



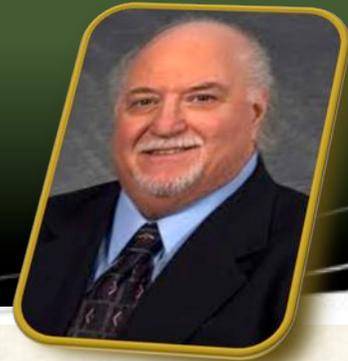
THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS

NORTH ATLANTIC REGION NEWSLETTER

S.A.M. LOSES A GREAT FRIEND

On December 23, 2013, Michael Piacente S.A.M. Assembly 194 co-founder and driving force passed away

see page 3



S.A.M. NATIONAL COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY VOTES TO MAINTAIN THE WEISS / HOUDINI GRAVESITE

By Eric DeCamps

The S.A.M. National Council at the Autumn 2013 meeting unanimously voted to provide financial funding for the maintenance of the Houdini Gravesite located at Machpelah Cemetery in Queens, NY. Our National Organization had provided the financial backing to maintain the gravesite in the past. However, unfortunately that was mistakenly stopped in 2006.

Thankfully the association for the cemetery still provided select services to maintain the plot without compensation. Besides standard care of the vegetative growth, the association reset the monuments and ledgers onto repaired foundations, re-graded the terrain, seeded the soil and cleaned some of the pollution from the stones. Their reasoning for this was because they felt an obligation to accommodate the many visitors, students and groups that expect a respectful appearance.

continued on page 2

NORTH ATLANTIC ASSEMBLIES

- Assembly 1 - New York City
- Assembly 14 - Liverpool, NY
- Assembly 24 - Albany, NY
- Assembly 25 - Fair Lawn, NJ
- Assembly 35 - Poughkeepsie, NY
- Assembly 47 - Rochester, NY
- Assembly 77 - Massapequa, NY
- Assembly 147 - Middletown, NY
- Assembly 161 - Scotch Plains, NJ
- Assembly 168 - Parsippany, NJ
- Assembly 181 - Hightstown, NJ
- Assembly 194 - Yonkers, NY
- Assembly 263 - Big Flats, NY



MAGIC - UNITY - MIGHT



A WORD FROM YOUR NORTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT AND EDITOR

At the S.A.M. National Council meeting, held on Saturday November 9, 2013 in Boca Raton, FL, the council unanimously voted to re-instate financial support for the yearly maintenance of the gravesite of our iconic member, Harry Houdini. Our national society had provided funding for maintenance in the past but it was mistakenly stopped in 2006.

In past issues of this newsletter I have reported about the history of vandalism at the Weiss/Houdini Gravesite. We featured an article on the Houdini Commandos donation and replacement of the missing Houdini bust. In this special Weiss/ Houdini Gravesite issue, you will read about the fascinating history and challenges of the Weiss/Houdini gravesite and Machpelah Cemetery.

While doing my research for this issue I unfortunately discovered that vandalism is not unique to the Weiss/Houdini gravesite. Other famous gravesites that have been vandalized include: Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Jim Morrison, James Dean, John Belushi, the Wright Brothers, and Oscar Wilde.

continued on page 6

S.A.M. & THE WEISS/HOUDINI GRAVESITE

continued from page 1

Interestingly enough, during his lifetime Houdini privately funded the cleaning and restoration of many gravesites of notable magicians throughout the world. It is only fitting that the S.A.M. take the responsibility of maintaining his gravesite. Especially since Houdini is single handedly responsible for expanding the S.A.M. from a local club of magicians in New York City, into a strong and vibrant national organization of magicians.



When Houdini toured the US, he would sponsor dinners and invite as many magicians as possible to these dinners. At the dinners, Houdini would extol the benefits and virtues of organizing a national network and a fraternal group of magicians to better the art. The S.A.M. flourished due to Houdini's powerful, dynamic and persuasive presentations. There is no doubt that this organization would not have flourished as it has if it was not for Houdini.

In addition, the Weiss/Houdini Gravesite is the only gravesite known to significantly display our S.A.M. Logo and Seal. Further proving Houdini's commitment to the S.A.M. even after his death.

This recommitment by the S.A.M. to the Weiss/Houdini Gravesite would have not been possible if it weren't for two people who showed the same kind of tenacity as Houdini did when he helped expand the S.A.M. The two persons I am referring to are Dick Brookz and Dorothy Dietrich (aka the Houdini Commandos). With their unrelenting passion they brought this issue to the forefront of our national organization. We also need to thank S.A.M. National 1st Vice-President, David Bowers for taking the baton from Dick and Dorothy and bringing it to the National Council's attention. And a special thank you to Most Illustrious, Dal Sanders, for his spirited backing of this important issue.

continued on page 4



COMPEER MICHAEL PIACENTE APRIL 8, 1947 – DECEMBER 23, 2013



On December 23, 2013 devoted husband, father, grandfather, magician, and a tried and true friend of the S.A.M., Michael Piacente passed on. Michael was a gifted and

generous magician. He was also a 33 year member of the Society of American Magicians and the driving force behind Assembly 194 in Yonkers, NY.

Michael's serious involvement in magic began in the late 1970's when he was he a frequent patron of New York's Magic Towne House and later Mostly Magic.

Although Michael and I have known each other for about 30 years, it was not until the last 3 years that we became very close friends. I would speak to him at least 4 to 5 times a week. We would talk about his family (he was very proud of his grand children), his business and he always provided me with sound advice about how to handle challenges within our Society. For lack of a better term, Michael became my magic consigliere. I am going to miss my visits with Mike.

