



The Servante

Official Newsletter of the Alliance of Illusionists Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138

Volume 2018 - Number 10 - October 2018

Next Monthly Assembly Meeting Thursday October 18, 2018, 7:00 pm

Illusion Warehouse - 3917 McCart Ave - Fort Worth, Texas 76110

Three Blocks North of Seminary Drive - Across From Rosemont School

“Booism” (the study of ghosts)

Halloween is of course the haunting season of the year! Dig out your favorite fall festival effect and bring it with you this coming Thursday night. We will have a “boo contest” to see if we can top each other with an evening of magic, mystery, and mirth! We hope to have a quick report on the progress of our 2020 TAOM convention planning. We also hope to have Dee Hood with us. Dee was one of the original participants of the “Magic and More” magic shop in Hurst, Texas that was the birthplace of our SAM Assembly 138. Bruce Chadwick will have a collector’s corner and show several things from his Illusion Warehouse museum room!

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND 2020 TAOM CONVENTION PLANNING COMMITTEE TO MEET

President Mark Jones has called for an Executive Committee meeting for 6:30 pm, immediately prior to the 7:00 pm Thursday October 18 Monthly Assembly Meeting. All officers are requested to be in attendance. All dues-paid -up club members may also attend. TAOM Vice-President Joey Byers has also called for a quick meeting of the 2020 TAOM Convention Planning Committee immediately after the Executive Committee meeting.

SEPTEMBER MEETING FEATURED OPEN MIC NIGHT

Despite a torrential rainfall immediately prior to our meeting, the September 21st third Thursday SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists meeting, the event was well attended with 15 in attendance. We were honored to have as our guests long-time magician Bernie Dolenz and his daughter Brenda Dolenz-Helmer.

After a couple of quick announcements by President Mark Jones about the upcoming Austin swap meet, the upcoming performance of The Illusionists, the notation of Van McGee’s birthday, and the 30th wedding anniversary of the Fulces, the magic began with Open Mic Night!

First was John Hale who performed his rendition of the Silk Tube, Frank Seltzer did an incredible Cards Across routine and a Card Stab effect, and Van McGee gave a review of David Solomon’s SOLOMON SECRETS and then performed the Finger Print trick. Pierce Brooks presented an Invisible Card routine, Lisa Fulce did her version of the Magic Nana’s Card Trick, and Bruce Chadwick almost burned the house down with Dragon’s Breath.

Al Fox astounded everyone with his version of a lottery number effect, Enoch Ng did several card routines, and Robert Smith performed and then explained his famous Rope and Finger Ring effect. Great gossip, good fellowship, and the comradely that is making our AOI Assembly 138 famous, continued after the meeting and in the Illusion Warehouse magic shop.



2018 OFFICERS

1. PRESIDENT:	Mark Jones	mark.warriorsforchrist@yahoo.com	469-207-9078
2. VICE PRESIDENT:	Frank Seltzer	fhs3@mac.com	214-676-6440
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4. SERGEANT AT ARMS:	Cindy Bighorse	cabighorse@gmail.com	817-846-4062
5. COMMUNICATIONS:	Bruce Chadwick	chadwickillusionist@yahoo.com	817-832-6062
6. HISTORIAN:	John Hale	x@jdsworld.com	214-783-1350
7. MEMBER AT LARGE:	Bruce Roberts	brucerobertspainter@gmail.com	817-300-7250

2019 OFFICER NOMINATING COMMITTEE FORMED

President Mark Jones has appointed himself to head-up the 2019 Nominating Committee to help secure Assembly officers for the 2019 club year. Any Assembly member interested in possibly serving the Assembly as a 2019 officer, please contact Mark Jones at mark.warriorsforchrist@yahoo.com or phone 469-207-9078.

