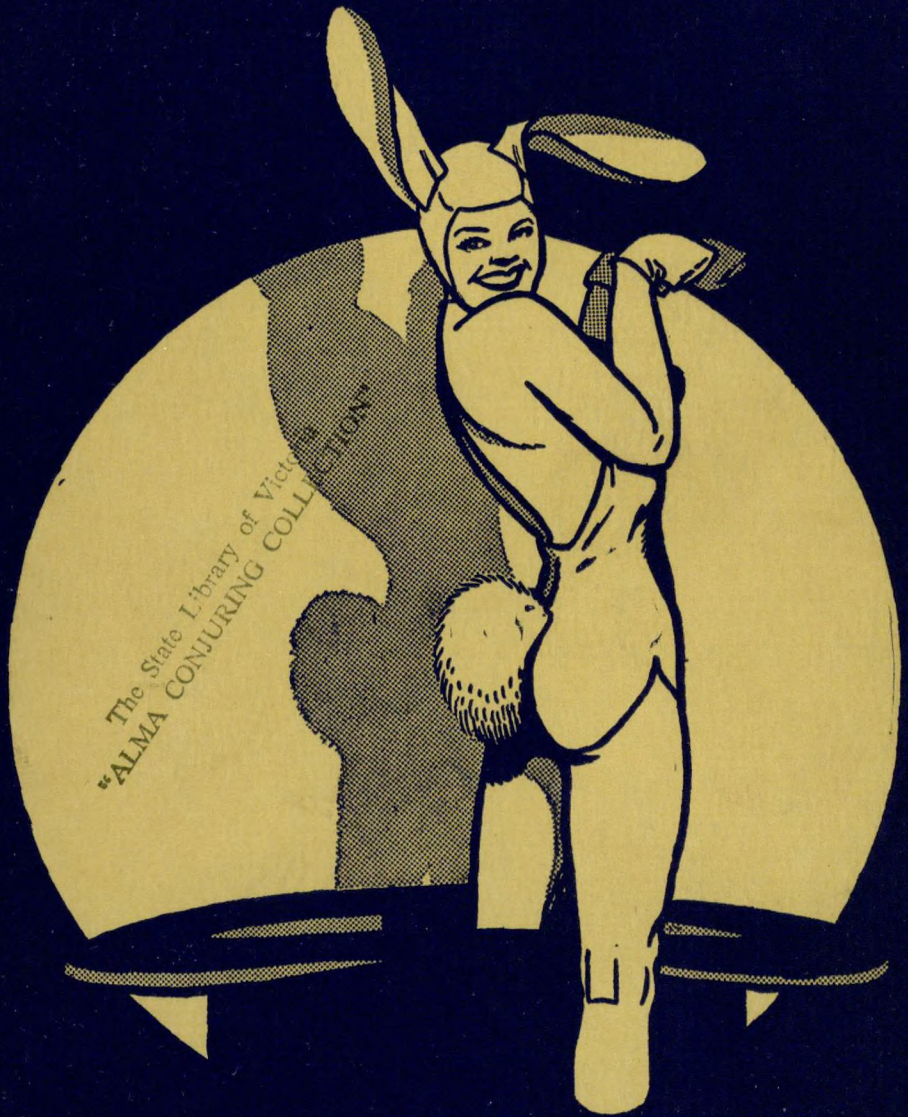
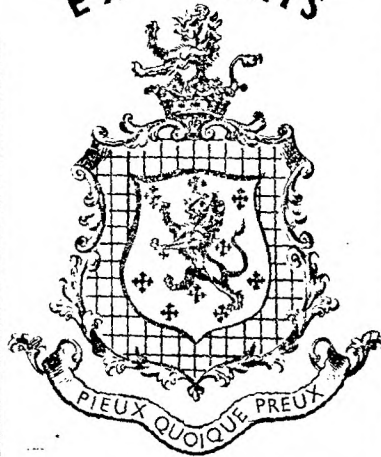


MAGICDOTES



BY ROBERT ORBEN

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MAGICDOTES

BY

ROBERT ORBEN

Author of
The Encyclopedia of Patter
Patter Parade



A BOOK OF ANECDOTES AND STORIES ABOUT
MAGIC, MAGICIANS, AND MENTALISTS



FIRST EDITION



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INTRODUCTION



Until the publication of **MAGICDOTES**, there was a serious shortage in magic of anecdotes concerning magic and magicians. I say serious, because the folk-lore of any art is one of the most important phases of it. The real color of magic lies in the re-telling of its famous events and little glimpses into the lives of its great. But to date, this part of magic memorabilia has been sadly neglected.

