the bottom half, and the steal was made as the top half was set onto the deck. Dribbling the top portion onto the selection is a more casual, disarming procedure, which adds to the overall appearance of fairness. This is a practical, deceptive and extremely useful sleight. Don't pass it by without a fair trial. The results are extremely rewarding. ♪

HAMMANESQUE *A FALSE SPREAD DISPLAY*

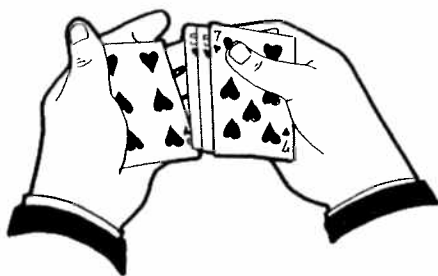
The Hamman count is a fine false display that fully deserves its stature as a deceptive and widely used sleight. It is particularly potent when one needs to stress the number of cards shown, or their specific values. There are instances, though, where the number and values of the cards are not the important features; when all that is desired is to show a portion of the packet, while hiding another portion as you seemingly show all the cards. In such cases, the deliberate one-by-one counting of the cards draws undue and unwelcome attention to their number and identities, at the same time increasing the danger of onlookers noticing the reoccurrence of certain cards during the count.

John has devised an alternative style of performing Bro. John Hamman's false display, one in which the cards are casually spread, rather than counted, as they are shown. The utility of this approach will be demonstrated with two examples: First, the spread display will be taught within the context of showing five black and five red cards as if they were red cards only. Second, an original color-changing deck effect will be explained, in which the Hammanesque spread display plays an important part.

Remove any five red cards and any five blacks from the deck. Arrange these cards, from face to back as follows: four red cards, five black cards, then the one remaining red card. Hold this packet face-up in left-hand dealing position.

As you perform the spread display you will transfer the cards in irregular groups from the left hand to the right. Begin by thumbing the first card to the right, and take it into the palm-up right hand. Do not take the card deep into the fork of the thumb; rather, hold it leftward of dealing grip, with the right edge of the card lying at the base of the fingers. Bring the right thumb down on the outer end of the card to hold it in place.

Without separating the first card from the packet, push the second card to the right, then the third, forming a small fan in the right hand (Figure 221). Now move the hands a few inches apart, separating the three-card

*figure 221**figure 222**figure 223*

fan from the face of the packet, and pause briefly. As you do so, mention the color of the cards or make some other relevant comment.

During this break in the display each hand makes an adjustment of its cards: The left thumb contacts the left edge of the packet, near the outer corner, and pushes the top six cards (all but one) to the right in a block. At the same time, the right fingers contract, pulling their three-card fan roughly square against the base of the fingers. Figure 222 shows the configuration of the cards at this point.

The spreading is now resumed with the execution of a secret exchange. This exchange resembles that of the Jordan count, but it is done from dealing grip, rather than

fingertip-pinch grip. The left hand moves its packet to the right and over the right hand's cards, positioning the rightjogged block under the right thumb. The outer right corner of the block should move significantly beyond the right edge of the right hand's packet, so that it can be securely caught between the right thumb and the base of the right forefinger (Figure 223). At the same time, lower the left fingers away from their packet, while clipping the outer left corner of the bottom red card in the fork of the left thumb. This leaves the right edge of the left hand's packet clear, permitting the right hand to slide its three red cards under the left hand's packet and approximately square with the lowermost card.

Move the left hand back to the left, taking with it the lowermost card of its packet and the right hand's three cards. The right hand retains the block of six cards: five blacks covered by one red.



figure 224

As the hands separate, push rightward with the left thumb on the face of the left hand's cards, forming a fan of four red cards (Figure 224). It is important that the left hand spread its cards *as* the hands move apart, and that the hands separate just enough for their cards to clear each other and no farther. If the hands move too far apart the actions will take on the undesired appearance of a count.

Bring the left hand back to the right and push the uppermost pair of red cards onto the face of the right hand's packet, spread so that all three red cards remain in view. Then conclude the display by taking the remaining two red cards from the left hand onto the right hand's spread, either together or one after the other.

The method of transferring the last four cards during the display is flexible. John sometimes takes three of the cards together, then places the last card on top of the rest. The quantities are incidental at this point, so long as the procedure looks unpremeditated.

While a steady rhythm is important to the deceptiveness of most false counts and displays, with the Hammanesque spread display it is an irregular rhythm that helps to create the sense of casualness that is so important to its success. In the example above, the rhythm of the spread might be denoted in this fashion: 123 — 4 — 56-7-8. Of course, the false display can be adapted to packets of different sizes, and more or fewer cards can be concealed during the spread.

Those are the mechanical details of the Hammanesque spread, but your attitude as you perform this display is as important as the actions. No mention is made of the number of cards in the packet. All that need be said is something along the lines of "This trick uses a group of red cards." The manner in which you spread the cards should appear casual, almost to the point of being sloppy. This relaxed demeanor suggests that nothing is being hidden, as there is nothing to hide. Now that the false display is understood, we will proceed to an excellent trick employing it. ♡

SLOW FADE TO RED

Effect: The performer casually cuts a small packet from the deck he has been using, spreads it to show the blue backs of the cards, squares the packet and waves his hand over it. When he next spreads through the cards, one of the backs is seen to have turned red. This red-backed card is set face-down on the table. The performer waves his hand again over the packet, and another card turns red. It is placed with the first red-backed card.

A third pass is made over the packet, and another card turns red; then a fourth card. To accelerate the process, the performer waves his hand over the balance of the packet and the backs visibly change to red. If it can be done with a packet, the performer observes, it can be done with an entire deck. He waves his hand over the remaining portion of the deck on the table, and the backs of the cards visibly change color, leaving a full pack of red-backed cards in place of the original blue-backed pack. ♣

Method: As was mentioned in the previous article, this trick relies in great part on the Hammanesque spread display. Consequently, the reader should familiarize himself with that procedure before undertaking the work about to be discussed.

A setup is necessary. You will need a red-backed deck and five blue-backed cards. In addition to their color, it is best if these cards differ in back design as well, to make the transformations as dramatic as possible. Place three of the blue cards on top of the pack, and the remaining two blue cards at positions eight and nine from the top; that is, four red-backed cards are set between the third and fourth blue-backed cards. Install a bridge in the near end of the top eight cards, or crimp the inner left corner of the eighth card in a downward direction. The final bit of preparation is to have a blue card case in your right-side coat pocket.

John feels that this trick is most effective if done after several other effects have been performed with a blue-backed deck. This means, of course, that a deck switch must be executed before you begin the present trick. A simple

pocket deck switch can easily be routined into your act; just introduce into the preceding trick some reason or excuse to go your pockets.

Having secretly brought the prepared red deck into play, casually spread the top two cards to the right, as you talk, letting blue backs be seen. Then square them back onto the pack and, with your palm-down right hand, grasp the deck by its ends and set it directly in front of you on the table. As you set the deck down, lift away the top eight cards — aided by the bridge or crimp — and place this packet into left-hand dealing position. A single blue-backed card is left on top of the deck, and everything looks as it should.

“I am going to take just a few cards to work with. As you can see, there is nothing special about these — nothing to see but blue backs.” As you are saying this, perform a Hammanesque spread to display a group of blue-backed cards. Since we are working here with eight cards, rather than ten, the spread procedure must be altered slightly from that described in the preceding article. Instead of taking the top three cards of the packet into the right hand, take only two. Then execute the block push-off and switch, and finish by taking the left hand’s three blue-backed cards, either singly or as a pair and a single card, on top of the right hand’s packet. Nothing is seen throughout but blue backs.

“But if I wave my hand over them...” Return the packet to the left hand and wave your right hand back and forth once over the packet. Now perform a second Hammanesque spread. “...one of the cards changes to red.” As the block push-off and exchange occur, a red-backed card appears in the middle of the spread. Outjog the red card for roughly half its length, as you take it onto the right-hand packet, then lay the left hand’s two blue-backed cards, spread, on top of all. With your left hand, draw the protruding red-backed card from the packet and lay it face-down and to your left on the table; then replace the packet into left-hand dealing position.

“I’ll do that again. I just wave my hand over them...” Wave your right hand over the packet. “...and another card changes to red.” Do another Hammanesque spread, outjogging the red-backed card that appears. Remove this card and set it with the tabled red card. Transfer the packet to left-hand dealing position.

“Every time I wave my hand, another card turns red.” Wave your right hand over the packet and do the Hammanesque spread again, producing a third red-backed card. Place it with the preceding two. Take the packet back into left-hand dealing position.

"This time I'll do it differently." Deal the top three cards, one by one, into the right hand, taking each below the previous one and forming a fan. As the right hand moves back to the packet to take the next card, instead slip the tips of the right fingers under the left hand's remaining pair of cards and draw out the bottom red-backed card. Simultaneously rotate the right hand palm-down, timing the turn to conceal the red back as the card is drawn rightward. Immediately deposit this card face-up onto the left hand's remaining blue card, leaving the face-up card jogged to the right for about half its width. Revolve the right hand palm-up again, and slip its three blue-backed cards squarely under the left hand's packet.

"I'll turn this card over and rub its back with the red cards..." With your right hand, gather the three red-backed cards from the table. Hold them face-down and roughly squared on the right fingers, the right edges lying at the crease of the fingers' inner joints. This positioning of the cards prepares you for a push-off and switch. Rub the back of the right-hand packet briefly against the back of the sidejogged face-up card.

Use the right hand's cards to flip the face-up card over on the left hand's packet (Figure 225). The card is seen to have a red back.

"...and it turns red." As you say this, look up at the spectators, drawing their gaze away from the cards. Then apparently take the newly changed red-backed card onto the other red backers in the right hand; but actually perform the block push-off and switch, just as it is performed in the Hammanesque spread. Table the right hand's packet, taking care not to spread the cards. The audience believes this packet to contain four red-backed cards. In reality it consists of one red-backed card over three blue-backed cards; and the left hand's packet, believed to contain blue-backed cards, holds three red-backed cards covered by a single blue card.



figure 225

"Now, I've done these one at a time." Point with your right hand at the tabled packet, and as attention is directed there, form a left fourth-finger break above the bottom two cards of the left hand's packet. Either a double buckle or a fourth-finger pull-down will serve this purpose.

"I'll do these all at once." Bring the right hand palm-down over the left hand's packet and grasp it by its ends, in a squaring action. At the same time, curl the left forefinger onto the face of the packet, and tilt the outer end downward. With a pass you will now bring the bottom two cards to the top of the packet. The pass is disguised by a cover action of Dr. James William Elliott's.

Start by executing the opening action of a Herrmann-style pass. That is, use the left fourth finger to pull the two cards below the break downward at their right side. Simultaneously press upward with the left curled forefinger on the face of these cards, using a light but steady pressure. These combined finger actions maneuver the two bottom cards to a vertical position, perpendicular to the top two cards, but hidden by them and the right hand (Figure 226). The left edge of the turning pair should glide lightly and silently over the face of the horizontal pair, moving toward the right edge of those cards.

Just as the bottom pair is turned on edge, shift the left forefinger to a position beside the left second finger at the lower edge of the upright cards. At this point the left side of the vertical pair should be clearing the right side of the horizontal pair. Press the upper edge of the vertical cards lightly against the right palm and let the left hand's packet settle onto the left palm (Figure 227). Position the right hand to expose as much of the visible packet as possible, keeping its blue back in sight.