One of the great pleasures in my service with the Society

happened just this past October when I was able to surprise Michael with the Society's North Atlantic Region Award of Excellence for his contributions to our art and for his tireless work for the Society of American Magicians. He never let me forget that I was able to surprise him with the honor.

In our magic community to honor the passing of a magician we perform a ritual known as the broken wand ceremony. It was both sad and an honor to presided over the ritual for Michael. I was proud to see so many Assembly 194 and other S.A.M. members participate and show strength, honor and love for our departed friend and compeer. Thanks to all who participated in the ceremony. It's times like these that - as difficult as it may be - proves that our magic world is a real community in the true meaning of the word.



MICHAEL PIACENTE COMPEER

In 1989 Michael was presented with the Seth Cohen Award for Magic. In the history of Assembly 194 only two other members of Assembly 194 have been given this honor. In 2007, he was awarded the first Pino Gareri Magician of the Year Award. In December of 2008, the Society of American Magicians presented Michael with a Presidential Citation for his longstanding work in our Society and in our community.

Michael also mentored young magicians. For over 15 years he worked closely with The Society of Young Magicians Assembly 42 in Stamford, CT. Some of the offices and positions he held within The Society of American Magicians include:

- President Assembly 194 (1981 - 1985 & 2001 - 2003)
- S.A.M. North Atlantic Regional Vice President (1984 - 1986)
- S.A.M. National Council (1984 - 1986)
- S.A.M. North Atlantic Regional Deputy (1994 – 1998 & 2012-2013)
- Chairman S.A.M. Insurance Committee (2010 – 2012)



S.A.M. Assembly 194 members (l-r) Dennis Barlotta, Jim Stranges, Eric DeCamps, Michael Piacente, and Monsignor Dermot Brennan

S.A.M. & WEISS/HOUDINI

continued from page 2

I would be remiss if I did not thank our Most Illustrious for naming me Chairman of the newly formed National Houdini Gravesite Committee. I am fortunate to have the following compeers who have agreed to serve with me on the committee:

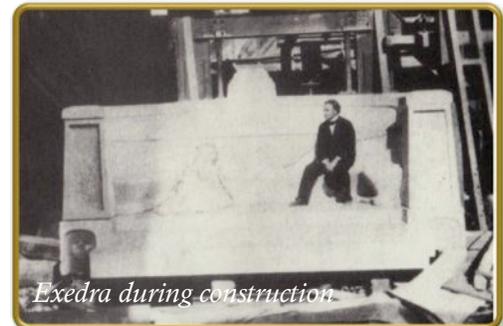
Joseph Devlin
 Thomas Solomon
 William Gleason
 Joseph Caulfield
 Kathy Caulfield
 Charles Siebert
 Peter DeLuca

Formation of this committee is only the first step in getting things done. There is much more work/maintenance that the gravesite will require but those can be addressed over time.

An important thing that we all have to keep in mind, and it is paramount to Machpelah Cemetery, is maintaining the sanctity and dignity of the entire cemetery. While the Weiss/Houdini's gravesite is very important to us, the entire cemetery and the thousands buried there are just as important to the Machpelah Association. We need to keep that in mind whenever we visit the gravesite. We all need to be more careful and respectful not only to the Weiss/Houdini family gravesite, but also to the thousands of other families who are buried there.

The cemetery is currently working on and planning major reconstruction. They are repairing retaining walls, patching walkways, they demolished the old office building to free up space and the cemetery's plan is to offer new plots to the Jewish community. They are also planning on building a new site office, new public restrooms, and a new storage facility.

I see this new obligation taken on by our National S.A.M. as a genuine humanitarian effort to preserve not only the legacy of Houdini, but our legacy as an organization as well and a real "mitzvah" for the generations of magicians to come. I am honored and very proud to be part of this new chapter in the history of the S.A.M.



S.A.M. ASSEMBLY 24 CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS WITH ANNUAL EVENT



By Vinny Grosso

On Tuesday, December 10, 2013, S.A.M. Assembly 24 had its annual holiday party. Every year, the event has grown in popularity and this year the Jay Gorham Assembly invited the local IBM, Ring 186, to create a joint party and its attendance was the best yet!



The evening, in a private room at Moscatello's Italian restaurant in Troy, NY, started with mingling and drinks and then a buffet style dinner. After dinner, Assembly 24 president Joe Goode gave out two awards. The President's Award to Helen Patti for her generous donation of funding two amazing magic lectures, one for each club. The other was the Martinka Award given to Jonathan Downer as the new member who has excelled in magic and introduced some great new magic to the assembly.



After the awards, the room was rearranged from banquet seating to theatre seating and guests were given a real holiday treat. Doc Swan, cover feature of M-U-M in October and hit of the S.A.M. National Convention this past July was the entertainment for the evening. Doc braved the snow storm, driving over 200 miles and could have received a standing ovation just for that. However, the members of Assembly 24 and Ring 186 rose to their feet after Doc's performance because, as always, Doc delivered an amazing full evening show.



OUR MAGIC HISTORY...



Theodore Hardeen
 Ferencz Deszo Weisz
 (February 29, 1876 – June 12, 1945)

Hardeen was born Ferencz Dezso Weisz or Weisz Ferenc Dezső in Budapest, Hungary. He went by the name of Theodore Weiss when the family moved to Appleton, Wisconsin. He was nicknamed "Deshi" and later "Dash" by his parents. In 1893, Hardeen performed with Houdini at Coney Island as "The Brothers Houdini." Later, Harry met and married Wilhelmina Beatrice (Bess) Rahner.

Hardeen learned the business from Houdini, but there is no doubt he had the natural ability to make it on his own and would have become a successful escape artist without Houdini.