Before I made statements though, I decided to check on the matter and come up with the facts concerning it. Therefore, I made a three-week study of 138 digest magazines. I chose this type of magazine because its contents reflect the interests of the American public more than any other medium I can think of. Each digest contained an average of 34 articles, 1½ book condensations, and 106 fillers or anecdotes. The totals were 4692 articles, 207 book condensations, and 14,628 fillers. In all of these 19,527 possible places of mention — Magic and its allied subjects came into the spotlight only seven times!

Now magic is supposed to be an art that interests old and young alike. An art that is mysterious and fascinating to all who come in contact with it. Yet in a national publication, reflecting the interests of 140,000,000 people — the subject of magic comes up but once in every 2790 articles, books and anecdotes!

Although you couldn't ask for more conclusive proof, I checked right into the heart of the art — the magic magazines themselves. I studied every major magic magazine published in the past few years, a total of some 400 magazines. I found but 40 recognizable anecdotes concerning magic in them!

Anecdotes are more than funny or interesting stories. They represent the best advertising medium a person, business or art can have. Samuel Goldwyn would be just another Hollywood producer as far as the motion picture public is concerned, if it weren't for the barrage of anecdotes that are published about him. Rockefeller would have been just another millionaire except for the famous stories regarding his penchant for distributing dimes. Magic also needs the publicity and interest good anecdotes can create.

MAGICDOTES is really two books in one. It is a book of anecdotes and a patter book. You can use MAGICDOTES in three different ways. Use any one of them intelligently and you will receive your dollar back a thousand-fold.

SECTION ONE contains original gags and anecdotes about magic and magicians. They can be used as either straight comedy material in your act or as gems of interest when giving an interview. The average magician, while supposedly living a life fraught with glamour and excitement, has nothing to say when confronted by a reporter or writer. These people don't want to hear how your act is routined or how you drew 600 people at Goldberg's Gypsy Grotto. They want amusing or interesting anecdotes to build a biographical article on. Take a one-year's course in feature article writing and that's what it boils down to.

But you don't have any interesting anecdotes? Nothing ever happened to you in magic that was funny? Then turn to SECTION ONE, substitute your name for "a famous magician" or "a noted mentalist" — and you've led the most fascinating life imaginable. Don't have any scruples about weaving a tale to add glamour to your biography. Most of the top stars in Hollywood have several "true" stories of their lives running at the same time, each one different from the others. Houdini told the story of his life in so many different ways, magical historians still aren't sure of the true facts. So use this material in SECTION ONE as much as possible and you'll be seeing the size and effect of your published press releases increasing.

SECTION TWO contains the best anecdotes that have appeared in magical publications in the past few years. SECTION THREE contains the best magicdotes sent to me in response to a nation-wide appeal conducted early this year. The stories in these two sections represent a good cross-section of magic as the layman wants to see it. So, when you're introduced as a magician, don't just do a few card tricks — relate some of the folk-lore of magic and you'll be surprised at the interest it will create. The names Houdini, Thurston, Dunninger, Herrmann, strike up all sorts of imaginative thoughts in the minds of the lay public. They can listen endlessly to the stories concerning Houdini's countless escapes, Houdini's adventures in Africa, or Dunninger's amazing feats of mentalism. I rarely do close-up-magic for my friends but instead create a fabulous picture of magic with words—a picture considerably more interesting than "Take a card!" or the "Penny and Dime".

SECTION FOUR contains straight comedy routines that can be used as such, or from which individual gags can be extracted for use in your magic. For the first time in any of my books I have included a "blackout". This is a comedy production involving the use of stooges and an improvised set. Although it requires a little more work and preparation than the average routine, I think you will find it well worth the extra trouble. I also hope the many readers who have requested this type of situation comedy will enjoy it.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank Bruce Elliott of THE PHOENIX, John Mulholland of THE SPHINX, Dave Robbins of MAGIC IS FUN, Bill Larsen of GENII, Bill Woodfield of MAGICANA, Lee B. Wood of the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, Richard G. Green of PM, Edward W. Dart of CONJURERS' MAGAZINE, Percy Abbott of TOPS, and Jules Mannix and Frank B. Harrington of COLLIER'S, for permission to reprint material from their publications.