"I do that by waving my hand over them all — and they all turn red." Look down at the packet in your hand, drawing the audience's full attention back to the cards. Pause very briefly, holding the right hand poised and apparently waiting only to perform its magical wave. Then complete the pass, using Dr. Elliott's cover action:

Straighten the right fingers and wave the hand leftward, over the packet (Figures 228 and 229). Concealed by this action, the left fingers swiftly fold the vertical cards flat onto the packet, square with it. Continue to move the right hand several inches to the left of the left hand, permitting the red back on top of the packet to be seen. Then swing the right hand gracefully to the right and over the packet again. These actions should look identical to the previous waves of the hand. The pass serves to effect a visible color change of the top card.



figure 226



figure 227

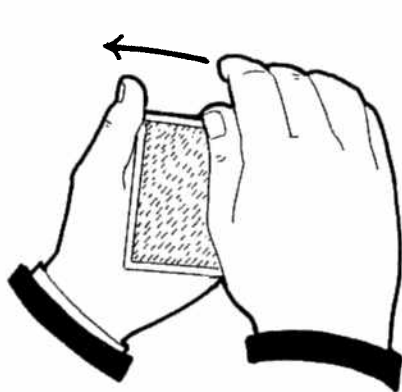


figure 228



figure 229

Pause for a brief moment to let the color change register. Then perform an Elmsley count with the packet, displaying four red-backed cards. Drop the cards casually onto the tabled packet.

“Of course, if I can do that with a packet, I should be able to do it with a whole deck. I just wave my hand over the top...” As you say this you pass the hands deftly over the pack, making the backs change to red. This is accomplished with Edward Marlo’s tabled flat-palm steal (ref. *The Tabled Palm*, pp. 5-6):

Position your hands, open and palms-down, at their respective sides of the pack and about two inches above the table. The reader will recall that the pack is red backed, with a single blue-backed card on top. In a

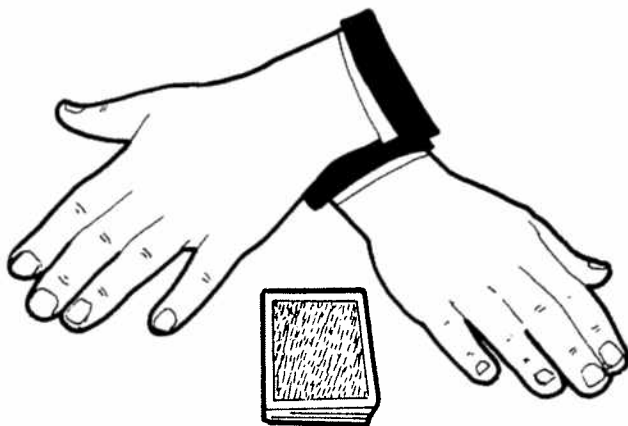


figure 230

graceful waving action, bring the hands together, directly over the deck, letting them cross, left hand over right (Figure 230). Then reverse the action, separating the hands and bringing them back to the sides of the pack. Repeat this crossing and uncrossing of the hands over the deck. Now turn the hands palms-up in unison, showing them empty. Turn them once more palms-down, still beside the pack, and cross them again. This time the hands pause over the pack for the briefest possible moment, and the right hand very lightly contacts the top of the deck. The outer end of the pack should lie at the base of the fingers, with the edge of the fourth finger at the right corner and the edge of the thumb at the left corner. In this position the thumb and fourth finger constrict slightly, catching the outer corners of the top card between them and lightly gripping the card in gambler's flat palm (Figure 231, an exposed view). The hands then rise several inches and part. However, they do not move completely aside. Instead they delay the revelation of the color change for a moment, by immediately crossing above the pack, then



figure 231

uncrossing again. This last wave of the hands is much shorter, and is done more quickly than the previous waves. Now move the hands back to their respective sides of the pack, allowing the color change to be seen.

When the change is properly performed, the actions of the hands are deft and smooth, and there is no perceptible lingering over the pack. Should you accidentally palm off more than one card, no harm is done; but given a light touch and a bit of practice, you will find that the knack of lifting away a single card is not difficult to attain. It is imperative, though, that when the steal is made, the cards on top of the pack remain undisturbed.

“...and the rest of the cards change to red.” With your left hand, immediately ribbon spread the face-down pack across the table. While attention is focused there, let the right hand drop back and to your side. After the visual effect has been appreciated and attention is relaxed, place your right hand into your coat pocket and bring out the blue card case, leaving the palmed card behind. Then gather all the cards, slip them into the case and put them away.

One nicety to be appreciated in this method is the consistency of the magical gesture: each color change is seemingly brought about by a wave of the hand over the packet, even though, covertly, three different sleights are responsible for the changes. ☺

HOT SLOT

E ffect: The performer recounts a recent experience in Las Vegas with the regiment of slot machines found there. He exhibits the wealth left him after his visit: a nickel, a quarter and a half dollar. Representing his empty fist as a slot machine, he places the nickel in it and, using his wand as a handle, pulls it to play. However, luck deserts him and the nickel vanishes.

He next places the quarter in his hand, inserts the tip of the wand into the fist and pulls. The quarter goes the way of the nickel. He has lost again.

Picking up the half dollar, his last chance, he places it into his hand. He pulls the wand and — a stream of silver halves cascade from the hand into a champagne glass. Jackpot! ♡

M ethod: In January of 1977 Dr. Hiroshi Sawa contributed a brilliant coin trick called “Sawa’s Slot Machine” to *Genii* magazine (Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 23-25). John has the greatest admiration for Dr. Sawa, and when he read this trick he understood the invaluable lesson it held: the magic had been imbedded in a story, a presentation that gave meaning to the vanishes of the coins and the final production. In doing this, Dr. Sawa had elevated what might have been a pointless display of technique to an artistic entertainment.

John immediately set out to master the trick. This he did, but as he rehearsed it certain alterations and simplifications in handling occurred to him. The plot, presentation and, in essence, the method remain Dr. Sawa’s. To the props used, John has added a champagne glass, which brings with it three benefits: it adds a touch of visual elegance; it aids several technical aspects of the handling; and it rings when coins are dropped into it, simulating the sound made by coins dropping into the metal tray of a slot machine.

In the final sequence of the trick it is necessary to transfer a palmed stack of half dollars secretly from hand to hand. Those who tackled Dr. Sawa’s handling usually found this a formidable move to do smoothly and

silently. Indeed, the trick bears a reputation of difficulty, due in large part to the stack transfer. John developed an easier method of executing this sleight. Other changes and touches will be encountered as the method is taught.

You need the following: a champagne glass, a wand, a nickel, a quarter and twelve or thirteen half dollars (the number of halves may vary, depending on the quantity you can dependably edge palm). You will also need a handkerchief or some other soft object that you can wad up in the bottom of the outer left breast pocket of your coat. This is done to prop it open slightly, for a reason that will soon be apparent.



figure 232

When ready to perform, secretly edge palm all but one of the half dollars in your right hand. (John normally opens with this trick, palming the coins before he begins.) A modified edge palm is employed here: in addition to using the palmer muscles to grip the stack, the right thumb also aids in holding the coins in place. The stack, or a good portion of it, is caught edgewise in the fork of the thumb, and is held more or less

wedged there, as shown in Figure 232. If you try this method of gripping the stack, you will find it easier than the standard edge palm, and probably more secure.

You must be standing behind a table when performing this trick. With your right hand, pick up the wand and place it under your left arm, trapping it between the upper arm and the side of your body. The forward end must be angled sharply upward, so that it lies very near your chest. Once the wand is securely caught under the arm, the right hand picks up the glass by its stem. Inside the glass are the nickel, quarter and remaining half dollar.

"I just got back from Las Vegas, and this is all I have left — eighty cents: a nickel, a quarter and a half dollar." As you say this, pour the three coins from the glass onto your left palm and display them there briefly. Then, as you name each coin, drop it back into the glass; but in these actions a small deceit is perpetrated. As you name the nickel, you drop that coin into the glass. As you name the quarter, however, you actually drop the



figure 233

half dollar into the glass, so that it covers the nickel. You then drop the quarter onto the other coins as you name the half dollar. Do not be concerned about these discrepant actions. From a few feet away it is difficult to tell which coins are dropping into the glass, and even if the ruse is noticed, it will be perceived as an unimportant slip on your part.

"I started with the small change — the nickel machines." With your left hand, apparently remove the nickel from the glass. Actually, you place the tips of the first two fingers onto the quarter, as it lies on top of the half dollar, and slide it up the side of the glass. When the quarter reaches the rim, release it, letting it rejoin the other coins with a clink, and bring away your hand with the thumb pressed to the fingertips, as if you are holding the nickel. This maneuver is pure bluff. If anyone looks into the glass, everything looks as it should, for the nickel is completely concealed by the other coins. As you bring the left hand from the glass, turn it palm-up, backs of the loosely curled fingers toward the audience (Figure 233). At the same time, set the glass before you on the table, within easy reach.

"I put the nickel in the machine..." Relax the left thumb, letting it separate from the fingertips, and pretend to catch the imaginary nickel in your cupped left hand. Close the left fingers around it. (Notice here how John has neatly avoided the extra and needless motion of a hand-to-hand false transfer.) Simultaneously move your right hand up to your left sleeve near mid-forearm, and tug the sleeve back, away from the wrist. Then continue to move the right hand inward to the wand, which lies caught under your arm. Grasp the wand by its upper end and take it from under the arm. Notice how John exploits the ancient principle of holding

an object in the hand to disguise the slightly cramped posture caused by palming the stack of coins. The right hand first holds the glass by its stem; then, after releasing the glass, it pulls back the sleeve, then takes the wand. The hand is continually occupied. As will be seen, this concealment principle is exercised throughout the trick.

Turn the closed left hand thumb up and insert the free end of the wand into the top of the fist. "...and I pulled the handle, *click, click*." With your right hand, move the upper end of the wand forward, then pull it back four or five inches, as shown in Figure 234, imitating the action of pulling the arm on a slot machine. In this illustration, the palmed stack of coins has been purposely exposed; but in performance, the right hand must be turned properly to conceal the palmed coins from the audience. Remove the tip of the wand from the left fist.

"*Brrrrr, click, click, click*. Oh, but I lost!" Here John mimics the sound of the three wheels of the machine whirling round and stopping. On the first click, he opens the third and fourth fingers of the left hand; on the

second click he opens the second finger; and on the third he straightens the forefinger. In this fashion the left hand is gradually shown empty: the nickel is gone. Slowly turn the hand, fingers spread, showing it front and back. As the vanish is concluded, casually replace the wand in its previous position under the left arm.

With your left hand, pick up the glass by its stem. Then look up at the audience, lessening attention on your hands. "Then I decided to try the quarter machine." As you say this, dip your right fingers into the glass and slide the quarter up the side and out of the bowl. This action should look exactly like the earlier one, but this time you honestly remove the coin. Do not look at your hands as you carry out this task.



figure 234

Set the glass back on the table, and simultaneously use the right thumb to slide the quarter over the fingers until its lower edge can be clipped between the middle phalanges of the right third and fourth fingers (Figure 235).

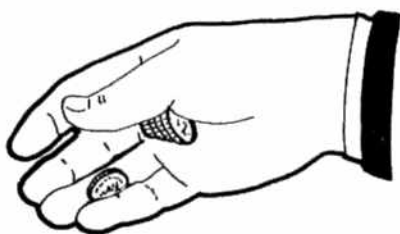


figure 235

"I put a quarter in..." Move the open right hand toward the left and pretend to toss the quarter casually into the left hand. Close the left fingers, as if catching the coin. Immediately move the right hand toward the wand. Again, use your gaze to lessen the audience's attention on your actions. Look up when you toss the coin into the left hand, treating the task as ordinary and unimportant.