The Assembly leadership is comprised of seven officers elected from the Active and Honorary Life Members in good standing of the Assembly. They are designated as the President, Vice President, Administrator, Sergeant at Arms, Communications, Historian, and Member at Large. Officers are elected by a majority vote of the Active and Honorary Life members in good standing at the December Monthly Assembly Meeting.

Except for the position of Member at Large, Assembly members must be members in good standing of the Assembly for at least one year prior to serving as an officer. An Active or Honorary Life member in good standing of the Assembly may serve up to two elected offices simultaneously. All Officers except the President can be re-elected and serve back-to-back terms.

SEPTEMBER 2018 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President Mark Jones called to order the Executive Committee of the SAM Alliance of Illusionists at about 6:45 pm on Thursday September 20, 2018. In attendance were officers Mark Jones, Vice-President Frank Seltzer, Communications Bruce Chadwick, Sergeant-at-Arms Cindy Bighorse, Historian John Hale, and Treasurer Joey Byers. Absent was Member-at-Large Bruce Roberts and Sergeant-at-Arms Cindy Bighorse. Also in attendance were Assembly members Lisa and Jimmy Fulce. The minutes of the previous August Executive Committee meeting were read by Communications Bruce Chadwick and approved as presented. President Jones then allowed officers to voice their various opinions about the recent Houston TAOM convention.

Next Communications Chadwick announced the successful creation of a new PayPal account for the Assembly in the name our corporate title, the "Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists." Chadwick also reported that the PayPal button on the website was recently changed so that new Assembly applicants and members desiring to pay their 2019 dues could do so, with the money going into the new PayPal account. Discussion was then announced regarding the need for the Assembly to obtain a checking account. A larger bank with no monthly service fees, no monthly minimums, and with bank branches convenient throughout the DFW metroplex was suggested. Frank Seltzer suggested Capital One.

Chadwick suggested the need of a simple shopping cart on the Assembly website so that basic information from members such as address, phone number, email address, etc, could more easily be gleaned and so that paperwork, specifically the "Dues Payment Forms" could be eliminated. John Hale suggested that this could be done through PayPal. Chadwick also suggested the move of the domain name www.taom2020.com to Historian and TAOM 2020 Webmaster John Hale. The need to secure the The Embassy Suites Dallas-Frisco/Hotel, Convention Center & Spa, 7600 John Q Hammons Dr. Frisco, TX, 75034, direct: 972-963-9156 for the 2020 TAOM convention was emphasized. Seltzer and Byers reported that the contract was under negotiation with the help of Carole Machol-Atler of Helms Brisco Inc. With no further business, the Executive Committee meeting ended with a unanimous affirmation.

HOUSTON'S MAGIC ISLAND TO REOPEN

By Annie Gally of Paper City, September 13, 2018

It's a magic trick as old as time — the disappearing act. Iconic dinner theater Magic Island pulled the classic move 10 years ago. After fire and water damage from Hurricane Ike, it retreated into the dark. Only its giant pharaoh's head, cresting the building like a beacon and visible from the Houston freeway, was a sign of what it had been before.



Now it's time for the dramatic reappearance. Magic Island is on the brink of rebirth, set to open its doors this November after a distant decade. In its heyday in the 1980s, Magic Island was a private club known for its sumptuous ancient Egyptian decor and opulent, intimate theaters. In this case, what happened in Vegas didn't stay in Vegas — the magic came to Space City.

And it was all manner of magic, from the sly sleight of hand-style to the mind melding you'd only see on stage, from the abracadabra to the abstract. The main theater sat 150, with two smaller rooms sitting about 20 to 30 people each. Now, it's all returning.

"It's not only the experience of a stage show. You can see the close-up miracles that happen before your eyes and under your nose," magician and Magic Island entertainment director Scott Wells tells PaperCity. "Illusionists have more emphasis on comedy. It's bubblegum for the eyes, pleasing and fun and funny."