Hardeen like his brother was a favorite in the magical world. Both amateurs and professionals admired him. He was a man of culture and a celebrated raconteur. Like Houdini, he was willing to spend both time and money to further the cause of magic. And the general public regarded him as a brilliant performer and a thrilling entertainer.



After his brother's death in 1926 Hardeen played the vaudeville circuit, doing many of Houdini's routines. From 1938 to 1941, Hardeen was featured in the Broadway revue, "Hellzapoppin," and during World War II he performed for the troops (as his brother had done during World War I).

In 1936 Hardeen starred in a short film for Warner Brothers called, "Medium Well Done." In it, Hardeen played a detective investigating a phony medium. Lloyd French, who also directed many of the early Laurel and Hardy films, directed the short.

Hardeen went to New York's Doctor's Hospital in 1945 for an operation. He unexpectedly died of complications while recovering from the procedure. He was 69 years old.

Most recently, Theodore Hardeen was a supporting character on season one of the HBO series, "Boardwalk Empire."

Click the image of Houdini and Hardeen to see Hardeen perform Metamorphosis

A WORD FROM YOUR NORTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT AND EDITOR

continued from page 2

I would like to thank all the guest contributors in this issue. I found the articles intriguing as I hope you will too. The articles clear up many of the misconceptions, false rumors, and controversy about the site.

Even with this recommitment by national, the gravesite still needs a lot of work. The newly formed Weiss/Houdini Gravesite Committee is looking into possible ways to raise funds for necessary work required to the gravesite above the basic maintenance the S.A.M. is now providing.

Also in this issue you will read about Hardeen. Just imagine having to live up to the legend that was having Houdini as your older brother. Talk about pressure! It's nice to know Hardeen handled it very well and flourished on his own merits.

There is a lot going on with our assemblies and with our associate members. Assembly 24 had another wonderful yearend holiday event. Margaret Steele toured China. Pat Darienzo reviews the Off Broadway hit, "Nothing to Hide." Steve Cohen gives us one of his earliest creations to work on and practice.

The heartbreaking news is the passing of Michael Piacente. I cannot stress enough what a devastating loss this is to our region and to the S.A.M. in general. Rest in Peace my friend.

Until next time, I remain yours in M-U-M.

NOTHING TO HIDE – A REVIEW

By Pat Darienzo

I've been holding off writing this review for a few days, after the mini-storm I accidentally stirred up on Facebook when I questioned some of the criticisms of *Nothing To Hide*, the Neil Patrick Harris directed showcase for card magicians Helder Guimaraes and Derek Delgado (now playing an extended run in NYC).

At that time, some veteran magicians who had seen it the show mentioned they felt they knew or had ideas about how most of the tricks were done and were generally underwhelmed. I responded that given their level of magic expertise, I would expect it to be a rare occurrence for them to walk out of a show and say "Wow. I was blown away and totally amazed." A better gauge of the show would be simply: "Was it entertaining?"

That was before I saw the show myself this past weekend. I was blown away... totally amazed... and thoroughly entertained.

From the stylish staging to the stunning magic and often Penn & Teller-like byplay between the two performers, I was engaged from start to finish by what I can honestly say was one of the most enjoyable shows, magic or otherwise, that I've seen.

There are four explanations I can think of to account for the dramatic differences in my opinion of the show and that of some of my Facebook friends who saw it:

- I saw a completely different show than they did: Now, I will grant you I *was* sitting in the front row, and had a clear view of everything done on stage. Not that it helped me detect anything, but I can understand that for someone sitting thirty rows back, a card trick might not have had the same impact as it did for me.
- Some of the magicians unconsciously let their "I could have done that" egos taint their enjoyment of the show: I will assume that as professionals, this is not the case, although I myself will admit to a tinge of envy watching the show, and at one time considered tripping Helder as he came down the stairs so I could take his place.



- I really stink at magic and everyone else is more experienced and educated in the art than I am: Aside from probably being an accurate statement, this would also explain why shiny things still overly entertain me.
- Different people are looking for different things in a magic show: Let's go with this one. It's simple and shouldn't insult anyone. While I am a great fan of intellectual, natural or off-beat presentations (Mac King, Penn & Teller, Play Dead, The Elephant Room), others prefer dancing girls, music and scenery changes (Copperfield, Melinda, Lance Burton).

For starters, I think if you're going to an hour+ show featuring two guys doing card tricks, you can't really go expecting a glitzy Vegas-style show. Given two performers, a table and chairs and a few minor assorted props such as a sock monkey and a chess clock, it's going to be a relatively static set.

However, for me, the pitch black stage, polished black flooring and simplicity of the rear wall bookcases of bottled decks was elegant, classy and visually stunning.

continued on page 14

MYSTERIES OF THE HOUDINI GRAVE

By Dean Carnegie

With the passing of another anniversary of the death of Harry Houdini, I thought I'd share some interesting information about his gravesite. His grave has been in the news most recently due to the wonderful work of Dick Brookz and Dorothy Diedrich's Houdini Museum located in Scranton PA. The museum took on the responsibility to restore the Houdini bust at the gravesite.

Let's take a trip back in time. It's 1885 and Houdini's half brother Armin/Herman died of tuberculosis. Young Erich offered up his entire life's savings (\$10) towards his half brother's funeral. Herman had a typical shaped tombstone with a rounded top. Seven years later, Houdini's father dies in 1892 and is buried next to Herman in the Machpelah Cemetery in Queens NY. The father was given a tall pillar shaped tombstone as can be seen in the photo below. Between the Weiss grave and the tree on the right is Herman's tombstone.