Because of the tilted position of the wand under the arm, the right hand, when reaching for it, must naturally pass very near the left breast pocket of the coat, which you have thoughtfully propped open. As the hand brushes by, it is an easy matter to release the quarter from finger clip into the mouth of the pocket (Figure 236). There should be no hesitation when you secretly dispose of the coin. Smoothly grip the end of the wand and remove it from beneath the arm.

Place the tip of the wand into the top of the left fist, as you did previously. "...and I pulled the handle, *click, click*." Move the wand forward and back, as before; then remove it from the left hand. "*Brrrrr, click, click, click*. I lost that too!" Open the left fingers in time to your sound effects, and show the quarter is gone. Display the hand front and back as the right hand returns the wand under your left arm.

Now comes the portion of the handling that seems the most difficult: the secret transfer of the palmed stack of coins from the right hand to the left. However, if the instructions about to be given are conscientiously followed, the sleight will be found much easier than presumed.

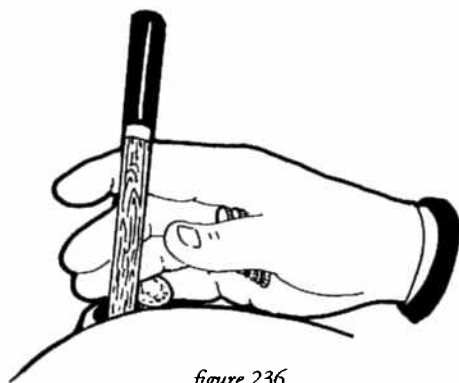
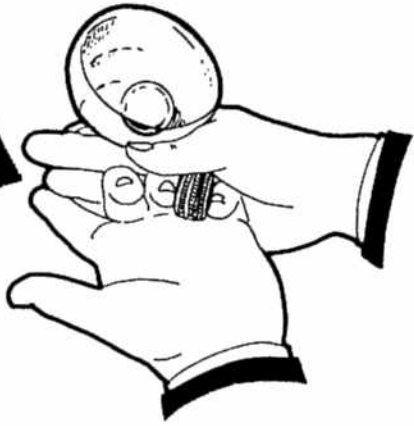


figure 236

*figure 237**figure 238*

"I was down to my last fifty cents and decided to go for broke." With your palm-up right hand, pick up the glass by cradling its bowl in the cupped fingers, the stem passing between the first and second fingers. Inside the glass rests the half dollar, and under this coin lies the nickel. The half dollar and the natural refraction of the glass completely hide the presence of the small coin. You are now going to pour the half dollar (with the nickel) onto the left palm. At the same time you will transfer the palmed stack to the left fingers.

Turn your left hand palm-up, fingers pointing toward the right, and bring the right hand to the left fingers, until the fingertips lightly touch the right palm. Separate the left third and fourth fingers and, with them, straddle the palmed stack, the tip of the third finger contacting the far end, and the fourth finger contacting the near end (Figure 237). This position must be quickly and smoothly attained. Immediately begin to tip the mouth of the glass onto the left palm. In this action the right hand naturally rotates palm-down. Maintain the left fingers' contact on the stack of coins as this occurs, curling the fingers inward until the stack is brought to rest on the base of the left fingers (Figure 238). Note that the left fingers do not attempt to pick up the stack and move it into the left hand. If they were to do this, the coins would likely slip from your control. Instead the two fingers act like bookends, guiding the stack as it is rolled into position by the right hand. Only when the stack rests securely on the left hand do the third and fourth fingers tighten on the end coins to hold it in place.

In this action of rotating the right hand over the left, the coins in the glass are spilled out and onto the left palm. While the transfer of the stack

can and should be done silently, if the palmed coins do talk, the sound is covered by the noise of the coins leaving the glass. Some mirror practice will be necessary to ensure that you do not expose the stack as you shift it to the left hand.

Move the right hand away from the left and set the glass on the table. Simultaneously close the left fingers around all of the coins, and turn the fist thumb up. With your right hand, take the wand from under your arm, and insert its tip into the fist.

"But this time, when I pulled the handle, *click, click...*" Move the wand forward and back, as before. Then remove it from the fist. Give the fist a sharp shake, audibly jiggling the coins inside. "Jackpot!" Hold the left hand over the glass on the table, open it palm-up and let the coins pour into the glass. While it is very hard to spill the coins in a steady stream from the hand, this is the ideal for which you should aim. If you first let the stack flop over, making the coins form an overlapping row along the length of the middle fingers, then raise the first and fourth fingers slightly, creating a spillway for the coins, a reasonably smooth cascade can be performed off the fingertips (Figure 239). The nickel goes into the glass as well, but amongst so many half dollars it will never be noticed. ☺

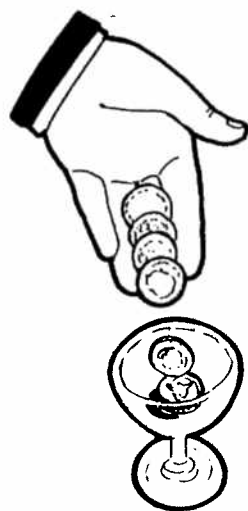


figure 239

SANVERTED

Effect: The plot is a union of two classic effects: the Ambitious Card and “The Last Trick of Dr. Jacob Daley”. Only the four aces are used. The red aces are displayed and placed under the black aces. With just a snap of the fingers, the red aces return to the top of the packet. They are slipped below the black aces a second time, and again they rise immediately to the top.

This ascension of the red aces is repeated once more; then one of the red aces is placed on the table. This simplifies matters, as there is now only one red ace to follow in the packet. It is shown and clearly placed under the black aces. Yet, it instantly returns to the top.

This ace is set on the table with the first red ace. The two black aces are now held up and given a snap, upon which the red aces and black aces transpose: the black aces are found on the table, and the red aces appear in the performer’s hands. ♣

Method: This shrewd plot combination was conceived by Jean-Jacques Sanvert, of France. M. Sanvert’s trick was described in English by Harry Lorayne in *Best of Friends* (pp. 485–488). John liked the trick, but desired a handling that was more casual in appearance and more economical in action. His revisions accomplish these goals, and incidentally eliminate a discrepancy in the original, making a fine effect all the better.

As promised above, only the four aces are employed. The suit order of the aces is immaterial, but the red aces must lie first and third from the top of the packet. Begin by displaying the face-up aces, two in each hand (a red ace behind a black in each case). You want to impress on the audience that you are working with only the aces, but you do not want the order of the suits remembered. Therefore, as you reassemble the aces into a packet, you apply Dai Vernon’s strategy from “Twisting the Aces” (explained on page 169 of this volume). Briefly, after the hands display their cards front and back, the right hand slips its two face-up aces under

the left hand's pair, swiftly pushing all four aces square and immediately flipping the packet face-down into left-hand dealing position. If this sequence of actions is performed smoothly and at a moderate speed, it is impossible to follow with any certainty the order of the aces. Of course, the actions should not be so rushed as to raise suspicion.

You now position the left thumb at the outer left edge of the packet and push over the top three cards as a block. With the palm-down right hand, immediately grasp the triple card by its right side, fingers above and thumb below. The tip of the thumb should lie very near center at the right edge of the block. If the cards in the block are not aligned, butt the tip of the right thumb against their edges, evening them before you grip them. The block must be closely squared or the next action will be jeopardized.

Without hesitation, revolve the right hand palm-up; and simultaneously do another block push-off, this time pushing over two cards. You must push the block both leftward and inward, widely angling the single ace behind the right front corner of the double, to expose the outer index of the lower ace, as shown in Figure 240. (Left-handed performers have an advantage here. Since they will naturally make this spread with the left hand, the outer index of the lower ace can be brought into view with just a rightward push.)

As you spread the cards, hold them directly over the left hand's packet (actually a single card). This permits the left thumb to contact the left edge of the double card, if need be, to correct any minor misalignment.

"Here are the red aces." Rest the left edge of the double card on the tips of the left fingers (Figure 241), and flip both the double and single cards face-down together onto the left hand's card, letting gravity square them as they turn. Immediately spread the four cards and take the top two into your right hand.

"I'll place them on the bottom, under the black aces." Slip the right hand's pair of cards below the left's, moving slowly and making sure that the fairness of your actions is observed. Square the packet in the left hand.

"But if I snap my fingers like this..." Snap your right fingers over the packet. "...the red aces pass through the black aces and rise to the top." Do another three-card block push-off and turn the block face-up, spreading it as two cards. The actions here are identical to those just employed to display the red aces. The red aces are once more seen in your right hand (Figure 240 again). There will be a minor discrepancy at this point: the order of the red aces is the reverse of the order previously

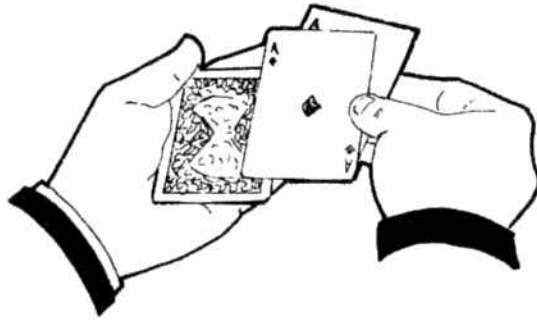


figure 240

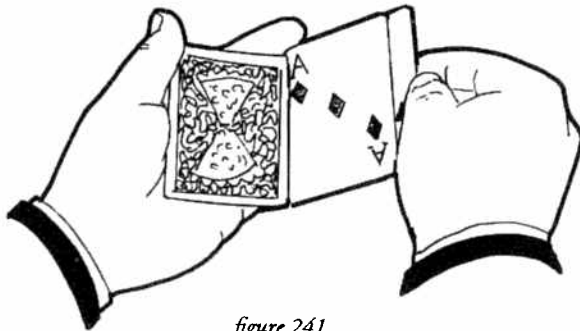


figure 241

displayed. This small quibble, however, is never noticed, and if it were it would be perceived as unimportant.

Flip the double card and the single face-down together onto the left hand's card. Immediately spread the four face-down cards and repeat the ambitious card sequence, placing the top two cards on the bottom, then using block push-offs to show the red aces have returned to the top. The sequence is resetting and can be repeated *ad infinitum*. John feels that three times is sufficient.

Upon showing the red aces risen a third time to the top, use the right hand's single card to flip the double card face-down onto the left hand's card. "Perhaps this would be easier to follow if there were fewer cards to watch. I'll get rid of the ace of diamonds." Here you name the red ace you've just flipped onto the packet and thumb the top card face-down onto the table. "That leaves the ace of hearts and the two black aces." As you mention the black aces, flash the face of the left hand's pair, showing a black ace there. Then flip the red ace, which is still in your right hand, face-down onto the packet.

"If I move the ace of hearts from the top to the bottom, then snap my fingers..." Do a two-card block push-off and shift the double card to the bottom of the packet. Snap your fingers; then do a double turnover, letting the double card fall square onto the face-down bottom card of the packet. "...the ace of hearts rises up, through the black aces, to the top." Using another block push-off, turn the double card face-down on the packet and immediately remove the top card. "Let me put it on the table with this one." Lay the right hand's card face-down with the previously tabled ace.

"Now we'll just use the black aces: the ace of clubs..." With your right hand, draw out the bottom card of the left hand's pair and glance at its face an instant after you name the ace of clubs. Do not let anyone else see the face of this card, but when you look at it, evince mild surprise. "Oops! Excuse me." Say this softly, as if to yourself. Exchange the right hand's card for that in the left hand. Glance at the face of the new card and show by your expression that you now have the right one. "The ace of clubs..." Hold both hands in front of you, each with a face-down card. "...and the ace of spades. All I do is give them a little flick..." With the third fingers of each hand, loudly snap the two held cards. Take another peek at their faces, without exposing them to the audience. "Not quite. Let me do it again." Hold the cards face-down and give them another snap. Turn their faces toward you and smile. "That did it. Look! The snap causes the black aces to jump down here..." Take the right hand's card into the left hand and, with the right hand, turn up the two cards on the table, revealing the aces of spades and clubs.