"There are mind-readers and mentalists. That's more esoteric, something you think about a lot more. Mind reading is real meat for the brain. Someone who can make predictions. It'll fry your brain. You think, 'How did you get inside my brain? How did you?' "Wells vows to bring all sorts of acts back. "That may or may not mean lions and tigers," he quips, Oh my.

Way back when, Wells watched big panthers prowl the stage. In the past week, he's been flooded by calls from former Magic Island magicians eager to bring their skills back to the stage. More than 100 acts are rearing to bend the rules of reality in front of a Houston audience.



The Magic Island Mystery In the old days, members of the elite Magic Island club would insert a card into the mouth of a carved cobra to gain entrance. Its slitted eyes would light up, and the doors to another world would open.

Within two years it became a public club. Inside, it was all mystery. Cut off from the outside with no windows, and no revelation of the magicians' secrets. It drew crowds for private parties and magic shows you couldn't find anywhere else in the city.

Owner Dr. Mohammad Athari, who also owns United Neurology next door, had toyed with opening Magic Island again and again over the years. His efforts would start, sputter and stop. But this time is different. Wells can feel it. "I felt excitement. Reserved excitement, because there had been other false starts and stops, it seems like every once in a while," Wells says. Now, it's no more crying wolf. It's a call to arms.

"We're moving forward each week. When I go down there, I see more and more things being done," Wells says. Magic Island's large theater holds up to 150 people, while the smaller ones seat 20 to 30 people on risers. Wells and his wife were the very last act all those years ago, performing a two-person mind-reading bit. He remembers the call Friday afternoon about the hurricane.

Maybe he could read minds, but he couldn't see into the future. He had no idea Magic Island would be shuttered for so long.

Sue Smith, who works with Athari at both Magic Island and United Neurology, couldn't believe it when the doctor came to her this time, promising to re-open Magic Island at last.

"I'm awe-struck. This has to be a massive remodel," Smith says. "We're trying to bring back that kind of old-school elegance. What's been challenging is keeping everything that was there but updating it and bringing it into the times of today." Smith is confident this time around, just like Wells. There have been inspiring omens.

"We were able to get our original phone number. That's crazy. That's one of the first things we did. I thought, 'Oh my God, that's a sign,'" Smith says. There's no longer any question this is Athari's calling.

Construction has kicked off, stirring up sawdust and old memories. Magic Island is being excavated like the tomb it resembles, but it's clear it's been ransacked. It takes a fair bit of suspension of disbelief to imagine it could be restored to its former glory. Hieroglyphics are marred by graffiti; irreplaceable items have been stolen. Among them, a rare poster that David Copperfield once offered to buy for \$25,000. The tell-tale, four-foot brass cobra that acted as the gateway. But the bones are still there, the design crafted by an engineer for Indiana Jones.

You can still find the bar from *Irma la Douce*, the romantic comedy starring Shirley MacLaine and Jack Lemmon. But the scene-stealer is the chandelier from *Gone with the Wind*. The artifacts aren't limited to Magic Island proper. As of right now, there's Old Testament overflow in the nooks and crannies and closets of United Neurology. There are boxes of the signature black-and-gold print matchboxes, the occasional sphinx sitting on a shelf and a full-size sarcophagus tucked in a corner behind stacked chairs.



Smith's favorite is a jade-green seated bust sculpture of an Egyptian goddess, one hand clutching an ankh and her cat's face neatly carved. People were always touching her at Magic Island, leaving her knuckles worn white.

"I tell people it's a fertility statue. I love telling them that. They freak out," Smith laughs. The goddess will find her way back to the dimly lit rooms of Magic Island.

An extensive remodel is underway, opening up the space, turning the "disco room" into a lounge, and a terrace running the length of the building is in the cards. "I just imagine sitting out there, watching the fireworks on New Year's Eve in the Galleria area," Smith says.

The revamped event space downstairs will have room for private parties of up to 300 people. Both floors will feature kitchens, with the kitchen downstairs left open. "Right now we're focusing on upstairs. We've had a flurry of interested people wanting to make a reservation," Smith says.