Thanks also to Robert Burkhard, Nelmar, Milbourne Christopher, Al Wolff, James Swoger, and Seymour Kessler, for the use of their magicdotes in SECTION THREE. And I can't even begin to express my gratitude to the hundreds of magicians who sent in material which, for one reason or another, could not be included in this book. Thanks a million!

Last, but certainly not least, (to corn a phrase) I want to toss a bouquet to Ted Trinkaus, Jr., for his superlative cover art work. I've been told all too often that it is the best part of my books.

Sincerely,

Bob Orben

MAGICDOTES

by

ROBERT ORBEN



SECTION ONE

Houdini always had a host of imitators and spent a good deal of his time challenging and exposing them. One day he was attending a side show in Coney Island when he saw a magician who billed himself as: "Richard Houdini—Son of Harry Houdini".

The famous escape artist promptly got in touch with his lawyers who took immediate action. Several days later Houdini returned to the side show and was amazed to see this freshly-painted banner over the magician's stage. "Richard Houdini—Formerly Son of Harry Houdini"!

●
My advice to aspiring magicians is this: USE ARRID!

●
"He spends all his time in jail reading."

"Who's his favorite author? Shakespeare?"

"No, Houdini."
●

There's a bar in Chicago run by a very capable amateur magician. The place is usually overrun with conjurers performing every conceivable trick and so the help have become immune to the wonders of the art. One day a layman was sitting at the bar when a magician came in and ordered a beer. He drank the beer, then with a horrible crunching of glass ate the beer goblet. Dabbing his lips with a silk produced from midair he walked across the room, up the wall at the far end, across the ceiling, down the other wall—and then floated out the door!

The layman stared at the vanishing figure in wide-eyed amazement. Then he turned to the bartender and said, "What a peculiar fellow!"

"Yes," the bartender agreed. "He never says Goodnight!"

Did you hear about the magician who wore his hair over his eyes so he could start the show off with a bang?



Presto: I just came from an island in the Pacific that is entirely surrounded by man-eating sharks. Each morning I'd go out swimming and there'd be thousands of them around me — but not one of them bothered me.

Chango: How come?

Presto: I have something tattooed on my chest that makes me safe.

Chango: Don't give me that! What is it you've got tattooed on your chest?

Presto: "ORBEN IS THE GREATEST MAGICIAN IN THE WORLD" — and not even a shark would swallow that!



It happened during the war when theatrical talent was being drafted like crazy. A young fellow with a wild gleam in his eye buttonholed a theatrical manager and asked for a job.

"I'm the most talented magician in magical history," he said. "I can do any trick that was ever invented and know more about sleight-of-hand than anyone alive. Not only that, but I do ventriloquism, mind-reading, rag pictures, shadowgraphy, and fortune-telling. In a pinch I can also sell tickets, sweep the floors, paint scenery, usher people to their seats, and peddle pop-corn during the intermissions. But most important of all — I'm 4F!"

The theatre manager looked at the fellow for a moment and then said, "You're nuts!"

"Of course I'm nuts," he replied. "That's why I'm 4F!"



I used to send original tricks to magic publishers — now I just tear them up myself They once sent me a letter saying my tricks were so bad they had to rewrite them before they could throw them away



Little Girl: Are you the man who did all the tricks at the theatre last night?

Magician: I certainly am!

Little Girl: Well you sure fooled me! I thought you were going to be good!

The son of an ardent amateur magician had just finished reading an article about Houdini.

"Dad," he asked, "how did Houdini escape from the Milk Can?"

"Don't know," his father answered. "Never knew much about that illusion."

A little later the curious youngster asked how Houdini managed to vanish an elephant from the stage of the Hippodrome Theatre.

"Can't say," came the reply. "Never really understood that trick."

A few minutes passed. "Say, Pop," the boy began, but then stopped. "Oh well, never mind."

"No, go ahead," said his father. "Ask questions. Lots of questions. How else are you going to learn about magic?"

●

"This means a good deal to me," said the poker-playing magician as he stacked the cards.

●

A few months ago a magician friend of mine asked me to write a speech for him. During the war he had been tireless in entertaining wounded soldiers and now they were giving a dinner in his honor. I wrote the speech and included a few anecdotes in it to brighten things up. My friend took the manuscript and without even stopping to read it headed toward the banquet hall.

That evening his speech was progressing very well until he came to the phrase, "That reminds me of a very funny story I know." It seems that he had never heard the joke before and when he finished reading it he laughed so hard he couldn't finish the speech.