"...and the red aces jump to my hands." Turn the left hand's cards face outward, displaying them; then toss them to the table with the black aces.

There are several admirable psychological touches that deserve mention in this last phase. Miscalling cards is a powerful ruse when properly acted. The extra bit of by-play that John uses — glancing at the one card and pretending he has taken the wrong ace — is a particularly cunning ploy. Also note how the revelation of the transposition has been blocked. He turns up the black aces on the table *before* he shows the red aces in his hands. If the reverse were done, the effect on the audience would be diminished. Exposing the red aces first can lead the audience to think that you are using four red aces. This thought is immediately dispelled when the black aces are turned up, but the initial perception causes momentary confusion as the spectators discard the one theory to recognize belatedly that a transposition has occurred. The trick is far more striking if the effect is immediately understood.

This routine, when performed properly, has a surprising impact on an audience. A lot of magic happens in a short time, with just four cards; the handling is clean and direct, and the sleights are not difficult to master. All this should be enough incentive for you to give it a fair trial. ♣

OIL ON TROUBLED WATERS

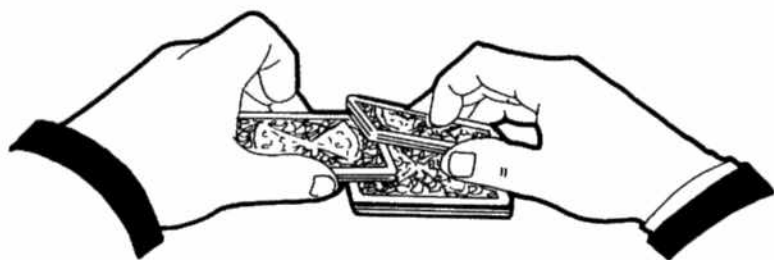
Effect: In several previous books I have expressed my reluctance to add to the profuse and repetitive literature devoted to Edward Marlo's Oil and Water plot. Only an innovative approach that clearly rises above the morass of idiosyncratic handlings can break my resolve. This Oil and Water routine is such an exception.

First, as is typical with John's thinking, he has stripped the effect to its basics. He mixes only six cards, three red and three black. This seems the ideal number; any fewer and the magical separation of colors is trivialized; and more cards only complicate the procedure, often without yielding an appreciable gain in effect.

Second, the trick begins with a genuine face-up alternation of the colors, and the separation of reds and blacks is immediate, with no intervening displacement displays. It is difficult to imagine a more convincing and straightforward procedure.

Third, the routine has a definite and dramatic finish, something most Oil and Water sequences lack. In the past, the common solution to concluding a series of color separations has been to make the colors suddenly alternate again. This produces a certain amount of surprise but, as will be seen, John has contrived a far more impressive climax for his routine, and a logical one: the entire deck — which was shuffled in the beginning by a spectator — separates into reds and blacks. ♣

Method: A simple deck stack is necessary. All the red cards are on top, and the black cards are on the bottom. Within the context of an act, you can begin with the colors segregated, and open with this routine (the magic develops quickly, as it should in a good opening effect); or you can first do one or two tricks that leave the color separation intact. Another option is to divide the colors secretly in the context of a previous trick. The point here is that the stack is uncomplicated, and therefore is not difficult to incorporate into the structure of a planned act.

*figure 242*

As you talk with the audience, set the face-down deck lengthwise on the table, in position for a riffle shuffle. John will sometimes casually shuffle the cards once or twice as he is talking. These shuffles consist of cutting off the top quarter of the pack and riffling it into the top quarter of the remaining stock. This of course retains the separation of colors in the deck. The fingers shield the front edges of the packets during the shuffle, concealing their disproportionate thickness, and no attention is called to the actions. These preliminary shuffles are optional. The next shuffle is not.

Strip out the middle section, in preparation for a riffle shuffle. That is, grip the ends of the pack with both hands and, with the right thumb, lift the top quarter of the deck about half an inch at the inner edge. Then, with your left hand, grasp the center portion of the pack and draw it leftward (Figure 242). As the center section clears the top and bottom quarters, let the right hand's top section settle squarely onto the bottom section. All this should be done without looking at your hands. You wish to place no importance on the cut.

Move as if to riffle the cards together, but then apparently change your mind. Address a nearby spectator: "Do you shuffle cards? Good. Would you give the deck a thorough riffle shuffle for me? Then everyone can be sure the cards are mixed." As the spectator shuffles the cards, your attitude must be one thing, while you portray it as something else. You must keep a close watch over the spectator's actions, assuring that only one shuffle is made and that the pack is not cut afterward. Reach out for the return of the cards just as the shuffled portions are pushed square, and before any further actions can occur. Outwardly, however, you must treat the shuffle as a mere formality, indulged in only to placate unwarranted suspicions in the minds of the spectators — a minor task, summarily carried out so that you can proceed to more important matters.

Thanks to the arrangement of the cards before the shuffle, the top half of the pack will still consist of red cards, and the bottom half of blacks.

Depending on the spectator's interlacing of the cards, several — usually no more than two or three — will likely be out of place near the center. (This is an old riffle shuffle strategy, first published in a slightly different form in the September 1931 issue of *Seven Circles* magazine [Vol. 1, No. 6, p.10]. For more information on red-black riffle shuffles, see Martin Gardner's series on the subject in *Hugard's Magic Monthly*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 2-4; and *Dai Vernon's More Inner Secrets of Card Magic*, pp. 54-55.)

Make some comment about the thoroughness of the spectator's shuffle, as you want it remembered a few minutes later that the cards were shuffled by an audience member. Retrieve the deck and spread it faces toward yourself. When you reach the center portion of the pack, quickly check to see how extensively the colors have been mixed. Assuming that several cards are out of place, you can casually lower the spread for a moment, allowing the audience to see the mixture of colors near center, while you hold the segregated top and bottom sections very narrowly spread. If there are no colors out of place, delete the display; nothing important is lost by its elimination.

Explain that you need just a few cards, and remove three black cards, then three reds. As you remove these cards one by one, drop them onto the table in a face-down pile. Among the six cards include all the out-of-place ones, thus efficiently cleaning up the stack so that the top half again contains only red cards and the bottom half only blacks. On rare occasions you may find more cards mingled than you can straighten with the removal of only six. In such an instance, casually transfer the extra cards to their proper halves of the pack while you are removing the six cards. Square the deck and set it aside, face-down and to your right.

Pick up the six cards you have removed, turn them face-up and point out that there are three reds and three blacks. Take the red cards into one hand and the black cards into the other. Now mix the colors by dealing the cards alternately into a face-up pile on the table: first a red card, then a black, then a red, and so on, until all six have been dealt. Square up the pile neatly, pick it up and turn it face-down, making all actions obviously fair. Spread the cards from left hand to right and raise them to expose the face of the spread. This once more displays the mixture of colors to the audience. Lower the hands again and form a left fourth-finger break under the top three cards as you square the spread into left-hand dealing grip.

Now wave your right hand over the packet in a magical fashion. "When I do this, all the red cards rise to the top." Here is an important presentational point. John, throughout the routine, presents the effect as one of

red cards rising to the top; never as one of red and black cards separating. By focusing attention strictly on the red cards, the effect is made easier for the audience to understand.

With your left thumb, push over the top card of the packet and grasp it at the right fingertips, near the right side, thumb above, fingers beneath. In the action of pushing over a second card, actually take a double card below the right hand's single card. Rather than executing a block push-off of the two cards above the break, John prefers to nip the right edge of the double card between the right fingertips and the first card; then, as he draws the double card to the right, he moves the left thumb rightward over the packet in a feigned pushing action. The double should be held leftjogged beneath the single card.

Next spread over another double card. This time a block push-off is executed. With your left thumb at the very edge of the packet, lightly push the top two cards to the right, and catch them under the right hand's cards, jogged roughly half an inch leftward of the first double. At this point you hold one card in the left hand and five in the right; but to the audience it appears as if you have merely spread over the top three cards into the right hand. Tilt the outer end of the left hand's card down a bit to conceal the thin front edge.

After spreading the cards as described, immediately turn the right hand palm-down, bringing the faces of its cards into view. Three red cards are seen. Lay this spread face-up on the left hand's face-down card, leaving the left half of that card in view, and hold the spread in place with the left thumb (Figure 243). The cards rest there for only a moment, while the right hand turns palm-up, then regrips the face-up spread and moves it to the right of the face-down card.

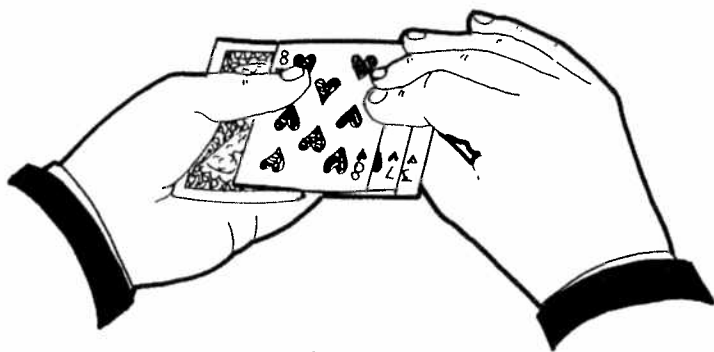


figure 243

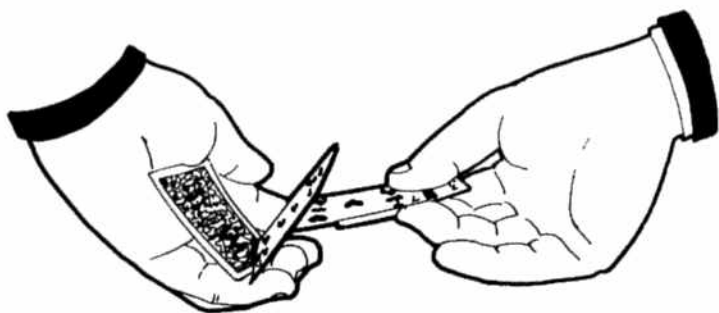


figure 244

Rest the left edge of the uppermost double card on the tips of the left fingers and, using the right-hand cards beneath, flip the double face-down and square onto the left hand's card. Figure 244 shows this action in progress. (This maneuver should be familiar to the reader, as it was used in the previous trick, "Sanverted".) As soon as the double card falls flat on the left hand's packet you say, "You see..." Smoothly thumb off the top card onto the table and continue, "...the reds rise..." Flip the next double card face-down onto the packet in the same fashion, and deal the top card onto the tabled one as you say, "...right through the blacks." Revolve the third red card face-down in the right fingers, and turn the left hand briefly palm-down, giving the audience a glimpse of the black card on the face of the packet.

At this point the audience believes the two cards on the table to be red (they are actually black) and the three cards in your left hand to be black (the bottom one is; the other two are red). Having turned the left hand palm-up again, make a one-handed face-down fan with the three cards. "I'll mix them again." Insert the right hand's red card between the top two cards of the fan and leave it outjogged. Then, with the right hand, pick up one of the tabled cards and slip it above the bottom card of the fan, outjogging it as you have the first. Place the remaining tabled card under the fan, outjogged as well. In this manner you seemingly alternate red cards once more with black cards.

