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By Shawn McMaster

Words like versatile, professional, outrageous, outspoken are a start, but to hang a single definition on this 47-year-old performer is “like trying to pick up a watermelon seed,” according to his friend, Rick Maue. “Every time you think you’ve got it, it slips from your fingertips.”

The Man Who Had Everything 54

By Gabe Fajuri

While entertainment was Jay Marshall’s business, collecting was his passion. At the time of his death in May 2005, every square inch of Magic Inc. in Chicago was crammed with his stuff, some great and glorious, but much of it dreadful, down-and-dirty, hadn’t-been-touched-in-thirty-or-more-years junk.

Targeting Blaine 60

By Alan Howard

He’s turned down sponsorship offers from The Gap, Milk, and Pepsi for previous stunts, yet David Blaine accepted a deal with Target to spend 53 hours out in the elements, spinning around and around... and he did it on just one week’s notice!

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By Stan Allen

Sure, Kevin and Caruso have a pretty sweet deal now, but if there really is such a thing as “paying your dues,” these two cruise-ship magicians have paid up enough to cover a lifetime membership.

Magic at the Manor 66

By Brad Henderson

What would you do if you received a single card in the mail with the words “Mangled Cats. The Man Soars. Can you Imagine?” printed on it? Well, if you’re a friend of Richard Garriott, you know to start looking for clues, because you’ve just been invited to possibly the magic party to end all magic parties.



ON THE COVER

Photo: Susan Wilson.



A black envelope arrives in the mail. There is no return address. Inside is a single Silver Serpent-brand playing card. Written on the back are the words: "Mangled Cats. The Man Soars. Can you Imagine?" What would you do if you received this cryptic missive in the mail? Well, many recipients knew to look for clues, because they're friends of Richard Garriott.

Richard Garriott, creator of the Ultima series of video games and a titan in the computer gaming world, is also an amateur magician. He designed a home that has become an Austin landmark, and each year throws an "off the hook" Fourth of July party, which traditionally never falls on the holiday. This year's Fourth of July party was in November.

Previous parties have included "When Hell Freezes Over," where snow machines and ski slopes were brought to central Texas

in July, and "The Titanic," where a scale model of the ocean liner was built. Guests arrived in period costumes and enjoyed a cruise on Lake Austin before tragedy struck. At the end of the night, those who weren't lucky enough to get in a lifeboat were actually plunged into the lake. Richard still beams when he recalls the Mayor of Austin going down with the ship.

The 2005 party began simply enough. Richard's new home was under construction, so he threw a "barn raising" party. Guests arrived in overalls and work clothes. While there, it began to rain, then thunder and lightning. Eventually, a tornado hit, and the room they took shelter in — actually, the back of a moving van — was spun around and eventually landed...in Oz. When the doors opened, Munchkin Land was revealed, complete with florescent flowers, Munchkins, and a house resting cockeyed on a witch. Guests traveled through a multi-acre Oz, having to prove their bravery, brains, and heart. Ultimately, they recovered the witch's broom, spoke to the fiery Wizard, and watched the lighter-than-air balloon ascend before returning to... Texas.

Always looking to top himself, Richard wanted the 2006 party to be themed around magic. So, for over seven months, Richard

and I, along with Dawn Allee, Steve Hemphill, and Pam Martin, made "Magic at the Manor" a reality. For Richard, his family, and 130 guests, it was a night like no other.

First, people had to figure out there even was a party, how to get there, and when. They had to unlock the secret website hidden on their invitation card. If you look closely at the face of the card you will notice a website: www.gaffus.com.

Well, it wasn't *that* easy. Gaffus.com was actually the clue site. People needed a hint to help them unlock the secret message on their card, though Richard's attitude was little more Darwinian. On the site you found the following equation: $32^{\circ}\text{F} < t < 451^{\circ}\text{F}$. With that clue, what would you do?

Many realized that it had something to do with temperature, specifically something to do with either freezing the card or heating it — but not burning it. The invitation was printed with special ink. When heated, several of the letters disappeared, and one rearranged itself! "Mangled Cats, etc." became magicatthemanor.com, which was the website with the official invite to the party. The site consisted of three pages: The first, an amazing broadside designed by

card. The card's suit designated how the guest list of 120 would split and travel throughout the evening. Then it was off to the tent, where an original Carter Spirit Cabinet eight-sheet lithograph greeted the guests as they entered.

