The Magical Minutes

RING 92

VANCOUVER MAGIC CIRCLE

the Charles Howard Ring

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NEWSLETTER
Roy J Hopwood

TLR SCRIBE(S)
Scott Barker
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PHOTOGRAPHY
Henry Tom
Roy J Hopwood
Graham Kita
Vincent Lee



Roy's Ramblings

Hi fellow VMC Members,

Microsoft Publisher is no longer available, so I have had to move to a new publishing program, namely **Affinity Publisher by Canva Version 3.3.3**. I am struggling to get my head around it. The learning curve is much steeper than MS Publisher ever was.

As a result, this will be a much shorter edition and not as polished as normal. Please bear with me while I learn the ropes.

It is very pleasing to see the response and support that members have shown for **Shawn Farquhar's "6 and Ten" initiative**. In fact, the response has been so good that there is now a waiting list.

Also great to see is the growth of our **Coffee and Magic Jams**. We now have three locations:

- Steveston
- Cloverdale
- Marpole

Thank you to **Charles Gauthier** for coordinating the Coffee and Magic Jams. They continue to be a great way for members to get together over a coffee, talk magic, and enjoy each other's company.

I am also looking forward to our **Christmas Function**, which is being held at the **Jade Dynasty Restaurant** in Vancouver on **Wednesday, November 25, 2026**.

A huge shout-out to the team who are working frantically to repair and restore the **William Shelly Trophy**. Their work is particularly important because the trophy will once again be awarded to the winner of our annual **Stage Competition**, which will be held during the Christmas dinner.

The other reason I am looking forward to the evening is that we will have some very special guests joining us for dinner and to watch the competition.

These guests are **Mary Jane Anthony**, and her husband **Bob Anthony.** Unfortunately their daughter **Kate** is unable to attend.

What makes this particularly special is that Mary Jane and Kate are direct descendants of **William Curtis Shelly**, one of the founders of the Vancouver Magic Circle and the donor of the William Shelly Trophy.

It is not every day that we get the opportunity to welcome descendants of one of our founders to a VMC event. I know I am looking forward to meeting them again, and seeing the William Shelly Trophy presented in their presence will make the evening that little bit more special.

Talk again soon,

Roy

VMC #92 Ring Report

Thursday, October 22, 2026

Our VMC Halloween meeting began at 7:00 p.m. with a Teach-a-Trick session by Scott Barker. He presented and taught the Whispering Jokers card trick as seen on Penn & Teller's Fool Us, which incidentally did fool the magical duo. At the same time, Stray Vo demonstrated several of his favorite card tricks.

At 7:30 p.m., VMC President Roy Hopwood made a few announcements about upcoming club events. He reminded members about our annual Christmas Dinner and Stage Competition, to be held at the same venue as last year, the Jade Dynasty Restaurant, on Wednesday, November 25, at 6:30 p.m. We will also be welcoming special guests Mary Jane Anthony, her husband Bob, and their daughter Kate. Mary Jane is the granddaughter of William Shelly, one of the Vancouver Magic Circle's founding members in 1942.

Roy also mentioned the upcoming 6 × 10 Magic Session at Past International President Shawn Farquhar's Hidden Wonders Theatre. This will take place on Monday, November 2, at 7:00 p.m., with doors opening at 6:30 p.m. To obtain a performance slot, members must attend the current session and request a spot for the following month. Please be sure to contact Shawn if you plan to attend so that a seat can be reserved for you.

Once Roy finished his remarks, he invited Scott Barker forward to host the Halloween Competition and review the contest rules. Competitors, in order of appearance, were Charles Gauthier, Danny Stetski, and Vincent Lee. The winner this year was Vincent Lee. Congratulations, Vincent!

The Tip Top and Tootsie Trophy was not awarded as the rules required all competitors to be members in good standing, and unfortunately some were not.

During the competition intervals, Scott hosted a fun trivia game for audience members, complete with game-show buzzers.

Just before the break, Roy gave five volunteers a gimmicked deck of cards and the 15-minute intermission to develop a trick. The participants were Yoosik Oum, Stray Vo, Axel Luna, Gabe Gabini, and Genpei Cai. Following the break, each participant performed the effect they had created. Well done, gentlemen!

It was now time for the Costume Contest. Entering this year's competition were Genpei Cai, Charles Gauthier, Michael Levy, Ken Cowie, Danny Stetski, and Scott Barker. This year's winner was Genpei Cai. Excellent costume, Genpei, and enjoy the $25 Tim Hortons gift card!