Tap the inserted cards flush with the fan, then neatly square the cards into left-hand dealing position, making it clear that nothing covert is being done. Wave your right hand over the packet. "If I do this, the red cards again rise to the top."

Push over the top three cards, one by one, and take them into the right hand, each under the previous one, forming a spread. While your actions

here are honest, they should duplicate in appearance the actions of the previous separation. Turn the right hand palm-down, displaying the faces of the three red cards, and rest the face-up spread momentarily on the left hand's packet while the right hand turns palm-up again and regrips the spread. Now, using just the left fingers, flip over the face-down packet and spread it to display the three black cards. (Notice how the handling in this phase validates that of the previous one.)

After a pause to let the separation register in the spectators' minds, slip the black cards over the reds, injogging the lowermost black card slightly, and place the face-up cards into left-hand dealing position. As you square them, convert the injog to a left fourth-finger break held under the three black cards.

"We can also do this face-up, but when the cards are face-up..." Here do a Herrmann-style pass, using Dr. Elliott's cover action, to effect a color change. (This sleight is explained in "Slow Fade to Red", pp. 218-219.) This brings the three red cards to the face of the packet as the right hand is waved over it. "...you can see the reds come to the top." Spread the packet to show all the red cards are above the blacks. Then square the packet and turn it face-down into left-hand dealing grip.

"We can do this a different way. I can put the cards at different places in the pack." With your right hand, pick up the face-down deck, which has been sitting untouched the entire time, grasping it by its ends from above. Dribble a few cards off the face of the deck and deal the top card of the packet onto these. Dribble a few more cards onto this card and stop. Deal the next card from the packet onto the pile. Dribble another group of cards from the face of the deck and deal the third card of the packet onto these. Release another batch onto the pile, this time making sure that at least half the deck now lies on the table. Deal the fourth card of the packet onto the pile. Continue to dribble cards from the deck, while inserting the remaining two cards of the packet at different spots in the upper half. This procedure disperses the three black cards in the bottom (black) half of the pack, and the three red cards in the top (red) half.

Carefully square the cards, leaving them on the table. "And even though *you* shuffled the cards, if we wait a moment..." Release the deck for a moment as you glance at your wrist watch and pause for a second. Then resume: "...all the reds rise to the top..." With one hand, neatly cut off slightly less than half the cards. When John does this he makes it look as if he is pulling away the cards with a sort of recoil. An impression is given of cards being pulled up through other cards.

Immediately turn the cut-off portion face-up and ribbon spread it to reveal nothing but red cards. "...and the black ones are left behind." Turn the remaining portion of the deck face-up and drop it squarely onto the face of the spread. Then ribbon spread these cards, showing them all to be black. Any red cards at the back of this packet will blend in with the other red cards, and everything looks as it should.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the sequence of actions, you will find that the entire routine moves swiftly from one surprise to the next, climaxing with the dramatic display of the segregated deck. It is truly an astonishing series of color separations that looks like genuine magic. ♡

CALLIGRAPHIC CASH

Effect: The performer borrows a dollar bill and has the lender sign it for later identification. He then folds the bill into a tight cylinder and heats it in the flame of a lighter. Suddenly the bill disappears in a flash of fire, and the ink cartridge from a ball-point pen appears in its place.

The performer looks suspiciously at the pen used by the spectator to sign the bill, which has since been lying on the table. He removes the cap from the pen, and inside, where the ink cartridge should be, he finds a rolled dollar bill. When it is removed and opened, it is found to be the borrowed bill, signed and slightly singed, yet still spendable after its miraculous flight. ♪

Method: The plot of finding a chosen card inside some unlikely object is centuries old; and performing such feats with a borrowed bill is almost as venerable. The idea of producing the card or bill from the pen with which it was signed creates surprise, and at the same time has a commendable logic. The earliest instance of a card being produced from a pen that I've been able to locate is Cyril Yettmah and Alex De Vega's "An 'Ink-red-u-lous' Trick" in Van Bern and De Vega's *Whirlwind of Wizardry* (1919, p. 61-65). The obvious variant on this plot, using a bill and a fountain pen, was contributed by Stewart Hanley to *Genii* magazine ("Capping the Bill", Vol. 1, No. 11, July 1937, p. 7). An updated version of the bill in pen, "O-pen Sez-a-me", appeared in the October 1984 issue of *Apocalypse* (Vol. 7, No. 10, pp. 977-978), under the by-line of the Thursday Night Group. Other treatments of the Bill in Pen effect have been published and marketed over the years, but the above references are sufficient to suggest the age of the plot.

Roughly fourteen years ago, while he was still in high school, John came up with the method about to be explained. One excellent — and, I believe, original — embellishment contained in his version is the production of the ink cartridge from the pen, which appears in place of the vanished bill. This touch modifies the plot, making it a transposition,

while it fortifies the logical foundation of the effect. In my judgment, John's method is superior in both handling and presentation to its predecessors. Be that as it may, it is an excellent piece of magic. Judge for yourself as you study the details.

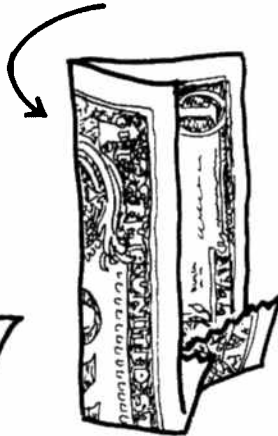
You will need the following items: a cigarette lighter, half of a flash bill, a real dollar bill, a short length of drinking straw or thin plastic tubing, a black ball-point pen with a metal cap that covers approximately half the length of the pen, and a duplicate pen. One of these pens is gimmicked as follows:

Remove the metal pen cap; then unscrew the two halves of the pen and remove the ink cartridge. Reassemble the empty pen case and, with a fine-toothed saw, neatly cut off that end of the pen from which the ball-point is meant to protrude, leaving only a short portion of this half, which remains screwed into the top section. The length of the sawed off portion will be dictated in part by the way the cap fits over the pen. You must leave enough length to assure that the cap can be securely seated on the pen while it covers the missing portion.

The piece of drinking straw or tubing should be about an inch and a half in length and of a circumference that slips easily inside the truncated pen case. If a straw of larger circumference is slit down its length, so that the cut edges can pass each other, it becomes adjustable, and can be adapted to the size of the pen. Paint the inside of the straw black to match the color of the pen, and cover the outside of the straw completely with a portion of the real dollar bill. Wind the bill around the straw as many times as is necessary to increase the circumference to a point where the straw will still easily slide up and down inside the pen case, but is not so loose that it will fall by gravity alone into the pen. One and a half winds is usually enough. You want the bill feke to bind just enough to keep it securely in position when extended from the open end of the pen (Figure 245). Clip that much of the bill off and glue it permanently to the straw, green side outward. Avoid using the ends of the bill, which bear its value. By concealing the value, you can use the feke with any bill that is offered you. Fit the bill feke into the pen, with most of its length projecting, and snap the metal cap over the feke.



figure 245

*figure 246**figure 247**figure 248**figure 249*

The metal cap from the second pen is not used during performance, but you may wish to keep it for capping the pen when transporting it. Lay the normal pen and the gimmicked pen side by side at the bottom of your left-side coat pocket, with the cap of the one pen and the writing point of the other turned forward.

Take the half flash bill and fold it into a cylinder as follows: Turn the half bill gray-side uppermost and fold a short length of the torn or cut edge up and over onto the bill (Figure 246). Next fold approximately one inch of the left side of the bill over to the right, as in Figure 247. Then, starting at the bottom, roll the bill up into a cylinder, green side outward, as shown in Figure 248. Now insert the point of the ink cartridge taken from the gimmicked pen into the center of the rolled flash bill, and spear the point through the bill near its midpoint (Figure 249). This impales the cylinder on the tip of the cartridge, ensuring that it does not unwind

or fall off. Place the prepared cartridge, bill-end downward, in your left trousers pocket, along with the cigarette lighter. (A flat model lighter is best, as the shape aids in the necessary maneuvers, as will be seen.) This completes the preparation.

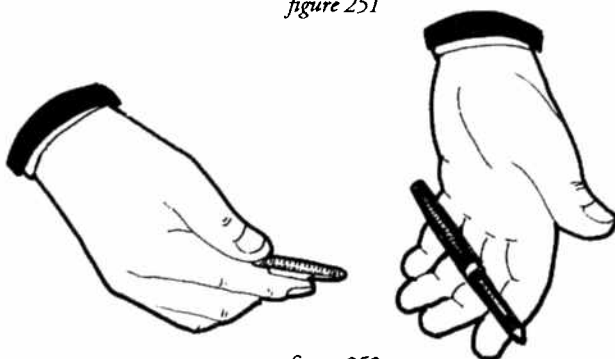
Begin the trick by asking for the loan of a bill. When one is proffered, reach into your left coat pocket for the pen. Actually grasp both pens, holding them together in an oblique position across the hand, so that the uncapped normal pen is hidden by the hand, and the metal cap on



figure 250

the gimmicked pen is visible at the fingertips (Figure 250). Bring your hands together in front of you, near waist level; and, with the right thumb and forefinger, grasp the metal cap on the gimmicked pen and pull it outward, mimicking the action of uncapping the pen. However, you actually draw the entire pen swiftly from the left hand, swiveling the body of the pen behind the right hand before it can be seen by the audience (Figure 251, performer's view). Immediately extend your left hand palm-up, offering the spectator the uncapped genuine pen (Figure 252). All this is done without calling attention to your actions. Instead, you ask the spectator if he will sign his bill, and you hand him the pen. Keep your right hand stationary. As it holds the metal cap it looks completely innocent, and the presence of the pen in the cap will not be suspected.

When the spectator has finished autographing the bill, reclaim the pen, taking it in your left hand, with the point nearest the fingertips and the body lying transversely across the hand, positioned for immediate concealment. Bring your hands together in front of you, turning the back of the left hand outward; and, as you ask the spectator to blow on his signature to dry the ink, pretend to cap the pen. In reality you reverse your previous actions, swiveling the gimmicked pen from behind the right hand to a position parallel with the ungimmicked pen in the left hand. At the same time move the right hand downward, as if snapping the cap onto the pen; then openly withdraw the gimmicked pen from the left hand and set it on the table. The left hand remains motionless, hiding the real pen from the audience. Again, these actions are performed with no attention paid to them. Uncapping and capping a pen are incidental tasks, so the

*figure 251**figure 252*

false actions should be performed as such. You never look at the hands as they work, misdirecting away from their actions at all times.

“Now I need a...” As you say this, move your hands toward their respective side coat pockets, with the left hand a bit in advance of the right. Start to place your hands in the pockets, as if to get something, and secretly drop the concealed pen into the left pocket. When John does this, his hands never fully enter his pockets; they merely tap them, the left hand making enough contact to drop the pen into the mouth of the pocket; then they move away. He also turns slightly to the left, further reducing the importance of the left hand’s action. Here you interrupt your search, pretending you have forgotten another preliminary. “Oh, before I do that I have to fold your bill up into a small square.”

Take the bill from the spectator and quickly fold it into eighths, green side outward, making it clear, without saying as much, that your hands are otherwise empty. When you have finished folding the bill, hold it at your right fingertips.

"There we are. This is the comedy portion of the show." With your left hand, reach into your left trousers pocket. Grasp the prepared cartridge and the lighter, and bring them from the pocket, hiding the cartridge in the hand, flash bill nearest the fingertips with the lighter resting over it (Figure 253).