The large stage shows run around 45 minutes long, and there isn't a set schedule for each night. "Part of the mystery and surprise of Magic Island is how time disappears. You go in at 7 and before you know it, it's midnight," Wells says. Shows go on as long as there are people to watch them. "People keep coming back to experience the magic. It's that feeling of childlike mystery and wonder," Wells says. And that goes for those who have seen it time and time again.

"I love the magic. In all the years I've been there, I've never asked how they do it. A few things you see over and over again — I was always amazed," Smith says.

Audience interaction is almost guaranteed in every show, particularly in the sleight of hand. "Within a 40 minute show, we'll have six people come up at different times. I'm confident that there will be a lot of audience interaction and need for volunteers," Wells says.

HOWARD THURSTON, THE MAGICIAN WHO DISAPPEARED

Overshadowed by more famous contemporaries, the visionary behind “The Wonder Show of the Universe” left a far-reaching legacy

By Eliza McGraw, smithsonian.com, August 9, 2018

A woman rose in mid-air. Cards hovered, and a box of candy became a rabbit. A horse and rider vanished, floating away as if in a dream, spangles sparkling in audiences’ eyes. At the magician Howard Thurston’s show, the world flouted nature. Through it all, the audience felt Thurston’s affection. Dale Carnegie included Thurston in his famed self-help book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, because Thurston had told Carnegie that before every show, he stood behind the curtain, saying over and over, “I love my audience.”

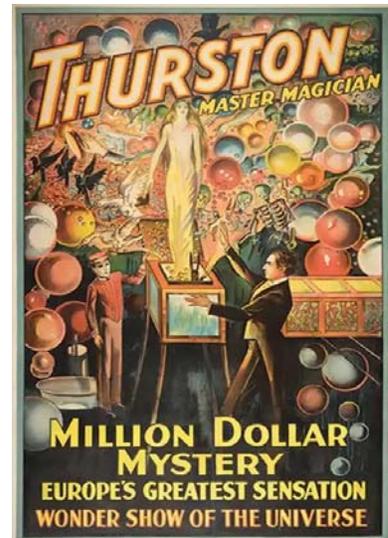


In the 20th century’s first decades, Howard Thurston thrilled people with his own brand of stage magic, a giant production requiring 40 tons of equipment. Today, he’s all but forgotten, eclipsed in history by his contemporary Harry Houdini, even though Houdini was more of an escape artist than a magician. But in his day, Thurston was the best. “It’s sort of like the hype of everybody that wanted to see Hamilton,” says Rory Feldman, a magician with a Thurston collection of more than 65,000 pieces. “Thurston—that’s what it was.”

Born in Ohio, in 1869, Thurston had a rough childhood that included some time riding the rails. While contemporary accounts reported that he’d been training for the ministry when he decided upon magic, biographer Jim Steinmeyer says that the young Thurston was a near-criminal who escaped institutionalization by saying he had found religion. Steinmeyer unearthed correspondence between authorities about the high-school aged Thurston. “It’s kind of jaw-dropping what they write about this kid,” he says. “They say ‘If you don’t take him, he’s at the end of his game.’ And ‘I really think this guy is redeemable, but he’s the roughest case I’ve ever seen.’” Thurston overcame those early trials, hiding his background to become, by the time he reached his early 30s, a stage magician whose success rested in part on his gentlemanly demeanor, what Steinmeyer calls his “bank president” grandeur.