In 1913, Houdini's mother Cecelia Weiss passes away. Those familiar with the Houdini story know how this affected him and altered the course of his life. Cecelia was buried in this plot also and her name was added to the large pillar tombstone.

Houdini was devastated with the loss of his mother. He visited the grave often and eventually came upon an idea of buying a larger family plot and erecting a monument to the Weiss family. This was called the 'exedra', which literally means resting place. The design however was done by noted architect Oscar Teale who was also an amateur magician and friend of Houdini's. The final cost of the monument was \$40,000.00 and it was installed at Machpelah Cemetery on October 1, 1916.



Oscar Teale later served as the fourth President of the Society of American Magicians and wrote a book called 'Higher Magic'. It was rumored that Oscar Teale was also Houdini's Ghost Writer on a number of projects including the tome, "A Magician Among the Spirits."

An interesting addition to the exedra was the inclusion on each side of the monument of part of the original Weiss Grave. On the far left is the gravestone face for Cecelia Weiss. On the far right is the gravestone face for his father Mayer Samuel Weiss.

Another unique feature is the emblem of the Society of American Magicians which is in the center of the monument just below the bust of Houdini. Harry Houdini served as President of the Society for several years and was the current president when he died in 1926. I can't help but wonder if the emblem was added after Houdini's death. It wouldn't make sense to have it on there in 1916 when the monument was erected. There is one photo in the Silverman Houdini book, which shows Houdini sitting on the exedra as it was being built (*see page 4 of this issue – ed.*). No circular hole is there for the emblem. So it likely was added later.

Houdini had his family moved to the new site and made arrangements for the rest of his family to be buried there upon their individual deaths. The only spouse however that was accorded a grave was Bess Houdini. Her name was added to Houdini's gravestone, but truth be told she is not there. Because Bess was Catholic and Machpelah is a Jewish cemetery, she was buried elsewhere.

continued on page 10

MARGARET STEELE BREAKS THROUGH THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA



Last summer Compeer Margaret Steele toured China, performing in the interactive children's illusion show, "The Magical School for Wizards." The elaborate story show traveled with a ten-person company, lavish sets and costumes, and included nine large illusions, as well as dozens of smaller tricks. They played in 1000+-seat theaters in four Chinese cities. The 90-minute show was written and designed by New York-based actor/magician, Arnie Kolodner, who also starred, playing two roles as both the good wizard, Professor Arnie, and his evil arch-nemesis, Snake. Margaret played Professor Pineblossom, the school's headmistress. A Chinese actress played the role of the apprentice, Dodo, and spoke her lines in Chinese, translating the show while staying in character and advancing the plot.

In addition to presenting her linking rings and floating feather routines, Margaret performed five illusions in the show – Chair Appearance, Zigzag, Spiker, Ghost Illusion and Cage Appearance. It was her first foray into box jumping, and she reports that being the one *outside* the box is *much* easier! The illusions were made much more challenging by Margaret's enormous wig and bulky costume. It was an acting role as well, and just for good measure she got to sing and dance, too.

Chinese kids and their parents went crazy for this show. But unless you plan to travel to China, don't

expect to see it anytime soon in the U.S. It's far too expensive to ship everything back and forth across the Pacific. When not touring, the show stays in storage in China. But you can see excerpts.

Arnie and Margaret performed several illusions on their half hour show on BTV . Click here to view:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_14R1zNW1c

and a promotional video was shot during their August run in Beijing Click here to view:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKG9y3czJKk>



MYSTERIES OF THE HOUDINI GRAVE

continued from page 8

Houdini did not want his brother Leopold buried there because of the personal feud they were having. But apparently, Leopold is there, though his gravestone is not. Houdini's sister Gladys is also buried there but her gravestone is missing as well. Those two stones were taken out after being vandalized.

There are 9 Weiss's buried in that family plot; Mayer Samuel (1829-1892), Cecelia (1841-1913), Herman (1863-1885), Willie (1872-1925), HOUDINI (1874-1926), Nathan (1870-1927), Theo/Dash Hardeen (1876-1945), C. Gladys Weiss (sister) and finally Dr. Leopold Weiss.

But there is a tenth person buried in the cemetery that never is mentioned. Perhaps people have forgotten about her. Hannah Steiner, Cecelia's mother is buried there. Houdini had her disinterred and then placed next to Cecelia sometime between 1913-1916 as a 'birthday gift' to his mother. Strange, sure, but this was Houdini. There is a gravestone there which reads Grandmother 1821-1887. This was Houdini's maternal grandmother. She is between one of the marble benches and Herman's grave.



It is reported that Houdini paid for perpetual care of his family plot but there are no records to support this claim. S.A.M. Assembly 1 took on the duty of overseer of the plot while the national organization financed the upkeep. But for reasons, which remain 'cloudy', it was stopped in 2006. However, others, like the Houdini Museum, contributed greatly to the gravesite and are responsible for the restoration of the bust, which now adorns the site once again.

I do have a fear that Machpelah may some day end up like Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Philadelphia. That is why I am very pleased that the National S.A.M. decided to re-establish funding for the maintenance of the gravesite. There is no doubt that the S.A.M. and the general magic community owes a great debt to the most iconic magician of all time to care for his grave.

THE HOUDINI FUND



ABOUT THE HOUDINI FUND

Magicians who have fallen ill or have been injured may be helped through the Houdini Fund, an integral part of the S.A.M. Magic Endowment Foundation. The Fund will assist any magician or allied artist who is in financial need, with extra expenses normally not covered by insurance, such as nurses, oxygen, wheelchairs, and other similar medical requirements. Funds are granted for comfort assistance such as in-hospital TV rentals and newspaper delivery, outpatient aides and additional drug assistance. The Fund has paid for transportation to and from medical facilities. These are grants and not loans. Payments are kept confidential.