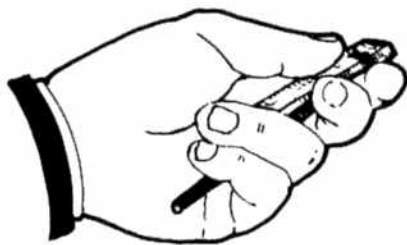
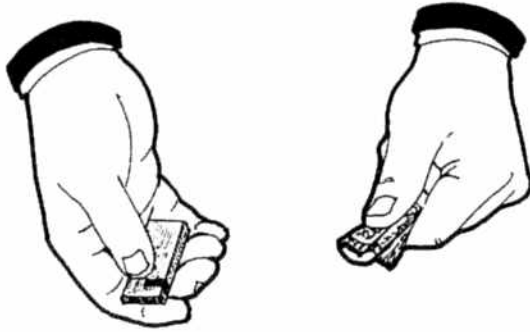
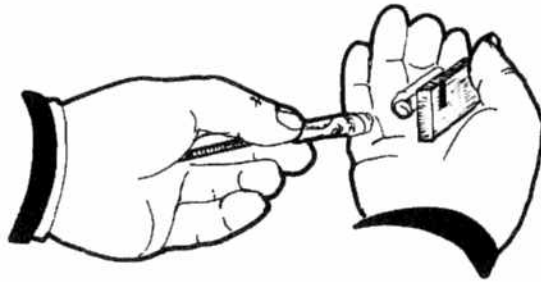


figure 253

"This is where I take your money and set it on fire." When you say this, look at the spectator, misdirecting from your hands as you exchange their contents. When the hands meet in front of you, lay the right hand's bill onto the side of the lighter. Then retain the folded bill under the left thumb as the right hand carries away the lighter. The borrowed bill should naturally settle directly over the flash bill on the end of the cartridge, and the hand can be tipped down a bit, letting the palm be seen empty. The thumb naturally covers the length of the cartridge, so that only the folded bill can be seen in the hand (Figure 254). However, do not make any sort of pointed display. With your right hand, set the lighter on the table.

"Normally it isn't funny to set money on fire, but when it's someone else's, it's hilarious. I'll just roll it up into a little tube here." Do this, wrapping the borrowed bill fairly tightly around the flash bill, with the single edges of the bill directed outward and lying at least a quarter of an inch past the outer end of the flash bill. Hold the rolled bill in view at the left fingertips and, with the right hand, pick up the lighter from the table.

"When it's packed this tight it really won't burn. I was just kidding. But when I wave the flame underneath it..." With your right hand, light the lighter and wave the flame under the rolled bill, concentrating it mainly on the single edges of the bill at the outer end. You want to catch one or more of these edges on fire for an instant — just long enough to singe the bill *slightly* and make it smoke. Do not look at the hands as you do this. Look at the audience as you talk to them. When you see the bill begin to catch fire, immediately extinguish the lighter and look down at the bill as you say, "Oops!" With the right fingertips and thumb, briskly stroke the rolled bill several times, moving the fingers gingerly outward, toward the burning end, to snuff out the tiny flame. Be careful, of course, not to burn yourself as you do this.

*figure 254**figure 255*

Look up at the audience as you laugh, mildly embarrassed, and say, “I’m sorry.” This draws the audience’s gaze up and away from your hands. When eye contact has been made, you do two things in quick succession: First, with your right thumb, roll the lighter up on edge, raising it off the fingers and holding it edgewise under the tip of the thumb. Then make another stroking action. However, in doing so, lower the lighter onto the rolled bill, catching the bill between the side of the lighter and the inner phalanges of the right fingers. Then secretly slide the rolled bill off the flash bill (Figure 255). The lighter completely covers the stolen bill. Use the right fingers and thumb to stroke the flash bill once or twice after making the steal. There should be no hesitation in the right hand’s actions, either before or after the substitution.

“It was actually not supposed to burn.” As you say this, continue to look at the spectator as you move your right hand forward a few inches and again light the lighter. The lighter partially screens the flash bill from the audience’s view, while the flame misdirects attention. Look down at the flame and move the flash bill forward into it. At the same time retract

your left fingers slightly from the bill, so that you do not burn them. When the bill ignites, shout, "Whoops!" or some other exclamation of surprise. Simultaneously turn your left hand palm-up while gripping the ink cartridge between the thumb and forefinger (Figure 256).

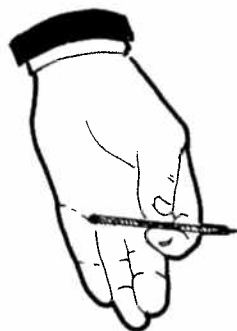


figure 256

"Oh, look at that." Stare at the cartridge while you lower your right hand to your coat pocket and drop the lighter into it. Retain the borrowed bill in finger palm. "It looks like the filler to a pen." Now look down at the gimmicked pen, which has been lying all this time in full sight on the table. "Oh, wait a minute." Transfer the cartridge to the right fingertips; then, with the left hand, pick up the pen and hold it up beside the cartridge, cap pointing upward. Stare at the pen and cartridge for a moment. "Humm, it's about the right size. Let's take a look."

Drop the cartridge into the right coat pocket. Then bring the right hand to the pen in your left hand and remove the cap, exposing the bill feke. Tip the top of the feke slightly toward you, to prevent anyone from seeing the black straw inside the cylinder. Stare at the feke as you drop the pen cap into your right coat pocket.

Now bring the right hand back to the pen and apparently remove the bill from it. In reality, as the hand moves in front of the feke, screening it momentarily from the audience's view, the right thumb, which rests behind the hand, contacts the top of the feke and pushes it downward completely into the pen. As this is done, the third and fourth fingers remain curled, holding the finger-palmed bill, while the first two fingers open (Figure 257). The instant the feke is out of sight, move your right hand forward, turning it palm-up. Simultaneously bring the right thumb down on the finger-palmed bill and roll it to the fingertips (Figure 258). Of course, there must be no



figure 257

*figure 258*

visible suggestion of your pushing the feke into the pen. The thumb should appear to grip the bill in the pen, remove it and roll it to the fingertips. While rolling it forward, press the bill open, flattening out the cylinder. Doing

so prevents the spectators from comparing the bill to the feke, which differ from each other in shape.

As the right hand turns palm-up to display the bill, also tip the top of the pen outward, letting its interior be seen. Since the colored straw matches the pen color, the pen will appear empty.

Casually drop the pen into your left coat pocket as you continue to work open the rolled bill in your right hand. Then use both hands to unfold the bill and display it, making it clear as you do so that they are empty of everything but the borrowed bill. "It's a little singed, but it is your bill. There's the signature, right there." Hand the bill to its owner for positive identification. The edges of the bill are indeed slightly singed, subtly validating the astonishing transposition. After the reaction to the effect has subsided, offer to exchange the singed bill for a fresh one, if the lender wishes. ☺

RUBBER DETECTIVE

Effect: A card is selected, noted and returned to the center of the pack. The performer encircles the deck with a rubber band, then pulls the band and lets it snap against the top of the pack. With that, the band instantly vanishes. When the performer spreads through the pack, he finds the rubber band near center, still encircling about half the cards. He snaps the band again, and it vanishes a second time.

On spreading through the remaining cards, he finds the band caught around just one. When this card is turned over it is found to be the selection. ♡

Method: This is John's solution to an effect originally posed as a problem by Karl Fulves. (Paul Harris has also tackled this challenge. His solution appears in a booklet titled *The Inner Circle*.) Aside from the deck, you will need a rubber band that fits snugly around the width of a single card without bowing it. Choose a fairly thick band of a color that contrasts well with the backs of the cards you are using. You want a band that stands out visibly when it is stretched around the deck. Carry this rubber band in your right coat pocket or somewhere convenient to the right hand.

Begin the trick by having a card selected and returned to the center of the deck. Then, through the most efficient means available to you, secretly control the card to the top of the pack. Preferably, the method of control should eliminate any open manipulation of the cards, such as shuffling or cutting. You want the audience to believe that the selection lies somewhere near the center of the pack. John usually has a card peeked in the deck, then brings it to the top with a side steal. A pass is another good alternative.

Hold the deck face-down in left-hand dealing position as your right hand procures the rubber band and briefly displays it. As attention is focused on the band, drop your left hand to a relaxed position near waist level and secretly push the top card a bit to the right. With your left fourth

*figure 259*

finger, push the card square again with the deck, forming a large break (approximately a quarter of an inch) beneath it. If you now relax the pressure of the left thenar against its side of the pack, the left inner corner of the top card will automatically pop up, forming a tilt break. Don't make this break too wide; a quarter of an inch is more than

enough. Once the break has been formed, you can tighten the thenar against the side of the pack again, to steady the raised end of the card.

Using only your right hand, maneuver the band around the right thumb and forefinger, and stretch it open. Then smoothly slip it over the inner end of the top card, while pretending to bind the full deck (Figure 259). Guard your right side as you do this, if spectators are positioned there, by tipping the right edge of the deck downward, or turning slightly to your right, to keep the tilt break concealed. As you move the band forward to the center of the card, let it slip off your fingers and snap around the selection, encircling it widthwise. The left thumb and fingers, positioned naturally at the sides of the pack, hide the fact that the rubber band passes around only the top card.

The band is now made to vanish through the use of a color-change pass. The color-change action is a combination of those used in "Upside-down" and "Slow Fade to Red". Jack Miller's color-change pass is also a close relative. First bring the right hand over the pack and grasp it, second finger at the outer right corner, thumb at the inner right corner, and forefinger curled onto the top card. Leave as much of the back of the pack exposed to the audience as is possible. At the same time, turn to your left and hold both hands out to the left, turning the deck upright, its right side directed toward the floor. This presents the back of the pack broadside to the audience.

Behind the screen of the right hand, begin the action of a Herrmann-style pass, using the left fingers to pivot the bottom half of the pack to a

horizontal position, even with the lower edge of the upper half. Then move the bottom portion forward until its outer side contacts the right palm, and the inner side comes even with the vertical portion. At this point the lowered half lies securely on the shelf of the left fingers, forming a right angle with the upper half. (For fuller details on this cocking action, see pp. 218-219.) Relinquish the right hand's grip on the



figure 260

the vertical packet, but maintain the hand's position in front of the deck, keeping as much of that packet in view as is possible.

"Watch the rubber band," you say, as you pinch it between your right thumb and forefinger, pull it outward a short distance (Figure 260) and let it snap back. Snap the band a second time. Then, on the third snap, suddenly tighten the left fingers, hinging the horizontal packet sharply upward and flat against the vertical packet. Figure 261 is a stop action pose, seen from the performer's vantage. Figure 262 shows the audience's view. This rapid closing of the bottom packet against the top one causes the rubber band to disappear, while the right hand's action of snapping the band helps to conceal the motion of the packet.

Lower the deck to dealing position and slowly spread through the cards until you reach the rubber-banded card near center. "The rubber band," you explain, "has penetrated through all these cards." Drop the loose top cards onto the table, while holding the lower half of the deck, with the banded card on top, in left-hand dealing position.

Turn to your left again, preparing for another color-change pass.

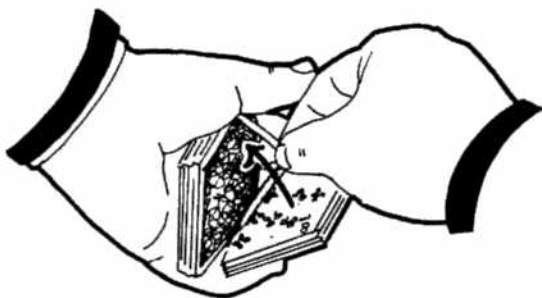


figure 261

*figure 262*

This time, lower about half the remaining cards into horizontal position, cocked in readiness for the pass. Snap the rubber band once or twice, completing the pass on the last snap. The band disappears a second time. Lower the deck to dealing position and spread the cards between your hands, revealing the banded card in the center of the spread. "This time the rubber band has penetrated every card but one. That usually means something. What was your card?"