The dress code was monochromatic black and white, and the tent reflected this right down to the choice of hors d'oeuvres. A well-stocked bar took care of the guests, but many ventured to the stage where, set off by velvet ropes, was our recreation of the original Sawing prop.

Prologue

At 7:45, master of ceremonies Michael

Weber gathered the crowd. His remarks were perfectly tailored to Richard's event. Michael explained how the movement of the crowd would occur, and warned that if anyone became separated from their "pack," they would be disassembled and become a permanent part of Richard's collection.

Next, I explained how I discovered that Selbit had originally presented the Sawing with an audience member and Richard's familial relationship. Finally, our host, Richard Garriott took the stage. As he was speaking, there was a small disturbance backstage and a sand bag fell from the ceiling, destroying the Sawing prop. I quickly

was occupied by a large blackjack table where Derek DelGaudio held his audiences spell-bound as he demonstrated the art and artifice of the card table.

After each performance, the docents read a letter from Richard. He mentioned that we had received crank calls and even one death threat for exposing the Sawing. He told them not to worry, but that we did have a problem. The gaffus was missing, but if found, it was not to be disturbed and the host was to be informed.

About this time, Derek and Eric each confessed they had seen something suspicious earlier. Derek had seen Eric hiding a



[Previous spread] The Austin, Texas mansion where the party — and crime — would take place. Clues were offered up by the cryptic playing-card invitation and playbill. [Above] Host Richard Garriott addresses the guests. Brad Henderson and Garriott access the unexpected damage to the Sawing.

A
♥
SILVER
SERPENT



rushed out to assess the damage. I assured Richard that we could repair the prop, but that there was a bigger problem. I had discovered backstage that the "gaffus" was missing. Stunned, Richard sent everyone off to their first show.

While everyone's experience was slightly different, here is a sample evening:

Act 1

The first group's docent directed the guests to Richard's dining room, where Eric Mead was the master of this domain. His elegant sleight of hand and quick wit transformed this space into a party. Two doors down, the living room

bag behind the tent. It contained a number of bottle caps, several of which had letters scratched off. Derek did not know what they meant, but maybe they would be of use. In the other room, unbeknownst to Derek, Eric revealed that he had seen Derek hiding a blackjack shoe with some cards in it. They were rubber-banded and probably in some special order. To help the group out, Eric also gave them a copy of Erdnase, which he managed to lift out of Derek's bag when he wasn't looking. The game was afoot.

After the first 40-minute set, the guests returned to the main tent for drinks or to visit Just Alan. Off to the side of the main tent was a small candlelit alcove. Statues of Hindu gods adorned this temple, and inside Just Alan was presenting Tarot readings as

David Rowyn, with an image on loan from Norm Nielsen. The second, directions. The third, the following letter from Richard:

The Promise

Dear Friends,

As many of you may know, I have been a long supporter of the magical arts and have collected a few interesting trinkets along the way. Recently, a very exciting situation has come to light.

Have you ever seen the classic *Sawing a Woman in Half* illusion. It was invented by P.T. Selbit at the turn of the last century. His illusion revolutionized the world of magic and popular culture perhaps more than any other illusion ever. Recently a friend of mine, Brad Henderson, discovered some obscure press clippings of Selbit's early performances. He was surprised to discover that when Selbit first began performing the illusion he did not use trained assistants for the Sawing. He chose someone from the audience to be "sawed in half"! Oddly, some eighteen months later, P.T. Selbit switched to using the trained assistant as we have come to know today. Unfortunately, no record of the original illusion's secret with the use of an audience member remains. Or so was thought until recently.

One evening Brad was visiting me and perusing my collection of antiquities, which included a few old family pictures. Brad noted that some of my ancestors had the name of Tibbles, which was P.T. Selbit's real name. We did a bit of research and found out that P.T. Selbit was a distant cousin. As we looked through the photos, Brad realized that one of them showed Selbit's original prop for the Sawing illusion. With the photo as our guide, we consulted some of the world's leading illusion designers and set out to recreate the original prop and illusion. I would like to invite you to the unveiling of this amazing illusion...

At Magic at the Manor 2006, not only would the prop be on hand, but we were going to perform the sawing and — to keep the secret alive — explain its workings to each and every member of the audience!

Apart from the website, no one in the world of magic knew anything of our historical discovery. And for good reason. It's a lie. But as most good magic tricks are built around a lie, so are many amazing parties.

