

David Solomon interviewed by Roberto Giobbi

A few introductory questions

Q: Can you please give our readers a brief summary of what started you in magic?

A: I attended a summer camp for 9 years. Dan Langell was the camp director and also a very good magician and hypnotist. I started slowly when I was 14 years old and 9 years later, I was reading *Dai Vernon's Inner Secrets*.

Q: If you look back at the time you started in magic to today, what are the major steps of evolution you went through?

A: When I started in magic, I read the classic texts and I studied my hands in the mirror. Secrets were passed on from magician to magician, but one had to prove worthy of having the secrets. I studied magic and got firsthand instructions from Dan Langell, Frank Cizek (a Don Allan disciple) and Harry Riser (a Faro Shuffle expert). In 1970 I met Ed Marlo which changed my focus to card tricks. I studied with him and helped him put out the Marlo Magazines until he passed away in 1991. Marlo taught me how to think about card magic and how to solve card problems. After Marlo's death, there was a void in my magic life. Jim Krenz was a great friend, and he was the one who made it possible for me to attend Escorial. At Escorial I met magicians who have become my lifelong friends. Of course, I have been influenced by Juan Tamariz and each Escorial I prepared a presentation piece. This was a completely different mind set than the Marlo attitude which had little planned patter. Today I look for good card effects with good methods for which I can write presentation and staging.

Q: Did you have any teachers and/or idols when you started in magic?

A: The biggest influences in my life were Dan Langell, Don Alan, Ed Marlo, Juan Tamariz, Roberto Giobbi, Rafael Benatar, and Simon Aronson and John Bannon.

Q: What were your favorite sources to learn from (books, magazines, conventions, lectures)?

A: I learned from books such as *Expert Card Technique*, *Marlo's Revolutionary Card Technique*, Harry Lorayne's *Close up Card Magic*, all other Marlo books including the *Marlo Magazine* and all of Dai Vernon's work. Remember that tapes and DVD's and the internet were relatively new to magic. I was influenced by lectures that I saw over the years and firsthand instruction through session magic. My time with Ed Marlo really helped form my learning.

Q: Your magic performance can be considered in every way professional, but you have never relied on magic as your main source of income. You make a living by running a printer's business. So, by definition you are an amateur magician in the best sense of this term, or part time magician, as Gene Anderson once put it. Did you ever want to become a professional magician in the sense that this would be your major occupation?

A: I never wanted to be a professional magician. I was always worried that I would get tired of magic if I did it full time. I am now retired from the printing business and think about magic constantly. I love magic and would never do anything that would deter my interest.

Q: From all the activities in magic you indulge in (inventing, reading, practicing, performing, constructing, writing, sessioning, lecturing), what do you like best?

A: I love to invent good card effects. The rush that I get when I have finally put the finishing touches on an effect is what it is all about. I do though like to lecture and teach my effects to other magicians.

Q: We are going to talk about your various activities in magic. Is it important to you to do so many different things or did it just sort of happen?

A: I like to have my finger in many different things in regard to card magic. I am not very interested in other facets of magic although I like to watch it. I am interested in communicating my ideas to other magicians therefore my web site, my books and DVDs are very important to me. I fell into helping Marlo publish *Marlo's Magazines*, and it paid off in Spades. Marlo was the inspiration of my life.

David Solomon, the Creator of Magic

Q: You are a well-known inventor of magic, especially card magic. What do you consider your best inventions?

A: "Cigarette or Pencil through Card" – I invented it with Don England and sold it personally. Many have imitated it and sold it.

"Solmar Ace Assembly" – it was the first kick back assembly with a magical climax. This is described in my lecture notes and in *The Wisdom of Solomon*.

"Technicolor Oil and Water" – I think that this method looks like real magic. I sell the effect.

"Cutting 10's" – This is nothing more than cutting the Aces, but the story makes the effect. This is described in *Solomon's Mind*.

"Rising Card" – this gaff allows the magician to rise two cards from an impromptu deck and then do other effects before and after. I sell this gaff.

"Blank Jazz Aces" – this is my closer and it never fails to get great applause. The method is in *The Wisdom of Solomon*.

"Gypsy Curse" – I am proud of the construction and patter of this effect. It is in *The Wisdom of Solomon*.

"Revised Mexican Poker" – John Bannon and Tomas Blomberg and I came up with what I feel is a new classic that can be performed with jumbo cards on the stage. It is in *The Wisdom of Solomon*.

"Jamesway Poker" – This is a brilliant effect of Stuart James that I have made practical and entertaining to perform.

All of the effects in my books are like my little children. I try never to put in an effect that I don't like the construction. I could go on, but just read my books.

Q: Which do you consider your most important personal success in inventing?

A: This is hard for me to know but "Technicolor Oil and Water" has all of the elements that I am proudest of. It has clever gaffs and clever procedure and great plot.

Q: Which is your invention that had the most commercial success?

A: I had the most success in selling a package that included all of the gaffed cards from my book *Solomon's Mind*.