If you would like to submit a request for funds, please click here: [Houdini Fund](#)

emails to the editor



Eric,

As always, another great job with your latest newsletter. A newsletter that brings our region together as one and where everyone gets to know what everyone is doing. Sum it up with one word - SHARING. Wish I had these tools back in the mid 80's when I served as RVP. I give you five (5) thumb (tips) up.

Michael Piacente
Assembly 194

❖

Eric,

The newsletter is a beautiful publication, and your mentions are greatly appreciated! Thank you so very much - it was a great evening and so wonderful to be there when you presented the award to Bob Fitch!

Peter Samelson
Master Magician

❖

Eric,

I wanted to extend my deepest thanks for the award that you presented to me at the Colombini lecture. Needless to say, I was really surprised and quite astonished when you called me to the front of the audience and made the presentation. I am delighted and appreciative of your thoughtfulness. Again, I say thanks to you for this and for all you have done for magic.

Dr. Jerome Wayne, MD
Assembly 1

❖

Eric,

Just read your last newsletter - WOW - you did a great job with the issue. Hope to see you soon.

Bill Schmeelk
Assembly 25

Eric,

Even though my work schedule doesn't permit me to be active in the S.A.M. anymore, I admire & respect the tremendous job you do!

We have a close mutual friend in Marc DeSouza, who is probably the living magician I know the longest (we used to hang out at the old Kanter's Magic Shop in Philly as teenagers) – and one of the few I keep in touch with these days.

Roy A. Snyder
S.A.M. PNP

❖

Hi Eric:

Many thanks for the award inclusion, but I am rapidly gaining ever more awe at the magic that you do with this newsletter. Its seductive in that I get totally engrossed in it and the stories, i.e. personal stories, stories with history, I love the photos that accompany the Assembly listings, i.e. the faces with the names. It gives a more human dimension to these folk and I look to see whom I might recognize....and then I realize that all of this seems so effortless. You've made it so. It belies the hard work, concentrated thought and creative effort that goes into this trick, not to mention collecting all of this stuff. Argh...fooled again by one sly smiling deceiver. Congratulations...

Bob Fitch
Assembly 25

❖

Hi Eric,

Once again you have produced an amazing newsletter. The amount of time, effort and attention to detail that you put forth is truly inspiring. Thanks for representing us so well in the S.A.M.

Frank Monaco
Assembly 35

continued on page 14

NORTH ATLANTIC REGION ASSEMBLIES & CONTACT INFORMATION

Assembly 001

Meets at 7:15pm the first Friday of the month at Mt. Sinai Hospital - 1425 Madison Avenue, NY, NY 10029

Contact: *Pending Submission*



Assembly 014

Meets at 7:30pm third Thursday of the month at Denny's Restaurant - 103 Elwood Davis Road, Syracuse, NY 13212

Contact: James Reminicky
174 Blackwell Lane
Henrietta, NY 14467
(585) 705-2313
(585) 256-6464
4privet@earthlink.net



Assembly 024

Meets at 7:30pm second Tuesday of month at SW Pitts Hose Company of Latham - 226 Old Loudon Road, Latham, NY 12110

Contact: Joseph Goode
6 Seldon Street
Schenectady, NY 12304
(518) 831-9222
joe@magicmelvin.com



Assembly 025

Meets at 8:00pm third Friday of the month at VFW Hall - Veterans Place, Elmwood Park, NJ 07407

Contact: Phil Schwartz
225 Beverwyck Rd.
Parsippany, NJ 07054
(973) 263-4419
quackmagicphil@aol.com



Assembly 035

Meets at 7:00pm second Tuesday of the month at Milanese Restaurant - 115 Main St. Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Contact: Joel Zaritsky
21 Stonehedge Drive
Poughkeepsie, NY 39689
(845) 546-1559
jizdds@optonline.net



Assembly 047

Meets 7:00pm third Tuesday of the month at St. Joseph's School - 39 Gebhardt Road, Penfield, NY 14526

Contact: Mike Dedee
22 Bainbridge Lane
Webster, NY 14580
(585) 409-0138
(585)-872-6574
(585) 753-5267
mdedee@rochester.rr.com



Assembly 077

Meets at 7:30pm on the second Monday of the month at The Community United Methodist Church - 100 Park Blvd. Massapequa, NY 11758

Contact: Lou Johnson
52 East Beverly Parkway
Valley Stream, NY 11580
(516) 599-2612
loucircuit@aol.com



Assembly 147

Meets Third Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm at The Trestle Restaurant - 2 Idlewild Ave., Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY 12520

Contact: Anthony Luhs
PO Box 36,
Warwick, NY 10990
(914) 450-7829
anthonyluhs@yahoo.com



NORTH ATLANTIC REGION ASSEMBLIES & CONTACT INFORMATION

Assembly 161

Meets second Monday of the month at Stage House Restaurant - 366 Park Avenue, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

Contact:



Christopher Smith
419 Sharp Street
Hackettstown NJ 07840
(908) 850-8765
sam161@comcast.net

Assembly 168

Meets the fourth Wednesday of the month at United Methodist Church - 903 S. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ

Contact:



Tim Fortune
42 Robin St.
Rockaway, NJ 07866
(201) 910-3752
fortunemagic@gmail.com

Assembly 181

Meets at 7:00pm the first Thursday of the month at the First United Methodist Church - 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520

Contact:



Dave Zboray
117 Deacon Drive
Mercerville, NJ 08619
(609) 890-0614
dzboray@aol.com

Assembly 194

Meets at 7:30pm the third Wednesday of the month at the Catholic Slovak Club – 49 Lockwood Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10701

Contact:



Msgr. Dermot Brennan
5655 Arlington Avenue
Bronx, NY 10471
718-601-1030
Mbrdermot@aol.com

Assembly 263

Meets at 7:00pm fourth Monday of the month at the Big Flats United Methodist Church - 109 Hillview Dr., Big Flats, NY 14814

Contact Secretary:



Tim Cleary
613 Chambers Road
Horseheads, NY 14845
(607) 796-9336
magicbytc@aol.com

S.A.M. DISASTER RELIEF FUND

ABOUT THE DISASTER FUND

The Society of American Magicians Magic Endowment Fund assists magicians who have suffered losses from national disaster such as earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and fires. The Disaster Relief Fund is supported by donations from the magic fraternity and others.