When the selection is named, draw the banded card from the packet and turn it up, showing it to be the chosen card. ♣

EVERYWHERE, NOWHERE AND ON YOUR FACE

Effect: A card is selected, noted and lost in the deck. The performer, using only one hand, artfully extracts a card from the center of the pack — but it is not the selection. He tosses it to the table and tries again; but the second attempt proves no more successful than the first. This wrong card is placed with the previous error on the table.

The performer turns the deck face-up and points to the card on the face; but this isn't the right card either. It is tossed down with the other two. In desperation, he spreads through the face-up deck. "Do any of these look familiar?" However, he closes the spread and turns the deck face-down again.

He then picks up the three cards from the table. "Well, actually, all these look a little bit like your card. They're all the same shape, and they've all got red backs. To me this one looks like an eight of hearts." When this card is named, the audience realizes that the performer isn't in as much trouble as he has pretended, for the chosen card is the eight of hearts. "So does this one. In fact, all three cards look like the eight of hearts — but I've got a great imagination."

He now squares the three indifferent cards and turns them face-down. When he next displays their faces, each of the three is seen to have become an eight of hearts. He throws the three cards face-down on the table and mixes them around. The spectator who made the selection is asked to guess which of the three is his. This seems a sure thing, as all the cards have just been seen to be his. Yet when the three are turned up, they are found to have reverted to their original identities — and when the audience looks up, they see the selection sticking to the performer's forehead. ♡

Method: Again we find John adroitly melding two classic effects of magic into a cohesive routine that exploits the strengths of both in a mutually beneficial manner. He has pared the plot of Hofzinser's Everywhere and Nowhere down to the basics and neatly incorporated

Card on Forehead to provide a strong surprise at the finish. The presentation contains both comedy and good magic. In addition, no gaffed cards or setups are required; the routine is completely impromptu. John considers it one of the most commercial card tricks in his repertoire.

This is performed while standing behind a table. Begin by having a card freely selected, noted and returned to the pack. Through any efficient means, secretly control the selection to the top. Then, holding the deck face-down in left-hand dealing position, strike a pose that suggests to the audience the promise of an impending miracle. Focus all attention on the left hand. Then, with the tip of your left thumb, contact the outer left corner of the deck and raise roughly half the cards at the left side. Without hesitation, slip the thumb into the gap created between the two portions (Figure 263), contact the face of the tilted top half, and slide the card at



figure 263



figure 264



figure 265

the face to the left and out of the pack (Figure 264). As the card leaves the center of the deck, the top portion will fall flat onto the bottom block, and this automatically flips the extracted card to a vertical position. Now, with your thumb, tip the upright card over and face-up onto the deck (Figure 265). This flourish is one popularized by John Scarne and Edward Marlo, who used it as a pretty way to produce a card from the pack (ref. *Let's See the Pack*, pp. 7-8). Here, however, the gesture is an empty one, as the card delivered is not the expected selection.

"Your card!" The spectator denies this. Look surprised. "Oh." Toss the card face-up onto the table. "Give me a second chance." Repeat the one-handed flourish, producing another card from the middle. This too of course proves to be a failure. Toss the second card onto the table with the first.

Turn the deck face-up in your left hand and deal the card at the face onto the table. "The jack of clubs?" Here you name the card dealt. Almost immediately spread the deck between your hands. "Do any of these look familiar?" As you go through this series of failures, accelerate the pace and delivery so that, by the time you have

dealt the third card to the table, the audience begins to suspect that your trouble may be a pretence. This possibility will be confirmed in the next moment. As you spread quickly and haphazardly through the cards, sight the card at the back. This is the selection. Immediately close the spread and turn the deck face-down in your left hand.

With your right hand, gather the three tabled cards in a face-up fan. As attention is focused on this action, push the top card of the deck slightly to the right and form a left fourth-finger break beneath it as you push it square again.

“Well, actually, all these look a little bit like your card. They’re all the same shape, and they’ve all got red backs.” Hold the right hand’s fan before the deck and, with your left forefinger, indicate the back of the cards as you mention them. Then turn the face of the fan toward the audience and tap one of the cards. “To me this one looks like an eight of hearts.” Here you name the selection you just glimpsed. This should bring a laugh.

“So does this one. In fact, all three cards look like the eight of hearts — but I’ve got a great imagination.” Lay the fanned cards face-down on the deck, partially closing the fan and jogging it as much as an inch forward. Immediately bring your right hand palm-down over the pack and pick up the outjogged cards by their ends, squaring them at the same time. In this action, also bring the tip of the right thumb into contact with the inner end of the card above the break, and secretly push this card square with the outjogged cards, adding it to the packet. As the right hand carries away the packet, set the deck aside. Note how the outjogging of the three cards on the deck makes such an addition appear impossible. This embellishment to a venerable add-on technique is well worth adopting.

“Okay, I give up. What was your card? It was the eight of hearts! Then I was right. If you look closely, this card does look like the eight of hearts; and this one; and this one.” As you say this you perform Bro. John Hamman’s flushtration count, showing three eight of hearts. For those unfamiliar with this ruse, it is quickly explained:

Briefly turn the right hand palm-up, exposing the selection on the face of the packet. Turn the right hand palm-down again, bringing the packet face-down over the palm-up left hand. With the left thumb, smoothly draw the top card from the packet and into left-hand dealing position. Rotate the right hand palm-up, again showing the selection at the face of the packet; then turn it palm-down. Draw the top card of the packet onto the card in the left hand. Turn the right hand up and down once more, showing the selection a third time. Then slip this card — actually

a double — under the two in the left hand. If this sequence is performed at a moderate pace and a steady rhythm, the spectators will believe they see three duplicates of the chosen card.

As the audience is responding to the surprise and humor created by this appearance of multiple selections, bottom palm the selection from the packet. For a description of the bottom palm John uses, see pages 96-97. As you complete the bottom palm, move the palm-down right hand forward with the packet and spread the three face-down cards into a row on the table. With the same hand, push the three cards around, mixing them, as you ask the person who chose the card, "Which one do you think is the *reale*ight of hearts." Here, of course, you name the selection. While full attention is focused on mixing the cards and having one chosen, drop your left hand, with the selection palmed, to a relaxed position near or on your left thigh.

Have the spectator turn up one card. When he does so, it is seen to be one of the previous indifferent cards. While all attention is fixed on his selection of a card, bring your right hand up to your mouth and secretly moisten the tips of your first two fingers. Magical tradition has it that one always coughs at this point, to excuse bringing the hand to the mouth. However, you can just as well clasp your chin momentarily, as you await the spectator's choice, or scratch your nose. Then, as the card is turned up, raise your right hand and scratch your forehead, applying the saliva from your fingertip there. These actions, outwardly nonchalant and common, draw no attention to themselves, and are particularly unnoticeable given the strong misdirection under which they are performed.

Drop your right hand and gesture at the two remaining face-down cards. "I'll give you two out of three. Pick another one." As the spectator makes his second choice, attention will be even more firmly fixed on the tabled cards. When you see the spectator reach out to turn up another card, raise your left hand to your forehead and press the back of the palmed card to the damp spot, sticking it there.

Just as the spectator is bringing the face of the second card into view, lower your left hand and grasp the last face-down card of the three. "This must be it then." Turn it over, revealing the third indifferent card. It is important that your left hand is in the frame of focus on the table as the spectator turns up the second card, and that this hand maintains the focus by immediately turning up the third card on the table. It is in this way that everyone's gaze is captured and kept from rising to your face.

Continue to retain the audience's attention on your hands by gathering the three cards into a fan as you say, "I guess we'll never find it." Then raise the fan of cards to chest level, drawing the spectators' gaze upward. It is now, and only now, that everyone will see the selection sticking to your forehead. At that moment you can expect a wonderful reaction.

Commonly, when the Card on Forehead is performed, it is done more as a gag, in which only the helper is completely taken in. The majority of the audience sees the card on the performer's forehead long before the person who is helping him; they may even see him stick it in place. But in the routine just taught, the misdirection is so well calculated, the discovery of the card on your forehead comes as a genuine surprise to everyone in the room. In John's hands it has bamboozled some of the top cardmen in the world, along with countless laymen. ♣♥

THE THIRTEENTH VICTIM

Effect: “This is a very dangerous trick. Twelve people have died doing it.” With this ominous introduction, the performer displays three gun cartridges on a saucer. “We need a gun.” However, finding he hasn’t one, the performer loads the three cartridges into his empty fist.

“Now I need a volunteer to catch the bullets as they fly through the air.” From nowhere a small voice is heard to say, “I’ll do it.” When the performer raises his unoccupied hand, it is now seen to have two paper eyes. His moving thumb, forming a mouth, completes the face of this primitive hand-puppet — a dubious, though willing volunteer for bullet-catching duty.

With hands widely separated, the performer points the index finger of his loaded fist, gun-fashion, at the finger-faced puppet and shoots three times. He opens his pistol hand to show the cartridges have vanished. The puppet then spits out the cartridges one by one onto the saucer.

The performer now convinces his handy friend to swallow one of the cartridges. Reluctantly the puppet agrees, and the cartridge vanishes. But the puppet suddenly suffers a coughing fit, during which the swallowed cartridge fires with a loud bang. The performer’s head recoils with the report, and the bullet appears between his teeth. ☺

Method: The fun and entertainment that John gets from this comical presentation of the old Chinese Marbles Trick (ref. Sach’s *Sleight-of-Hand*, pp. 66-68) are far greater than the bald description above can convey. The presentational concept was inspired by Dr. Sawa’s “Billy Goat Trick” (which has not yet appeared in an English text). John’s full patter will be given in combination with the handling details.

The cartridges used are dummies: bullets in their cases, but without powder and primer charge. John actually has the entire primer removed, as the small hole this leaves in the case head is inconspicuous, and the cartridges are never given for examination. Under no circumstances should you carry around or work with live cartridges. The consequences of an

accident could be tragic, if not fatal. Go to a sporting goods shop, choose a suitable caliber cartridge (John uses nine-millimeter Luger cartridges), and have the professionals there prepare three dummy bullets for you. Don't try to dismantle live cartridges yourself. While you are there, also purchase a duplicate bullet without a case.

Also required is a white, ceramic saucer (ceramic is necessary for both weight and sound) and a "bango shooter". This device (also called a "bingo shooter") is a cap-firing mechanism that is sold in a variety of practical joke items — exploding pens, exploding books of matches — and can sometimes be found packaged separately. It has a spring arm that, when released, comes down on a cap, causing it to fire. If the bango shooter is mounted in some item, remove it. Securely attach it to the underside of the saucer, parallel to the near rim, with the cap-bearing end of the gimmick turned to your left (Figure 266). The bango shooter must lie in such a position that, when the saucer rests on a table, the weight will keep the cocked spring arm in place. In preparation for performance, load the bango shooter with a cap, cock the arm and set the saucer on your table, with the gimmick turned toward you.

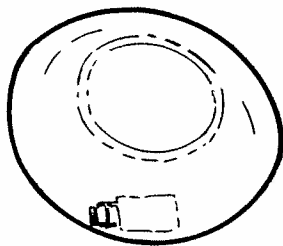


figure 266

Two last required items are a plastic squeeze-purse and a pair of eyes for the hand puppet. The coin purse is of the common sort, oval in shape, that opens when you press its ends toward one another. Place the three cartridges inside the purse. The eyes are drawn on two self-adhesive (pressure-sensitive), round, white labels. Stick the labels together by overlapping one slightly over the other. Attach these eyes lightly to the back of the purse, with most of the labels projecting beyond one end (Figure 267). Lay the purse slit-side upward on the saucer, with the eyes turned to your left.