Putting it Together

Being a video game designer, Richard Garriott understands the concept of an immersive, interactive experience. Along the way, he wanted every moment of this party to be magical. The process began in May with a meeting between Richard, his girlfriend, Kelly, and her daughter, Brennan; his

event coordinators, Pam Martin and Dawn Allee; Steve Hemphill, the technical theater coordinator; and myself.

Potential plotlines were discussed, as well as the specific resources available in Richard's home. Called Britannia Manor, the home was built on the highest point in Austin to accommodate his fully functional astronomical observatory. In addition, Richard can move from any room to any other room without being seen via a series of secret trapdoors and passages. As one approaches the house, one notices a four-horse carousel on the front lawn, complete with calliope music, and a small island with a Zen-like temple just behind. In the house, one finds a dungeon accessible only to those initiated into the secrets of its entry. The dungeon is a private subterranean space where Richard houses some of the more macabre and arcane pieces of his collection.

Richard's temperament runs from the artistic to the scientific. Across the hall in the science room, you will find several relics from an era when both worlds sometimes collided. Most notable are several orreries, Victorian mechanical models of the solar system designed so that a turn of a crank can convey the movements of the planets. Also to be found are dozens of curtas (mechanical calculating devices, which were the forerunner of the modern calculator), Tesla coils, Jacob's ladders, and Leyden jars. It is almost like being on the set of a Frankenstein movie, but with class. Perhaps the most wondrous piece to be found in this room is a stunning rendering of a DNA helix drawn by one of its two discoverers, James Watson.

As Richard and I organized the event, we had an important goal in mind, an objective from which we would not

waiver. We wanted each and every guest to leave thinking: "Magic is cool. It is important. It is something that I would want to learn more about and support in the future." To that end, we brought in some of the best performers in the world. We also wrote and designed, with David Rowyn, a full-color souvenir booklet featuring Richard's house and collections, a brief history of magic, and the biographies of all of the players.

The Effect

While we wanted to keep *Magic at the Manor* a private event, it turns out, someone leaked the secret. As the guests arrived, several protesters — apparently local magicians — had signs outside the gate trying to dissuade people from coming in. The protesters objected to the Sawing illusion being exposed, even though this method had not been performed in almost a hundred years.

As guests entered the registration tent, paparazzi from several of the local papers were on hand, as well as our official event photo-grapher. Along the red carpet were several pieces from Richard's magic collection, including two black-art tables once owned by Harry Houdini, a Wakeling automaton, and books by P.T. Selbit. After registering, the guests were given a lanyard. On each was an antique playing



art. Two decorators spent over five hours working on Alan's tent the day before the show. Then Alan took another four hours to add his finishing touches. Some guests gasped when they entered his room.

Then, on the hour, the second act began.

Act 2

The group journeyed across the lawn to the carousel. The horses were in full gallop, and riding one was David Williamson's alter ego, Lynch the Genie. His show was part birthday party, part magic shop, part psychological breakdown. David had people laughing so hard they could not stand up.



Just Alan offers profound Tarot readings in a truly appropriate setting. Hull Youngblood demonstrates one of many unique automata from Garritt's collection. At the carousel, Lynch the Genie, portrayed by David Williamson, is almost as "drunk" as his skunk.

Featuring stock children's magic, as well as a flawless execution of the Needle Swallowing, David's performance ended with him thumbing his nose at the "big time magicians in their tuxes in the tent" by presenting his own madcap version of the Sawing. Unfortunately, the blade actually got stuck *inside the spectator's body!* He played the character to perfection.

After Lynch's performance, our British historian, portrayed by Richard Hatch, shared with the group what a gaffus is. He also pointed out an unusual orb floating in the air above Garritt's observatory. Hatch showed a poster of Okito's Floating Ball and explained that while we know how the ball levitates, how it glows as if lit by an ethereal supernatural force was a secret taken to Okito's grave. This was our chance to learn that secret.

was told to stand very still as Dr. Rectum tried to transport him to a second box stationed behind the audience.

On cue, a Tesla coil began firing, shooting sparks at the enclosure. Slowly the volunteer began to fade out, until he finally disappeared completely. Hatch went to the second box, but the volunteer did not arrive. Then, someone from the audience noticed that there was movement in the observatory. You could see the figure of this man grow out of nothing. Hatch yelled up, telling him to find the secret. The orb went out. When the man was transported back, there in his pocket was a light bulb. He had no idea how it got there and no memory of having obtained it. Of course, Hatch had pointed out that temporary memory loss is a common small side effect of the trip.