The evening's activities concluded at approximately 9:30 p.m., leaving more time for socializing.

Special thanks go to First Vice-President Charles Gauthier for opening the hall, purchasing the coffee and donuts, and helping with setup. Also assisting with setup were Michael Levy, Ken Cowie, and Scott Barker. Thanks as well to everyone who helped put everything away at the end of the evening.

A special thank you to Ken Cowie for taking photographs throughout the evening and for giving me a ride home.

We had 22 members and 2 guests in attendance.

Scott Barker

Six members of the VMC on Monday October 5, 2026 attended Hidden Wonders for the first session of 6 and Ten. The six were Donavan Wert; Rob Teszka; Yoosik Oum;Scott Barker; Charles Gauthier and Ken Cowie.















Best Wishes to Marianne

Many members will be aware that **Marianne Dumay** recently experienced a serious health issue and required hospitalization. We are pleased to report that she is now recuperating at home and making progress. The members of the Vancouver Magic Circle extend our warmest wishes for a full and speedy recovery, and we look forward to seeing Marianne back with us when she is ready.

From One Coffee Table to Three Magic Jams

What began with two Vancouver Magic Circle members meeting for coffee and sharing a little magic at Waves Coffee House in Steveston has grown into a valued part of our club culture.

The first sessions brought together Roy Hopwood and Michael Nemeth, and later Roy Hopwood and Charles Gauthier. What started as informal gatherings to exchange ideas, practise effects, and enjoy each other's company at Waves Coffee House in Steveston gradually attracted more participants and sparked new locations.

Today, Coffee and Magic Jam Sessions are held regularly in:

- Steveston
- Cloverdale
- Marpole

These relaxed gatherings provide a welcoming environment where magicians of all experience levels can share ideas, test new effects, seek advice, and enjoy the fellowship that makes our art so rewarding.

A special thank you goes to Charles Gauthier for his enthusiasm and dedication in organizing and coordinating these sessions. Through his efforts, the spirit of learning, sharing, and friendship continues to thrive, one coffee table at a time.

Coffee & Magic Jam

Cloverdale

Photos courtesy of Ken Cowie

October saw a Coffee & Magic Jam in Cloverdale and shows that Life after retirement includes More Magic time

At the Jam were **Scott Barker, Charles Gauthier**, and **Roy J Hopwood**

Along with having a fun time learning & practicing Magic, we also discussed ideas towards building a stronger & more inviting VMC Club.











Coffee & Magic Jam

Marpole

Photos courtesy of Charles Gauthier

Marpole is the third location for Coffee & Magic Jam. This location was chosen and organised by Charles Gauthier.

Some of the people attending these sessions include:

Charles Gauthier, Michael Levy, Sam Bennison. Rosalind Chan, Stephen Kaplan, Jonathon Santiago, Mark Sriver, Elijah Zysman.

Below are several photos from covering a couple of sessions.



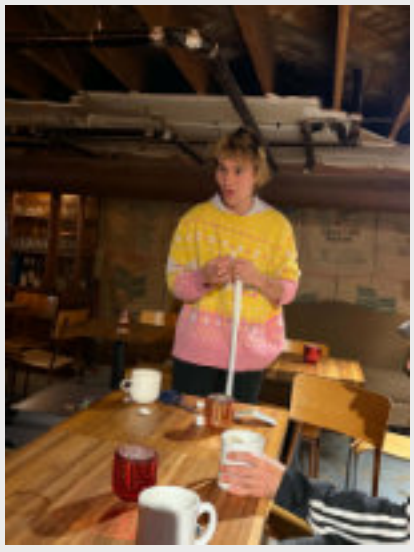
Coffee







Magic



I Recall...

When a Trick Becomes Yours

By Roy J Hopwood

No. 81 November 2026

How borrowed ideas, hard-earned experience, and years of performance transform a trick into something uniquely your own.

From time to time a younger magician will ask me, “How do I make a magic trick my own?”

It is a simple question, but the answer took me many years to understand.

When most of us begin in magic, we all do exactly the same thing. We buy a trick, read the instructions, learn the moves, and perform it exactly as the inventor described. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. In fact, it is probably the best way to learn. Before you can alter a routine, you need to understand why it works in the first place.

The problem is that some magicians never progress beyond that stage.

Over the years I have seen countless performers present an effect exactly as it appeared in the instructions. The same props. The same script. The same jokes. The same sequence. There may be nothing technically wrong with the performance, but there is also very little of the performer in it.