Finally, secret the bullet in your mouth before you start to perform. If you lodge it between the cheek and the lower gum (as is done with the threaded needles from mouth trick), it should not interfere with your speaking. John usually does



figure 267

one or two tricks with the bullet in his mouth, before performing this effect. The presence of the bullet is not suspected, and he is prepared for its production long in advance, without his hand ever going near his mouth. The trick is given the following introduction:

"This is a very dangerous trick. Twelve people have died doing it." This declaration usually elicits some doubting smiles or snickers, as John delivers it with his tongue gently in his cheek. "Oh, you think I'm kidding. Well, you'll sing a different tune when you see that this trick uses three..." Here you pick up the purse and squeeze it open, letting the three cartridges inside fall into your opposite hand. "...genuine bullets." During these actions you secretly stick the eyes into place on your right hand. Use your palm-down right hand to pick up the purse from the saucer, gripping it by the sides. The white backs of the eyes-stickers are very nearly invisible while lying on the white saucer, and no one is looking for anything.

Lay the purse into the palm-up left hand and turn that hand palm-down, consequently turning the purse end over end and bringing the eyes, sticky-side down, to your right. The right hand remains near the left and, with your left thumb, you press the eyes to the side of the right forefinger, near the inmost knuckle (Figure 268), simultaneously peeling them from the purse. With this simple action the eyes are transferred quickly and secretly to the right hand, perfectly situated for making the hand puppet.



figure 268

The right hand is automatically positioned to reclaim the purse. Therefore, in a smooth continuation of action, transfer the purse back to the right hand, gripping it this time by the ends. Then squeeze it open and let the three cartridges drop into the

left hand, which immediately spills them onto the saucer. You must look at the hands when you begin to stick the eyes in place; but as soon as you have checked the positioning, look up at the audience as you talk to them. Look down again only when you spill the cartridges onto the saucer. Then, while keeping the right hand turned to conceal the eyes, casually transfer the purse to your left hand and set it to one side on the table.

"We need a gun." Look around briefly, as if searching for one. In doing so, turn partially to your left and hold out your left hand. Let your gaze settle on the open hand as you say, "This will be the gun..." Form the left hand into a fist with the forefinger extended, and turn the top of the fist toward the audience. "...and this — *click*.." Make a clicking sound with your tongue as you shake the hand and curl in the forefinger, as if snapping open the cylinder of a gun. "...is the chamber of the gun. I'll load the bullets into the gun.

"Here's the first bullet. It goes into the chamber." With your right hand, pick up a cartridge from the saucer and insert it, point first, into the opening of the left fist. If you keep the right hand palm-down during this, the paper eyes on the side of the hand cannot be seen by the audience.

With your right forefinger, push the cartridge into the fist, until the top can be gripped in the fork of the thumb. Then shift the left thumb over the opening of the fist, "closing the chamber", and hiding the bullet from view. You are now in position for the pop-up move. "That's bullet number one."

With your right hand, pick up another cartridge from the saucer. As the right hand moves toward the left fist, let this cartridge drop into finger palm. Pretend to hold it at the fingertips and touch them to the top of the left fist. At the same time, behind the screen of the right hand, turn the fist thumb-side up and, with the tip of your left forefinger, contact the point of the first cartridge (Figure 269). Push upward until the cartridge lies on top of the fist, then move the right hand away, letting the audience see the substituted cartridge. "That's bullet number two." Open the fist slightly and let the cartridge sink inside, holding it in readiness for another pop-up move.

With your right hand, pick up the remaining cartridge from the saucer and finger-palm it beside the second cartridge in your right hand as you execute the pop-up move again. "And bullet number three."

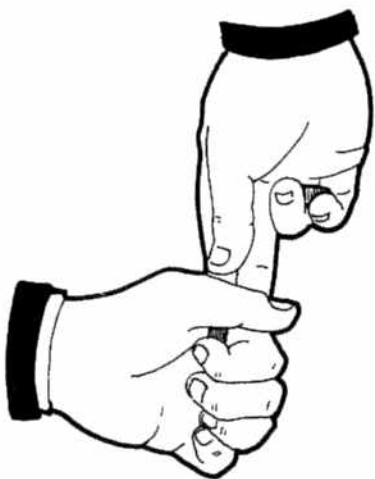


figure 269

Let the cartridge be seen atop the fist; then open the fist slightly and let the cartridge sink down into the curled second, third and fourth fingers. Now click your tongue as you shake the left hand and extend the left forefinger and thumb, pretending to snap shut the cylinder of the gun. If the pop-up moves have been done convincingly, everyone should believe that all three cartridges are in the left hand. In reality there is only one.

"Now I need a volunteer to catch the bullets as they fly through the air." Make only the briefest of pauses here as you look around the room. Then, in your best ventriloquial falsetto, say, "*I'll do it.*" Look around you in mock surprise. "Who said that? Who said that? Oh!" As you do this, turn to your right and extend your right hand, curling the fingers loosely inward to form a fist puppet. During this motion, be sure to keep the hands well separated. You do not want to create any suspicion of having secretly transferred the cartridges to the right hand.

Direct your gaze toward the right hand, focusing attention on it. The paper eyes are seen by the spectators for the first time. The unexpected appearance of the puppet, and the silliness of the situation, should bring a laugh from the audience. As you assume this position, bring the left hand directly over the saucer on the table, roughly eight to ten inches above it.

Resuming your still-lipped falsetto, and moving your right thumb as the puppet's mouth, say, "*Hi, how you doin'? Yeh, I'll do it. Okay? Ready — aim — fire! Pow!*" Synchronized with this, point the left forefinger toward the right hand (Figure 270) and jerk the left hand slightly, as if

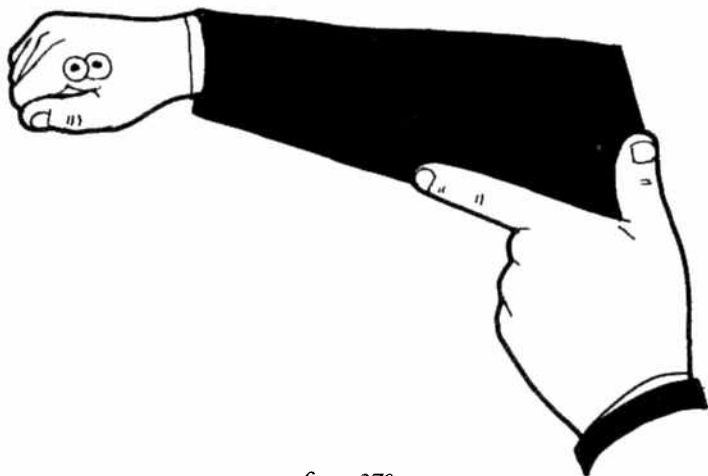


figure 270

shooting a gun; then jerk the right hand in mock recoil, as if catching the bullet. Now, with the right fingers, work one of the finger-palmed cartridges into view in the mouth of the puppet (Figure 271). Do not work it too far forward, as in a moment you must quickly retract it into the fist again.



figure 271

Briskly move the right hand to your left and over the saucer, secretly letting the produced cartridge sink back into the fist and out of sight. The larger movement of the hand conceals this small adjustment. Simultaneously turn the fist thumb downward. You now execute a Han Ping Chien substitution: as you pretend to drop the cartridge from the mouth of the puppet, you actually release the cartridge from the left fingers, letting it drop straight down onto the saucer. The hands should not appear to come near each other as this is done. Timing of the hands' actions is, of course, critical to the success of this sleight, but it is also performed on an offbeat, while the spectators are laughing and reacting to the stunt of the puppet catching the cartridge in its mouth. Consequently, their attention is momentarily relaxed.

Immediately after dropping the cartridge, turn the top of the right fist outward again, bringing the face of the puppet once more into view, and swing the hand out to your right. Now make the puppet repeat, "*Ready — aim — fire!*" For the second time, make the sound and motions of firing a gun. Work the same cartridge previously produced into view in the puppet's mouth, and this time let it drop legitimately onto the saucer, while simulating the actions used during the production of the first cartridge. This time, however, keep the hands well separated.

Swing the right fist again to your right. "*Ready — aim — fire! Pow!*" Mimic the firing of the gun a third time, and produce the third cartridge in the mouth of the puppet. Let it drop from the puppet's mouth and onto the saucer with the others. "*Are they gone?*" In response to the puppet's mildly skeptical question you slowly open your left hand and display it front and back. "Yup, they're all gone."

"Now that you've done that, I want you to eat one of the bullets."

"*What, are you nuts!*"

"Come on, just one."

"*Well, all right,*" says the puppet, with some reluctance. As this exchange takes place, with your left hand, pick up the saucer at its near

side, catching the cocked arm of the bango shooter under the tip of the fourth finger and holding it back. The body of the gimmick should lie to the right of the fingers, not under them.

You now perform a vanish we believe to be Dr. Sawa's, originally done with dice: Bring your right hand to the saucer and pretend to pick up one of the cartridges. In reality the right fingers sweep the cartridge inward, in the act of picking it up, and bring it to the edge of the saucer. Instead of grasping the cartridge at the fingertips, you slide it over the edge of the saucer and let it drop into the left hand (Figure 272), where it rolls into the slightly curled fingers and out of sight, under the saucer.

Without hesitation, the right hand pretends to grasp the cartridge and remove it from the saucer. Close the hand into a fist, again forming the face of the puppet, and move the thumb up and down as you make chewing sounds, followed by a *gulp*.

"Is it gone?" you ask.

"Yeh."

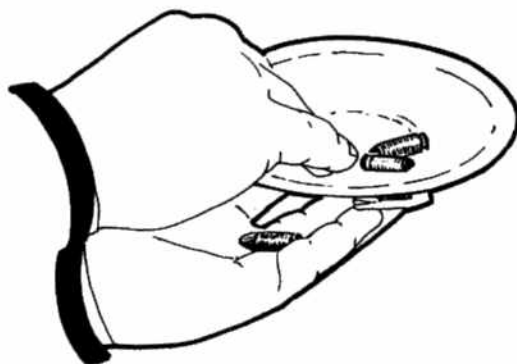


figure 272

"Open up." Move your right thumb downward, opening the puppet's mouth. "Wider." Move the right thumb farther downward. "Wider." Here, open the right hand completely, and show it front and back. "Oh, it is gone!"

Close the right hand into a fist again, forming the puppet face. Then twitch the fist as you make a coughing sound. "What's the matter?" Make the puppet cough again.

"*It's caught in my throat.*" Another cough.

"Can you get it out?"

"*I think so.*" While looking up at you, its mouth in a direct line to yours, the puppet coughs twice more, at the end of which there is a loud *bang!* This, of course, is made by the bango shooter, which you fire by releasing the left fourth finger's tension on the spring arm. Jerk your head back, as if something has hit you, and quickly work to your lips the bullet you have

secreted all this time in your mouth. "Ooof!" Display the slug, caught between your teeth; then let it drop onto the saucer to finish.

As the audience is laughing and reacting to this surprise, with your right hand grasp the saucer and spill the cartridges and bullet into the left hand, adding the palmed cartridge to the others. Place the lot into the squeeze purse and put everything away.

This novel presentation can be very funny and at the same time quite surprising. One needn't have the lip control of Ron Lucas to make this a success. Actually, poor ventriloquial technique can add to the humor of the situation. If you get into the mood of the piece, you can reap considerable fun from it. When John performs it, the result is sheer entertainment.