Act 3

To feature specific rooms in Richard's house, the group of thirty guests were broken into sets of ten: Kings, Queens, and Jacks.

The Queens were led to a stand-alone building in Richard's yard, where Hull Youngblood was the keeper of the automata room. Hull gave a brief tour of the collection, including several pieces from the Victorian era and a large number of examples from England's Cabaret Mechanical Theater. Then, Peter Samelson was introduced. Peter is an artist. His Smoke routine features a through-line which addresses toys — adult toys. What better setting could exist than this wonderful

space devoted to the toys of the imagination? Closing with his very artistic Snowstorm, Peter directed the guests outside, where two young assistants were auditioning for help.

Vanessa Lauren and Tiny Bubbles (a.k.a. Steve Daly) were tired of doing all the work and getting no credit. They had decided to do their *own* show, but they still needed an assistant. So, young men from the audience were auditioned and put through the paces that their female counterparts usually are. The laughter could be heard on the other side of the house. In the end, the lucky winner was given a diploma — a scrap of newspaper from the dove cage. Just a scrap of paper? Or was it a clue?

The Jacks were led into Richard's media room. Here, he houses several pieces from his

adventure collection, including a Russian cosmonaut suit, artifacts recovered from the Titanic, and most of his magic collection. Bill Malone took over and held the audience in stitches with his stunning card work. Before leaving, room manager Stephanie Gorss, grew real roses on Richard's P & L Rose Bush, which were given to the ladies in the room.

The docent then led the guests down the hallway where they encountered a gypsy mystic, played by Andrew Goldenhersh. Claiming to know why the Sawing was destroyed, he handed the group a book with pages missing from it and explained that Selbit's ghost destroyed the prop as Karmic justice for

come with the room." Seemingly using props from the collection, Max placed the sitters in touch with the "other side."

After their brush with the bizarre, the guests were led into the science room where they discovered Jon Armstrong, representing the Magical Alliance, and John Lovick, representing the magical press. The two were arguing over who was the sexiest. Armstrong demonstrated his magnetic qualities with a packet of cards, while Lovick gave one lucky lady the ultimate present — a magical drawing of himself in his "Chippendale's outfit." Before departing, Armstrong gave one man a jar of mysterious powder.

the Streets," wowed them. When he revealed the melon under his hat for his Cups & Balls finale, there was a collective whoop. After his stellar performance, two young "e-llusionist magicians" entered the scene and talked about extreme magic — the kind you can download on the Internet and perform the next day. Jared Kopf encouraged Marcus Eddie to perform the trick he learned yesterday. Marcus borrowed a ring and explained, "Extreme magic is live. It's raw. It's about emotional investment. Not mine... yours." And with that, he threw the borrowed ring into Richard's 14-foot-deep scuba pool. While



Gazzo wows the crowd by producing six oranges and a melon. Brandon Kopf helps an audience member retrieve a locked box from the bottom of the pool. The Mad Scientist (Cy Albertson) and the Curator (Richard Hatch) contemplate their Transported Man illusion.

revealing his secret. Andrew then did several stunning pieces of magic, ending with him transforming into a living, talking skeleton.

The Kings made their way into Richard's dungeon, where a full-size human skeleton had been resting peacefully for a dozen years. Also on display were two authentic shrunken human heads from the Jivaro tribe of Central America, original vampire hunting kits complete with crucifixes that fire silver bullets, and the original Leatherface mask from the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* movie. The group was arranged in a circle in preparation for a visit with the spirits, with Max Maven as the guide. Max entered the room and explained, "What separates me from the other performers is the relationship to the environment." He paused dramatically. "Richard purchased me in 1998. I

Back to the tent. By now the guests were deep into the story. Each group worked feverishly to figure out their clues. The newspaper from the assistants had a sudoku puzzle on it. Some tried to solve it. Letters from the bottle caps spelled words; the only one that seemed to make sense was "Capezio." There was a key in the back of Erdnase which allowed one to decipher the phrase, "It is not what I am but where you found me." But there were extra cards left over, a pair of Aces and two more that apparently stood for "metric system." The light bulbs confounded many, so much so that two were shattered as people tried to peek inside.