Q: Do you think inventing can be learned by others?

A: Yes, inventing can be learned by dogged determination and good inspiration.

Q: If you had to give a lecture on creating magic, what would be the 5 points you would make?

A:

1. Read and watch magic constantly - pick good plots.
2. Have a vision of how you want the magic to look.
3. Don't settle for the first solution. My inventions took many hours of thinking and experimenting with different methods.
4. Never be satisfied with any invention. Try to think about the method to make it as good as possible before publishing.
5. I have worked on Oil and Water for 30 years and just came up with a new way to do it that I think may be the best way to do the effect. I have also worked on Succession Aces since 1997 and am still seeking the perfect solution.
6. Work with others that you trust – synergy gives good energy.
7. Make sure you remember your ideas and the ideas of others, so that you can credit properly.

Q: Would you name one or two of your creations and tell us what the procedure was you followed from the idea to the finished product?

A: "Thoughts Across" – I invented "No Palm Cards Across" using a great idea of Ed Marlo's "The Sailing Count." except I used it in a different way than he used it. He felt that it could only be done with Bee cards. I can do it with any deck. I saw Juan Tamariz do a version of thought of cards across and I invented gaffs that enabled me to do the Sailing Count and then have the spectator count the gaffed cards. Together the gaffs and the technique create a perfect illusion of thought of cards traveling across without palming or the cards touching.

"Solmar Ace Assembly" – I saw Ed Marlo do an Ace Assembly and I anticipated the Aces returning to the piles that they came from. In fact, he had substituted Deuces for Aces. I was disappointed with the effect that he created, but it afforded me the opportunity to actually do the effect that I anticipated.

David Solomon, the Performer

Q: Do you perform for laypeople (Close-up, stage/music, talking)?

A: I perform for laymen usually at parties. I have been hired to do parties and cocktail strolling magic, but I prefer to perform for small groups that I know.

Q: Why do you perform? What does it do for you?

A: I love to perform my magic for other magicians. I enjoy fooling magicians and then telling them the secret. I also like party magic to entertain my friends and acquaintances. It does give life to the party.

Q: How would you describe your performance style?

A: I perform in a laid-back style. I do remember though the first time that I saw magical effects and try to allow people see it as I saw it. I try to perform what I feel is my most fooling effect for my first effect. I find that once laymen are really fooled that they relax and watch magic differently without being adversaries and heckling. I don't know if they

suspend their beliefs as some have said, but for a minute or two they are entertained with something that they cannot explain.

Q: Would you tell us a typical act? What items do you perform?

A: I do different effects for laymen than I do for magicians. For laymen I would typically start with the presentation that cards have personalities. I then ask for their favorite card and after I tell them something about their personality from the card that they selected I do the Ambitious Card. I follow with "Four the Hard Way" telling a story about each of the Ace, 2, 3 and 4. I then do Paul LePaul's "Gymnastic Aces" with a named four of a kind. I then do Triumph with the same four of a kind. I finish with two selected cards rising from the deck and if an encore is required, I do Out of This World. This gets the money.

Q: What is the most important thing in a performance for you?

A: I want to entertain spectators as well as fool them. I want them to come along with me to travel to a fantasy land for 15-20 minutes. I always try to have good energy and charm the people with my personality.

David Solomon, the Lecturer

Q: Do you remember when you gave your first lecture?

A: I think that I am getting too old. I really don't remember but I have been lecturing for a very long time - maybe the late 1970's.

Q: From then on you have lectured in many parts of the world. Would you like to tell us about some particular highlights?

A: In 1986 I lectured in 8 cities in Japan. The great Japanese magician Mr. Shigeo Takagi invited me to lecture after Ed Marlo declined to come to Japan. After my first lecture, he told me that my material that I had prepared was too technical for the Japanese magicians that I was addressing. Every day he would ask me to perform new self-working material for him. He then would tell me which effects to do in the lecture. I never did two lectures alike.

Q: How would you describe your type of lecture?

A: I lecture by doing the effect then the method. In the first half of the lecture, I like to do impromptu effects. In the second half, I do gaffed effects that have good patter stories. I try to keep my description of the method brief, but with enough detail that the magician can understand the method and/ or ask questions.

Q: What are the three most important things you want to communicate in your lectures?

A: I want to show good plots with tight methods and good thinking.
I also want to show smooth technique without any technical tip offs.
I want to show my great love for magic and entertaining.

Q: There are different types of lectures, such as lectures talking about history, inventions, techniques, effects, presentations, concepts or just demonstrations of items that will be sold afterwards, and there are many ways of giving it. What are your favorite types of lectures and who are your favorite lecturers?

A: I am still a trickster at heart. Show me a good effect with a good entertaining plot and a good performance and I will pay my money. Sometimes I don't get any tricks that I want to do, but maybe it will lead me to some new idea. I love to be fooled. This has not changed over the years. I do love the study of magic and I have enjoyed many discussions about magic at Escorial and 31 North. I am not as much of a history buff, but I would not turn down seeing the Hooker Rising Card.