Recent disasters have reduced the coffers and we need your help. Any donation to this humanitarian effort is appreciated. Recipients do not have to be members of our Society to receive assistance. If you can help, please mail donations to:

MEF Disaster Relief Fund

234 Towyn CT
Ambler, PA 19002

or PayPal to: samadministrator@magicsam.com

NOTHING TO HIDE – A REVIEW

continued from page 7

The tricks themselves were original presentations and executed flawlessly. Even those which, on the surface, appeared to be simple, such as modifying the contents of a locked and hidden box, or an invisible deck effect were done brilliantly and with unique style and humor.

Did I have an idea about how some of the tricks were accomplished? Of course I did, but even so, there was something in each and every effect that left me smiling at its smooth execution, or at how effectively I had been manipulated or misdirected. The show was fascinating on multiple levels and one of the best magical presentations I've seen in some time.

And at its core, isn't there also something just inherently comical about a few hundred people gathering each night and paying money to watch two men do things on stage with 52 pieces of cardboard?

Having said all of that, I still understand it's not for everyone. My friend, a fellow magician who attended the show with me, said he felt his attention waning midway through the show.

So maybe it's just my way of looking at it. I thought the atmosphere of mock gravitas and importance that the show presented, contrasted with the likeable and sometimes comical personalities of Derek and Helder and the lighthearted nature of the event, made for one of the most entertaining evenings of magic I've ever seen. Hands down.

And, oh yeah, anyone who says they know how most of the tricks were done, is being disingenuous.



emails to the editor

continued from page 11

Hi Eric -

Thanks for the great newsletter - it's so beautiful and filled with so much magical information about all the Assemblies in our region!

Over the years I've met so many famous magicians, including Al Baker - and now I add you to my list!

Best regards,

Ed Fitchett

Charter Member Assembly 35

❖

Eric,

Outstanding job!! I always enjoy reading the newsletter. Each quarter it gets bigger and better! Keep up the good... great work!

Bill Krupskas

Associate Member

❖

Hi Eric,

Thanks.

Another nice job... no, another GREAT issue!

Scott Wells

Associate Member

❖

Eric,

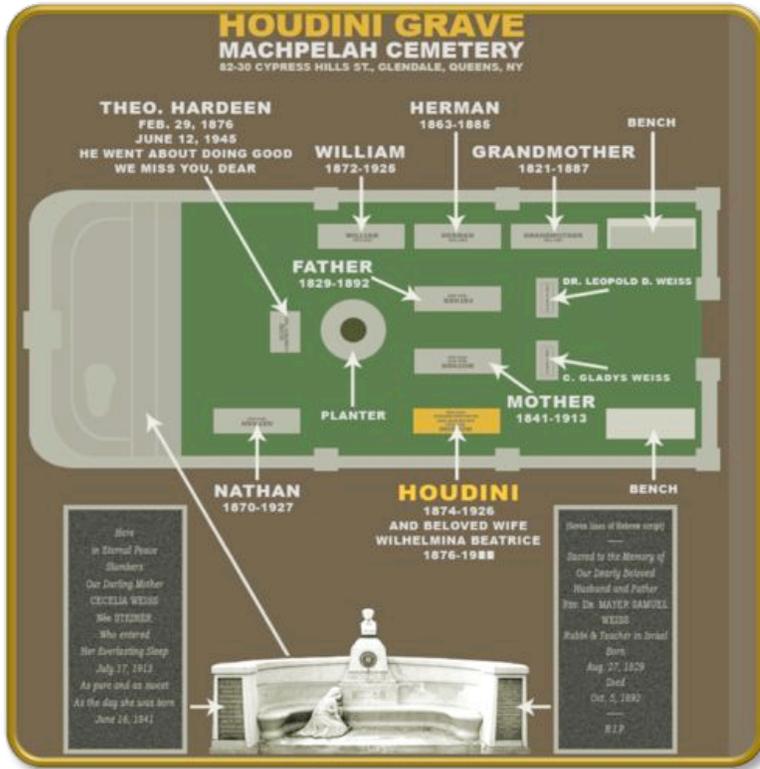
WOW, what an amazing issue. Congratulations Eric on your latest release. It's amazing how much material is covered and it's clear that you have devoted an amazing amount of your time to the Regional VP position. Thank you for all your efforts and in your constant quest to better the art of magic.

Brett Schulman

Associate Member

HOUDINI GRAVE AERIAL MAP

By Tom Interval



at the heart of a family dispute. Yet there lies Leo with the rest of the family while Bess slumbers underground miles away.