●

Before I got married I used to wave my hand and a wallet filled with money would appear. Now I wave a wallet filled with money, and a hand appears!

●

Stage Manager: Do you wish to see Ming Soo Ling, the great Chinese magician?

Woman: Yes — tell him his mother is here from the Bronx.

●

A noted magical lecturer spoke before a New York magic club, and at the close of his lecture was presented with a check for his services. (He must have been a magician!) He handed the check back to the club treasurer with the suggestion that it be donated to some worthy charity.

"Would you mind," asked the club-member, "if we add it to our special fund?"

"Not at all," said the celebrity. "And may I ask what the special fund is for?"

"To get us better lecturers next year," came the innocent reply.

●
If the trick doesn't work — the magician doesn't work!
●

A magician and his bride were honeymooning on a Mississippi River steamboat. In the evening they strolled along the deck and looked happily at the river. Suddenly the young groom cried out poetically, "Roll on thou deep and ageless Mississippi — roll on!"

His bride gazed solemnly at the water for a moment and then in an awed tone whispered, "Oh John, you wonderful man! It's doing it!"

●
Dear Mr. Orben:

A friend of mine said you were the worst magician in the world, so I just wanted to write and tell you that if you're the worst magician in the world, I'm President of the United States.

Sincerely,
Harry S. Truman

●
Houdini once visited an insane asylum to study the methods of restraint used there. At the end of his visit he found that no taxi was available to take him back to his theatre. Not wanting to miss his cue, he quickly jumped into a passing bus that seemed to be heading in the right direction. As he took his seat he noticed a guard was counting the men in the bus.

"One, two, three, four" counted the guard, pointing to each passenger. "Five, six" and then, spotting Houdini, asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm Harry Houdini," came the prompt reply.

"Seven, eight, nine" continued the guard, who was used to answers of that sort.

●
The meanest man in the world is the ventriloquist who threw his voice under the old maid's bed!
●

The Mighty Mysto and his Magnificent Magical Extravaganza were playing to a small and unappreciative audience. While in the

midst of a levitation the audience became exceptionally unruly and began to hiss him. With the dignity of his profession, Mysto strode grandly out to the center of the stage and began:

“Ladies and gentlemen! Please control yourselves! We have amassed the greatest array of magical talent in history (a loud catcall interrupted him) and have traveled many thousands of miles to bring this superlative entertainment to you (the hooting grew louder)”

“And don’t forget, folks,” Mysto concluded, “if it comes to a showdown, we outnumber you!”

●
Woman: I want to send a message to my dear departed husband.

Medium: I can arrange that. That will be five dollars.

Woman: Reverse the charges please!

●
A magician and his little boy were traveling to one of the conventions on a railroad train. The boy insisted on sticking his head out of the window. Deciding to teach him a lesson, the magician scooped the boy’s cap off his head and sleeved it. “There,” he said, “the wind’s blown your cap away.”

The youngster began to cry. “Now I’ll say my magic words and bring it back,” exclaimed the father triumphantly.

He uttered some mystic incantation and at the same time restored the cap to the boy’s head. “Now remember,” the magician added, “don’t put your head out of the window again.”

For a few minutes the boy sat rapt in thought. Then suddenly he took his cap off and threw it out of the window. “Do it again, Papa,” he said.

●
Did you hear about the girl who refused to go out with a magician because his hand was quicker than her eye?

●
“My wife says if I don’t give up magic she’ll leave me.”

“That’s too bad.”

“Yes, I’m going to miss her.”

●
A ventriloquist unable to get vaudeville booking turned to spiritualism and opened a medium’s parlor. His first patron was a widow who wanted to talk to her departed husband. The ventriloquist did his stuff and the widow was delighted. After the seance

was over she gave him fifty dollars and asked if she might come again the following week. The ventriloquist, holding the fifty dollars, was so eager to please, he replied, "Madame, I'll not only let him speak to you, but I'll drink a glass of water at the same time!"

●

What's so wonderful about Blackstone making a horse vanish into thin air? Henry Ford did that forty years ago!

●

One of the magical lecturers was scheduled to speak before a magic club in a small mid-west city. When he arrived at the club room he found that the usual pitcher of water and glass were missing from the speaker's table. He quickly called the chairman's attention to this.

"Do you want the pitcher of water to drink?" asked the chairman.

"No," replied the lecturer, "I finish with a high-diving act!"