Audiences do not remember tricks nearly as much as magicians imagine. What they remember are personalities, stories, humour, and those impossible moments that stay with them long after the performance is over. Most of all, they remember the performer.

Looking back over more than sixty years in magic, I realise that very few of my favourite routines began as entirely original ideas. Almost all of them started with something I bought, read, learned, or borrowed. The difference is that they did not stay that way.

Take *Drunkology* for example. The trick originated as Barry Govan's *The Tipsy Ten*, but rather than simply present it as supplied, I wrapped an entirely different story around it. The routine became a tale involving a breathalyser test, a police officer, and a rather confused driver. The cards became characters in the story rather than mere pieces of cardboard. I have been performing that version for more than forty-five years. The effect remains essentially the same, but the presentation became mine.

The same thing happened with *Watch the Birdie*. In the mid-1970s I became fascinated with the Ascanio Spread and was inspired by Australian card magician Barry Govan. I also incorporated a move from Walt Lees. Yet the finished routine was not a demonstration of those techniques. It became a four-phase game in which spectators continually fail to locate the “birdie.” The trick acquired its own identity, its own script, and even its own props.

Then there is *Oops! My Mistake*, perhaps one of the best examples of magical evolution. That routine is an amalgamation of ideas drawn from several different sources, including Rovi, Harry Lorayne, Frank Thompson, and Martin Gardner. Rather than copy any one routine, I blended elements from several and continued refining the result over decades. The experience taught me that a routine is never truly finished. It merely reaches a point where it works well enough for an audience while continuing to evolve in the performer's mind.

Another favourite example is *Easy or Hard*. This one is particularly interesting because I cannot point to a single source and say, "That is where it came from." I know I was influenced by ideas from Dai Vernon, Harry Lorayne, and Al Koran, but what eventually emerged was something quite different.

The effect itself is deceptively simple. A spectator shuffles the deck, selects a card, loses it in the pack, and after only a handful of questions I reveal the chosen card. The method depends on estimating a cut, remembering a key card, reading the available information, and making logical deductions. More importantly, it depends on what I call "Jazz Magic." There is an element of uncertainty. There is risk. Sometimes success depends as much upon experience and judgement as it does upon technique.

What makes that routine mine is not the mechanics alone. It is the way I think about the problem. Another magician might perform the same effect as a demonstration of card skill. I perform it as a conversation with the audience. The method is fluid rather than fixed. After years of performing it, I realised I was no longer following somebody else's instructions. I was following my own reasoning. That, perhaps, is one of the most personal forms of originality a magician can develop.

My favourite example, however, is the Jerry Andrus Linking Pins routine.

I bought my first set sometime in the early 1970s. I learned the supplied routine and quickly discovered that certain parts did not suit me. I did not particularly like some of the handling, so I started making changes. One modification led to another. Four pins became three. Moves were simplified. Phases were reorganised. Presentation evolved. Before long I was no longer performing the original routine at all. I was performing my routine.

The interesting thing is that none of those changes happened overnight.

Too many magicians believe originality arrives in a single flash of inspiration. My experience has been quite different. Most originality arrives in small pieces. A better line here. A stronger ending there. A clumsy move discarded after repeated performances. An unexpected audience reaction that suggests a new direction.

Gradually the routine begins to reflect the performer.

The audience may never notice those individual changes, but collectively they make all the difference.

I often tell magicians that there is a world of difference between learning a trick and owning a trick.

Learning a trick means understanding the mechanics.

Owning a trick means understanding why you perform it.

Why have you chosen that effect?

Why do you use those props?

Why do you tell that particular story?

Why are you the right person to present it?

When the answers become personal, the magic becomes personal too.

Looking back, I can see the pattern clearly. *Drunkology* began with someone else's effect and gradually acquired my own story. *Watch the Birdie* grew out of techniques and ideas that inspired me. *Oops! My Mistake* became a blend of several influences. *Easy or Hard* evolved into my own approach to problem-solving and what I like to call "Jazz Magic." The Linking Pins started as a commercial trick and, over time, became a routine that many magicians now associate with me.

None of these routines arrived fully formed. Each developed through performance, thought, failure, experimentation, and experience. Some changes happened deliberately. Others appeared unexpectedly after hundreds of performances. Taken individually, the changes were often quite small. Taken together, they transformed the routines into something uniquely mine.

The next time you learn a new effect, do not ask, "How do I perform this?"

Ask instead, "How would *I* perform this?"