Before you explore the aerial map, here's a list of who is buried in the Houdini/Weiss family plot and how they're related to Houdini:

- Harry Houdini (1874–1926; born Erik Weisz, anglicized to Ehrich Weiss)
- Cecelia Weiss (1841–1913; mother)
- Rabbi Mayer Samuel Weiss (1829-1892; father)
- Theodore Hardeen (1876–1945; brother; born Ferencz Deszo Weisz)
- William Weiss (1872–1925; brother; born Gottfried Vilmos Weisz)
- Herman M. Weiss (1863–1885; half brother, by father's first marriage; born Armin Weisz)
- Nathan Joseph Weiss (1870–1927; brother; born Nátán Weisz)
- Dr. Leopold David Weiss (1879–1962; brother)
- Carrie Gladys Weiss (1882–1959; sister)
- Hannah Steiner (1821–1887; grandmother)

Here's an aerial map of the Houdini gravesite in Machpelah Cemetery in Queens, New York. It's based on my visit to the site.

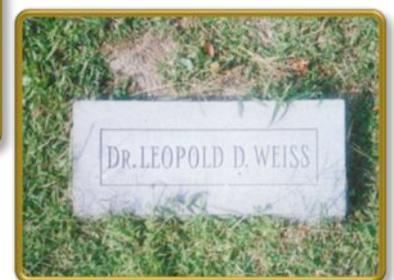
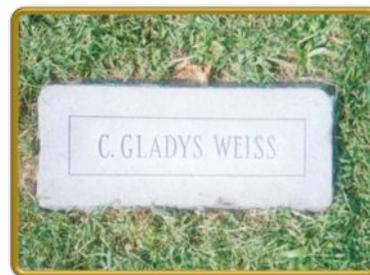
Houdini's brother, Leopold's and his sister, Gladys's headstones are no longer there. Someone vandalized them in 1993, along with two hand-carved stone benches. According to the manager of the cemetery, the markers will remain in storage until some person or organization can come up with the funding to repair them.

Consequently, many people who visit the plot probably don't even realize Leopold and Gladys are right there under their feet upon entering from the east side. Also, while Bess's name shares space on Houdini's headstone, she's not buried in this plot. That is because she was Catholic and Machpelah is a Jewish cemetery. Bess is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne, New York, about 35 miles north of Machpelah. If Houdini knew Bess wasn't buried next to him, he'd be *infuriated*. And the irony is that Houdini didn't want Leopold buried in the plot because Leo was

The Map

And pre-1994 photos of the gravesite showing Gladys's and Leopold's markers:

Houdini Gravesite. The two headstones at the very bottom of the photo, considerably smaller than the markers of other family members, are Gladys's (left) and Leopold's (right).



CONJURING

ANALYSIS AND EXECUTION

This month we have a contribution from the Millionaire's Magician, Steve Cohen. He created this piece when he was just a young boy and it was first published in the March/April 1987 issue of Tannen's Magic Manuscript.

NOTEPAD

EFFECT- A card is selected, signed, and cut into the deck. A spiral-bound notepad is introduced and flipped through. Paper clipped to the inside back cover is a card. Upon removing it and turning it over, it is seen to be the spectator's card, with his signature. You then explain that it wasn't hard to find because its back color has

PREPARATION – Buy a Spring Memo Book (60 sheets, 6"x4", spiral bound on the left side). On the inside back cover, paperclip a redbacked card, back-out. You must use a red deck with one bluebacked card on the bottom, facing the same way as the rest of the deck.

Performance: The deck is held in the left hand. Have two cards selected and signed. The first card is returned and controlled to the top. Show the second selected card, and get ready for a top change. Change the second selection for the first selection, and place it face down on the table. Have the spectator place both his hands face down on top of it. Top palm second selection from top of deck with right hand, one-handed if you can do it that way.

PERFORMANCE- You must force the bottom card without the spectator seeing its blue back. The easiest way would be to cut the deck, holding a break between the halves, and doing a dribble force. After doing this, put the selection face up on the table. Replace the right hand's portion onto the left's half. Of course, there are many other ways to force the bottom card without its back being seen-use whatever you feel comfortable with.

Turn the whole deck face up in your left hand. Place the selection face up onto the face of the deck. **HAVE IT SIGNED.** This is Important!! Turn the deck face down and do any in-the-hands false cut. Hold the deck in right hand Biddle grip.

Pick up the notepad in your left hand, clip-side on the bottom and towards the audience. Do a Kelly Bottom Placement with the selection and load it under the pad as the hands come together for a moment (as you patter that the pad helps out if tricks don't work in the end). Figure 1.



Figure 1

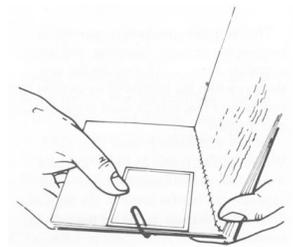


Figure 2

With the left fingers, slip the selection into the paperclip, under the pad, for about a quarter-inch. Table the deck. You now can be totally free and open with the pad since the selection is paper clipped to the back of it. Flip through the pad until you come to the back cover. The red backed card will be paper clipped there.

You will now do the standard Don Alan card switch. Your left hand holds the book open, the spiral binding at the base joints of the left fingers. This allows you to close the pad just by moving your fingers toward your palm.

Your right thumb goes onto the back of the red card, and your right fingers get firm contact with the selection underneath the pad. See Figure 2. Now, both hands will be turning palm down, your left fingers closing the pad, and your right fingers taking the selection from the bottom. Figure 3. Strive to make it look like the card was just removed from the pad and turned face up in one smooth motion. Explain that it wasn't hard to find their card since it had an odd-colored back. Let the spectator turn it over to reveal the final climax.