Act 4

For the fourth act, the guests were led to the pool deck where Gazzo, "King of

the audience noticed a small ATA case sunk at the bottom, a police officer came forward and took Marcus in for questioning in regard to the destruction of the Sawing prop.

The audience then turned their attention to Alain Nu, who was seated atop a ladder. He encouraged a member of the audience to hide spikes under Styrofoam cups before he walked down the steps of the ladder, avoiding the spikes. The police officer arrived again and took Alain away, and not a moment too soon. As he was being taken away he yelled, "What you want is at the bottom of the pool. What you need isn't in any book." With Jared's help, the audience realized what they needed to do. They retrieved the box. Some used a hook, others dove right into the pool!

The box was, not surprisingly, locked. No one knew the combination. Someone tried the missing page numbers from the book Andrew had given them. When opened, inside the box was a zip-lock bag. Inside that, a sealed container; inside that, another bag. Then a brown bag. Then a container. Then a ball of yarn. A spectator unwound the ball of yarn and inside was the borrowed ring.

Resolution

Finally, all of the groups convened at the tent. Michael Weber lectured briefly on perception and magical thinking, before deconstructing the clues. "It is not what I am but

He took the pieces of newspaper and restored them. When put together they formed a page from the Minnesota sports section. What is the team from Minnesota? The Twins. And yes, throughout the evening, there had been a pair of identical twins roaming the party, right beneath their noses. But while Ava and Leonna Snell admitted to stealing the legs, they did not destroy the box.

For that, Michael went to the other clues. Marks on the cards spelled "Help me." Bottle caps when viewed from *inside* a bottle revealed "Incider," a poorly spelled way of saying "Insider." And the light bulb was able

away, Tiny was heard to exclaim, "I'm just big-boned."

Michael explained that while we were not able to recreate Selbit's sawing, we would wrap things up not with the way things *used* to be done, but with the way they are *now*. For the finale, Kevin James took the stage. Kevin began by producing a bowling ball, then moved into floating a rose. The audience gasped at least three times during Kevin's presentation of this now-classic effect. Finally, Kevin and crew closed with his famous mind-blowing Sawing illusion. It was the perfect finale for an unbelievable evening. ♦



Michael Weber reveals the lost gaffus — a pair of fake feet. But who destroyed the Sawing? It was the assistants, Vanessa Lauren and Tiny Bubbles. Kevin James closes the show with his amazing Sawing a Person in Half.

where you found me." Well, the cards were found in a dealing *shoe*. If you arranged all the scratched bottle caps it spelled, "Capezio," which is a type of shoe. The newspaper had two shoe ads on it and also the comic strip *Shoe*. If you rubbed the contents of Armstrong's jar on Lovick's paper, it read, "What is the measure of a man?" and had two ruler marks each going to 24 inches, which is two feet. The cards had an extra pair, and "metric system"? Well, the gaffus was *fake feet*! But where were they hidden? Well, remember the light bulb? It came from the footlights — not just any footlights, but fake footlights. That's right, the missing gaffus was a pair of fake feet that someone hid in the fake footlights.

But who did it? Michael took each of the clues and transformed them magically.

to light on its own. "Many hands make light work." Who did it?

It was the *other* set of twins at the party, the only set of twins who could have gotten all of these props into the other magicians' hands, the only people with enough magical experience in so many genres to be able to do so. Yes, the culprits were the assistants — Vanessa and Tiny!

Tiny yelled out, "Of course we did it. If you perform the trick without an assistant, then we're out of a job. We need this to live. The Assistant's League stopped Selbit a hundred years ago, and we were sent to stop you tonight." Michael was stunned. "I don't believe you," he exclaimed. "What do you mean?" yelled Tiny, "I just told you we did it." "No," Michael said, "I don't believe you're twins." As the two were being hauled

Author's Note: A lot of people worked on Magic at the Manor. While many have already been mentioned, several of my friends volunteered their time to help and deserve recognition. Special thanks go out to David Rowyn, Javier Garza, Roger Gorss, Sam Haine, Nathan Coe Marsh, and Nancy Moon. Finally, a huge tip of the hat goes to our hosts, Richard Garriott and Kelly and Brennan Miller. They opened their home to each of us and made sure everyone had a memorable night. Whether it was the couches in the green room, the 100-year-old bottles of port at the after party, or the surprise lecture by magical legend Robert Stencel, Magic at the Manor was a memory which will long live in our imaginations. W