The difference may seem small, but it is where originality begins.

After more than sixty years in magic, I have come to believe that originality does not necessarily mean inventing something entirely new. More often, it means taking an existing idea and investing enough of yourself into it that it eventually becomes inseparable from who you are.

When that happens, the trick no longer belongs to the dealer, the inventor, or the instruction sheet.

It belongs to you.

Winston Freer

Winston Freer (1910–1981) was born in St. Albans, Vermont, and became interested in magic at age 16 after seeing the famed illusionist Howard Thurston perform. He worked for Abbott's Magic in Colon, Michigan, during the 1930s and performed under the stage names Alladin and later Doc Maxam.

Why he matters

Freer was less a celebrity than an inventor: he created unusual methods and effects that other magicians found startlingly original. Fellow magician U. F. Grant reportedly said Freer was "fifty years ahead" of the rest of the magic world.

Area	What Freer was known for
Linking Rings	A no-key Linking Rings routine, avoiding the usual key ring used in the classic effect.
Levitation	A one-person method for levitating a spectator, which attracted attention in the magic community and appeared on the August 1941 cover of *The Linking Ring*.
Physical impossibilities	Effects including freezing water into ice in his bare hand and rope routines.
Puzzles	The Tile Puzzle, a geometric paradox in which pieces appear to be removed yet the puzzle still fits its original frame exactly.

His signature effect

Freer's most striking reputation came from performing a suspension or levitation while standing in the middle of a floor, completely surrounded by spectators—leaving little room for the usual hidden supports or angles. A 1941 recording of the performance was later included in a collection of his work.

Legacy

Freer published *Alagen Rope* (with U. F. Grant), *25 Rice Bowl Methods*, and *The Magic of Doc Maxam*, both in 1954. A later compilation, *The Adventures of Winston Freer*, gathered about 200 pages and 50 effects, along with letters, notes, sketches, and memorabilia.

He remains a cult figure among magicians: not broadly famous to the public but respected by specialists as one of magic's most inventive and unconventional creators

Gabriella Lester on *Jeopardy!*

Los Angeles-based Vancouver magician **Gabriella Lester** recently appeared as a guest video presenter on the popular television quiz show *Jeopardy!*.



The category was **Magic**.

One of Gabriella's clues gave a nod to her mentor, **Shawn Farquhar**:

> *"My mentor and idol is the brilliant Shawn Farquhar, whose amazing feats include being the first person to successfully fool this duo two different times on their hit show* Fool Us"

The correct response was:

"Who are Penn & Teller?"

This national television appearance gave Gabriella an opportunity to showcase the art of magic to a wide audience while also recognizing one of Canada's most accomplished magicians.

Ken Jennings holds the Jeopardy! record with a 74-game winning streak, earning $2,520,700 in regular-season play in 2004. His run began on June 2 and ended on November 30, when **Nancy Zerg** defeated him after he missed a Final Jeopardy clue about H&R Block.

Jennings answered 2,693 clues correctly during the streak, became the first contestant to win more than $2 million, and later won the 2020 Jeopardy! The Greatest of All Time tournament.

He is now the show's current host.

SPOOKY HALLOWEEN MEETING

Thanks to all the members who attended the meeting on Thursday October 22, 2026.

Three members— Charles Gauthier, Danny Stetski and Vincent Lee performed for the Tip Top & Tootsie Trophy, however, due to some issues the trophy was not awarded. Unofficially, Vincent Lee came in first place with the most points awarded by the judges.

Six members competed in the costume competition— Scott Barker, Ken Cowie, Michael Levy, Danny Stetski, Charles Gauthier and Genpei Cai. The winner by audience vote was Genpei Cai. He was given a $25 Tim Horton's gift card as a prize.

Scott Barker and President Roy J Hopwood introduced new games for members to participate in.

Scott hosted a trivia contest whilst the judges wrote up their respective evaluations of each performer.

Roy invited five members to the front and gave each of them a gimmicked deck to perform a routine with. All of them did an excellent job considering that they only had about 15 minutes to think of something before performing.

It was a fun evening.

We hope to see you at our Annual Christmas Dinner on Wednesday, November 25th at 6:30 pm at the Jade Dynasty Restaurant in Vancouver's Chinatown. Space is limited. Register online. Remember it's also the William Shelly Trophy competition for stage magic. You have a month to think of a routine and practice!