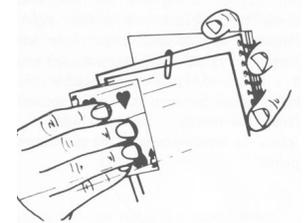


Figure 3

CEMETERY BELT AND THE WEISS/HOUDINI GRAVESITE

As you drive through the Jackie Robinson Parkway in NYC, there are over two and half miles of Queens' Cemetery Belt ahead of you. A burial ground so vast that like the Great Wall of China, its likely visible from space.

Cemetery Belt is a sprawling collection of cemeteries established after the State Rural Cemeteries Act of 1847 forbade the creation of any new cemeteries in Manhattan. Under the Act, cemeteries became a legitimate commercial enterprise for the first time in New York. Non-profit organizations were authorized to buy up land and sell plots to individuals, replacing the traditional practice of burying the deceased in churchyards and private property.

Between 1832 and 1849, a series of cholera outbreaks thoroughly exhausted Manhattan's remaining burial sites. The common belief at the time was that groundwater could become contaminated with the disease when infected corpses were exposed to the soil. As a result, all burials were prohibited on the island of Manhattan in 1852.

As the population increased, new changes, including bridges, power plants, utilities, and city infrastructure often required the displacement of gravesites. Manhattan started removing its deceased, and sent them to western Queens—tens of thousands of deceased were disinterred and transported to mass graves in the Cemetery Belt. As one could imagine, these transports were kept away from the public eye and often carried out in the middle of the night.

Surrounded on all sides by a vast expanse of headstones, Machpelah Cemetery makes up only a small portion of the sprawling graveyards. The cemetery dates back to the mid 1800's and the place is a shadow of what it once was, but one grave stands out. It's the monument of Machpelah's most celebrated resident... Harry Houdini.

Today, Queens' five million plus "eternal residents" more than double its living population. Most of



Cemetery Belt reached capacity long ago and as a result, some have fallen into disrepair with officials failing to provide the "perpetual care" their patrons are rightfully owed.

The Society of American Magicians was for many years the official patron of the Weiss/Houdini's Gravesite. However, care was mistakenly stopped in 2006. Thankfully due to the tenacity of Scranton Houdini Museum directors, Dick Brookz and Dorothy Dietrich, they convinced the National Organization of the S.A.M. to reestablish the fiduciary responsibility of the care of the Weiss/Houdini graves.

According to Machpelah's current CEO, David Jacobson, the cemetery is currently working on and planning major reconstruction. They are repairing old retaining walls as well as pathways, they demolished the old office building (pictured above) to free up space and the cemetery's plan is to offer new plots to the Jewish community. They are also planning on building a new site office, new public restrooms, and a new storage facility.



THE HEADSTONES FOR GLADYS AND LEOPOLD WEISS

By John Cox

On August 22, 2013 I posted a 1996 article on my website (click: [NY Times - 1996](#)) from the *New York Times* about the troubled upkeep of Houdini's grave. The article mentioned the headstones belonging to Houdini's siblings Leopold and Gladys, which have not been seen since they were damaged by vandalism in 1993. *The Times* article stated that some local magicians say they believe that Mr. Jacobson may have hidden them, or worse, sold them off to collectors.

Well, that's not true, and here's the proof. Here are the headstones as recently photographed by our friends Dorothy Dietrich and Dick Brookz of the Houdini Museum in Scranton. David Jacobson, the manager of

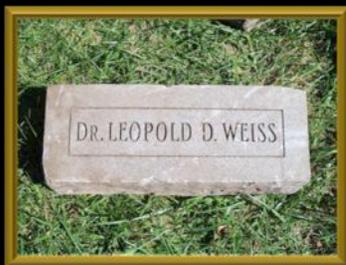


Machpelah Cemetery, has kept them safe in storage until funds can be raised to have them replaced.

The obvious question is why the

stones weren't replaced during the 1995 restoration with the \$25,000 raised by the S.A.M. with the help of David Copperfield and James Randi? Unfortunately, I don't have the answer to that. Thankfully the National Council of the S.A.M. recently voted to provide money for the upkeep of Houdini's grave.

There has also been some recent friction among the parties who have in the past looked after the plot, so at the moment there are no plans to restore these markers.



Hopefully a way to raise the necessary funds will be found and Gladys and Leopold will get their headstones back in place. It's really a shame that these graves have remained unmarked since 1993. In fact, we are in danger of a generation not even knowing that Gladys and Leo are buried with their family and big brother Houdini.

Grave timeline:

1. 1916: Houdini erects plot and exedra in memory of his parents.
2. November 4, 1926: Houdini is buried in plot.
3. 1927: S.A.M. holds memorial service and unveils Houdini bust by John Cassidy (and exedra S.A.M. emblem?).
4. April 1975: Original Houdini bust is smashed by vandals.
5. Spring 1976: S.A.M. replaces Houdini bust with replica.
6. August 1983: Second Houdini bust is stolen. Replaced by S.A.M. with replica.
7. 1987: Machpelah Cemetery goes into bankruptcy. State takes ownership.
8. November 1990: Third Houdini bust is stolen. (Replaced?)
9. 1993: Benches smashed and Gladys/Leopold headstones damaged.
10. 1996: Grave is restored with funds raised by the S.A.M. with help from David Copperfield and James Randi. Houdini bust and Gladys/Leopold headstones are not replaced.
11. March 2002: Police recover bust stolen in 1983 (returned to S.A.M. in 2011).
12. 2007: S.A.M. stops paying for the upkeep of the plot.
13. September 2011: Dorothy Dietrich and Dick Brookz replace Houdini bust with replica.
14. January 2013: Anonymous owner shares photos of original smashed bust on Wild About Harry.

S.A.M. North Atlantic Newsletter

Editor: Eric DeCamps

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Send news and questions to: eric@ericdecamps.com

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