David Solomon, the Writer

Q: Can you give us a brief overview of your writings (books, essays, lecture notes, DVDs etc.)? Do you write yourself and what do you like about writing?

A: My first contribution was to the *Tops Magazine* "Refined Oil and Water." When I was working on the *Marlo's Magazine*, Ed put many of my variations in print. My first magic was published in *Sessions* written by Simon Aronson in 1982. I then self-published *Solomon's Mind* written by Eugene Burger in 1997. My last book *The Wisdom of Solomon* was self published in 2007 and written by me with the help of Jeffrey Siegfried. I have one DVD on the magic of *Solomon's Mind*. I am very proud of the DVD documentary *Ed Marlo – It's All in The Cards* that I produced with all of Ed's students in 2003. Fun Inc and I recorded two single DVD tricks "Thoughts Across" and "Knives Gone Wild." I have submitted articles to the Linking Ring, Genii Magazine and Magic Magazine and MUM. I also have a new web site in which I publish a free David Solomon Magic Bulletin for subscribers. I do write most of the magic myself, but I find that I am too brief in my descriptions therefore, I have others edit my material before I submit it for print.

David Solomon, the close friend of Edward Marlo

Q: You are among the very few who were close to Ed Marlo for many years. How did you meet him? Please tell us a bit about the sessions you had with him.

A: I met Ed Marlo in the early 60's but I did not know who he was. I formally met him when I got out of the Army in 1970. I met him after seeing one of his students Steve Draun fool me with one of Marlo's effects. He told me if I liked that effect, I should come over to the restaurant to meet the inventor. For 20 years until his death I sessioned with Ed Marlo. Marlo did much of the magic for me that ended up in the *Marlo Magazine* or in *The New Tops*. When I helped him publish *Marlo's Magazines*, I never read the material thoroughly until it was published for fear that I would do an effect for someone that I was not supposed to do. Marlo was a wizard. He could solve any card problem. I write about an effect that I posed to him one evening over the phone which I had been working on for 3 months with no solution. I called him at 8:00PM in the evening and he called me back in the morning at 9:00AM after working on the problem all night. We got together that night and he presented me with 21 pages of handwritten notes. See "Marlo vs The Observation Test," *Sessions*. Marlo could fool me at will. I would sit for hours with him as he did effect after effect. At one session we had done magic for three hours and I finally said would he please show me how one of the effects worked. He looked at me and said that he finally had a sale. He was the greatest and sometimes I yearn to be able to sit with him just one more time to show the magic I had learned since his death in 1991.

Q: What are in your opinion Marlo's most important contributions to magic? Did he change anything?

A: Marlo could solve card problems better than any other magician. He also invented original moves and handlings. He was the most prolific writer of card magic in the 20th

century. Marlo had great intuition about effects. He was able to see good effects and make them better. For example, he changed Roy Walton's Collectors from 3 cards collecting 2 cards to a four of a kind collecting 3 selections. This seems like a little addition, but it really made the effect a classic. He could solve any card problem submitted to him. If I were going to pick a team of the best thinkers in card magic, he would be unquestionably my first choice.

Q: Do you think he received the recognition he deserved?

A: I think that he received the proper recognition, but he got bum wrapped by people who said that he was a thief. When you actually sat with Marlo, he was full of information to share. Many people that sat with him got many ideas from him that later were published under their names. Marlo did want to invent card magic and sometimes went overboard in thinking that he had thought of effects or moves that he saw others do. He was a compulsive thinker about card magic and sometimes reprocessed ideas. He was a genuine genius and I never met anyone like him.

Q: What influence did Marlo have on your personal approach to magic?

A: Marlo taught me card magic. I learned by watching him perform the most difficult sleight of hand and the most complicated routines. I am indebted to him because he taught me how to think about magic. It is too bad that he died in 1991. I would have loved to show him some of my new creations. I know that he would have loved my solutions and better, yet, he would have built new magic from my variations.

Final Comments

Q: If you hadn't become a magician, what else could you imagine having done?

A: I was a salesman for 30 years and I studied the art of selling. I love magic as my avocation and frankly can't imagine life without magic.

Q: What is the question I missed asking you?

A: Magic has afforded me the opportunity to meet the most interesting people of my life all over the world. I have made lifelong friendships with these people. Most of my best friends are magicians. I know that I could go anywhere in this world and find magical friends. When Madeleine, my wife and I honeymooned in Seattle and then British Columbia, I went to the magic shop to get directions to good restaurants and sights to see. We have a wonderful brotherhood and something that I cherish and would never trade.

Q: One last piece of wisdom.

A: I have tried in my writings to give credit to my fellow magicians. I hope that all magicians try to remember how they came up with ideas and credit properly. There is nothing more deceitful than to steal another man's good idea. Be gracious to your fellow magician and it will pay you back in Spades!