Charles Gauthier

Lesser-Known Facts About Harry Houdini

Most people know **Harry Houdini** as the world's most famous escape artist. Few realize he was also an aviator, inventor, collector, historian, filmmaker, and—according to some historians—possibly an informant, though evidence that he was a formal intelligence operative remains inconclusive.

Aviation Pioneer

In 1910, **Houdini** made the flight recognized by the *Aerial League of Australia* as Australia's first successful controlled powered flight.

Master Collector

He assembled one of the world's great libraries on magic, spiritualism, and the occult.

Library of Congress Legacy

In 1927, 3,988 volumes from his collection were received by the *Library of Congress* through his bequest.

Magic Historian

Houdini's collection helped preserve books, playbills, scrapbooks, and other records connected with magicians and the history of magic.

Patent Holder

He received U.S. Patent No. 1,370,316 for an emergency-escape diver's suit.

Inventor at Heart

Houdini was fascinated by engineering, mechanics, locks, and new technology.

Movie Producer

He founded the *Houdini Picture Corporation* and produced and starred in his own films.

Publicity Genius

Long before social media, **Houdini** understood how to keep himself in the headlines.

Spiritualist Skeptic

After years of investigation, he became one of the world's most famous exposers of fraudulent mediums.

Strange Friendship

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle believed **Houdini** possessed genuine supernatural powers.

Born Erik Weisz

The world's greatest escape artist was born **Erik Weisz**, later known as **Ehrich Weiss** in the United States. He performed professionally as **Harry Houdini** and legally adopted that name in 1913.

More Than Escapes

Had he never escaped a single handcuff, he might still be remembered as an aviator, inventor, historian, collector, author, and filmmaker

HALLOWEEN HIGHLIGHTS

Photos courtesy of Charles Gauthier











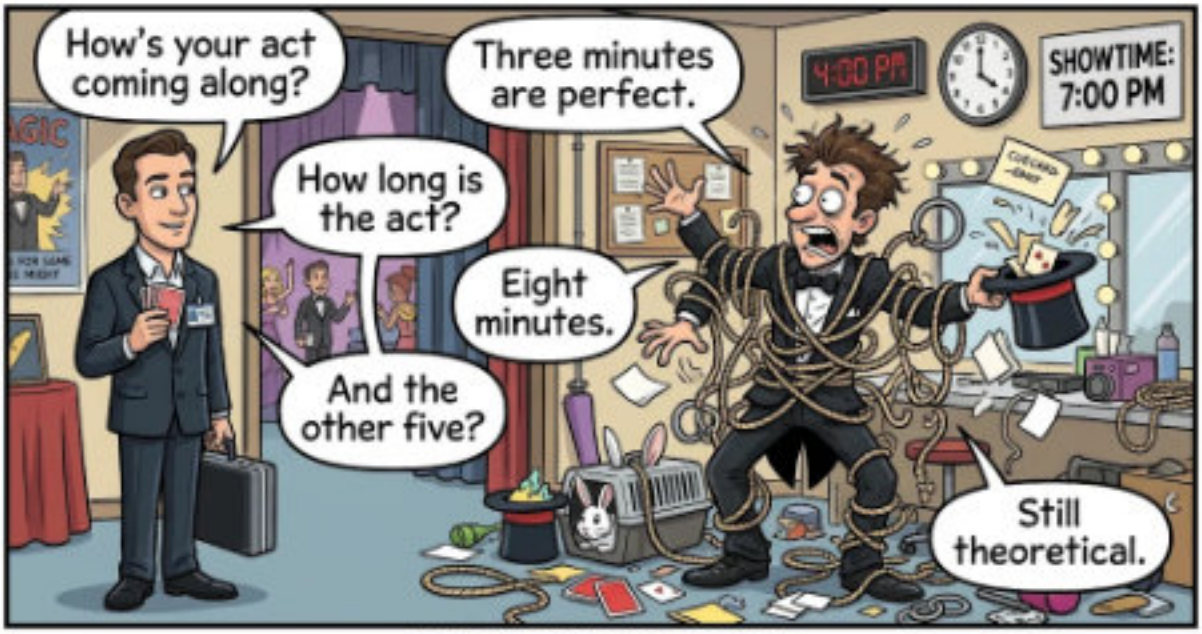




Can you name all 22 tricks???



CAN YOU NAME ALL 22 TRICKS???
By **Ben James**. Originally published in *Magic Makers* (Australian Society of Magicians, Melbourne). Reproduced with permission. With grateful thanks to **Vinal Kumar** for facilitating permission to reprint



"COMPETITION DAY"