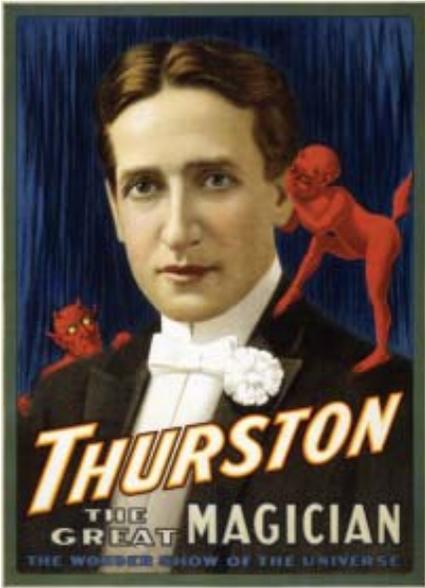
In his white tie and tails, Thurston performed incredible tricks. One, called the “Rising Card,” started with an audience member choosing certain cards, as if for a regular card trick. But expectations turned upside down when Thurston put the deck into a glass goblet. He would then call up certain cards—the king of spades, the ten of clubs—and they would rise two feet in the air, into his hands. The dazzling end was when all 52 cards were thrown, serially, into the audience. One reporter wrote that they fluttered to audience members “like beautiful butterflies.”

Audiences of the ’10s and ’20s loved magic. Many vaudeville shows included magic acts. Thurston inherited the “mantle of magic” from Harry Kellar, who popularized the floating woman illusion, or the “Levitation of Princess Karnac.” Thurston added Ziegfeld-inspired touches



to his show, like gaudy costumes for his assistants. And he closely observed European magicians he encountered, as Steinmeyer writes, especially those at London's Egyptian Hall, where the most accomplished magicians gathered.

By 1925, a typical Thurston show included elements of the circus, dancing girls, and a full orchestra and featured an astonishing 36 presentations with engineering marvels. Sometimes, a Baltimore reporter wrote, the number of attendants drew attention to the "complicated apparatus" that made a particular trick work. A list for Act 3, from one of Thurston's workbooks: Nine People Cabinet, Pigeon Pie, Bangkok Bungalow, Egg Trick, Glass Trick, Prisoner of Canton, Phantom Piano, Lady and Boy, Triple Mystery.



Thurston performed for royalty, celebrities and presidents. He pretended to smash President Calvin Coolidge's watch to pieces, only to have Mrs. Coolidge find it in a loaf of bread. Theodore Roosevelt's son Quentin saw the show so many times that he outsmarted Thurston once, by bringing a bag that foiled a trick involving an egg.

Children flocked to Thurston's shows, causing reviewers to remind readers that if they were insistent on spotting a false panel move during one of the cabinet tricks, they should let it go to preserve the kids' happiness. He performed annual shows for orphanages. "They're all children, these patrons of mine," Thurston said once. "I am proud of my calling as an entertainer—a dealer in magic art that involves the practice of deception without causing harm."

Feldman says that part of Thurston's impact was the language he used. "It did not appear as though he was reciting lines. And the stories he shared felt like he was saying them for the first time," he says. "The impression that he made on people was so strong. People who saw him perform returned years later with their own children to see 'The Wonder Show of the Universe' once again."

An excerpt of Thurston's stage patter found in one of his workbooks shows his unique delivery style:

"Many of you are saying to yourself that it is impossible for Fernanda to float in space without any performance and that Fernanda is hypnotized. I'll prove it to you. Wake, wake Fernanda and raise your right hand. Rest and sleep, Fernanda. In all our lives there are certain events that stand out that cannot be forgotten. I am going to show you something now, ladies and gentlemen, you will remember a long as you live. Behold the impossible."

Feldman says that in these moments, many people trusted what they saw. They thought that Thurston himself was magic. "They really believed it. I have some letters that are to Thurston where people are like can you help me find the love of my life? Can you tell me where my brother is?"

Thurston took his role seriously. "The conjuring fever was consuming me, and there was no relief," wrote Thurston in his 1929 autobiography, *Life of Magic*. "I know of no business, trade or profession that exerts so powerful an influence as magic. The love of it becomes a passion." He told a reporter in 1903 that he practiced card tricks for an hour every day and then again before his performances, and he had his hands massaged three times a week, to keep them smooth.