●

Customer: When I buy a suitcase I want to see some cowhide in it.

Clerk: Tricks he wants yet!

●

A baby rabbit had been annoying its mother all day. Finally the exasperated parent replied, "You were pulled out of a magician's hat — now stop asking questions."

●

The bore of the local magic club was explaining for the umpteenth time his new super-duper invisible pass. As the minutes went by he felt the inattention of his audience growing, so he decided to catch them off base. Without a lapse in his explanation he suddenly began talking double-talk.

"Now you burmp your second finger into the smolg you gained by framming the deck to the gazillagazam. By doing this you can schwump the rest of the cards into the new fwenglebottom order. Of course if you've remembered to bring along your gittle-gasic (the one with the secret splitlibbit on it) the zattataack will be much easier. Now, are there any points you want me to go over?"

"Yes," came a tired voice from the rear. "What's a zattataack?"

●

He studied magic under Blackstone. He was janitor in one of the theatres he played.

Magic Dealer: Are you sure this trick is original?

Inventor: Of course it is.

Magic Dealer: Well then, I want to shake your hand. I've always wanted to meet you, Professor Hoffman!

●
A magician recently received a fan letter from a prisoner in Alcatraz who wrote:

"I really enjoyed your recent magic show at our prison. It was the best thing I've seen in eight years, three months and seven days."

●
A famous mind-reader stopped a little boy in a small town and asked, "Say Billy, could you tell me where the Post Office is?"

The boy looked at him amazed. "How did you know my name was Billy?"

The mentalist smiled. "I'm a mind-reader, son. I guessed it right, didn't I?"

"You sure did," admitted the youngster as he turned away. "Now you can guess where the Post Office is."

●
He performed the Sawing A Woman In Half illusion so many times he had to join the carpenter's union Now, everytime he does comedy magic, he demands chortle to chortle pay

●
A tall man, around whose shoulders draped an Inverness cape, appeared at a booking office and applied for work. He claimed to be the greatest magician in the world and said he did everything from card magic to illusions.

"Got any gag stuff?" asked the agent. "Pop-up ties? Electric bow-ties? Flat rabbits?"

"No," replied the applicant, "but I have the fastest pass in the business and even vanish a small horse in my act."

"Well, do you have any comedy patter?" continued the executive. "Tell any funny stories?"

"No, I don't. But I have an excellent stage personality and have played in the finest theatres."

"You do a little vent, maybe? Or rag pictures?"

The man shook his head once again. "No, I can't do any of those, but give me a pack of cards and I'll"

The agent showed him to the door impatiently.

"And you call yourself a magician!" he scoffed.

Ann: That magician always begins by holding my hand.

Jo: And then?

Ann: Then it isn't long before he wants to shuffle the whole deck!



A big black horse trotted into a booking office one day and asked for a job. In no uncertain terms he declared himself a terrific magician and a better escape artist than Houdini.

The booking manager just gaped at the equine as he went into a series of fancy card shuffles, manipulations and productions. With professional ease the horse then did a nifty rope routine and finished with a sensational version of Zombie.

"Say," the agent smiled at the horse, "that was pretty good. Do you do any illusions?"

The horse gave the agent a disgusted look. "Don't be ridiculous," he said. "Whoever heard of a horse that could do illusions?"



A famous magician was talking to a friend backstage. "And would you believe it," he concluded, "it took me ten years to discover I had absolutely no talent for magic!"

"Good heavens!" sympathized the friend. "What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything," replied the conjurer. "By that time I was president of three magical societies!"



Visitor to insane asylum: Why do you say you're Howard Thurston? The last time I was here, you said you were Harry Houdini.

Inmate: Yes — that was by my first wife!



The landlady of the theatrical boarding house placed a platter of very thinly sliced meat on the table. The hungry show people stared at the meat dismayed.

"Did you cut these, Mrs. Lewis?" asked the magician.

"Yes, I cut them," was the stern reply.

"All right," retorted the conjurer, "I'll deal!"



He once got a black-eye for doing magic at a party. He was showing a girl a card trick and he made his pass too quickly.



An old Chautauqua magician surprised his colleagues by one

day retiring with a small fortune. When asked the secret of his success he replied:

"I attribute my ability to retire with \$200,000 savings after forty years in the magic field to ceaseless practice, a desire for perfection, originality in all my effects, an undying love for legerdemain, and to the death of my father who left me \$225,000."

Two mind-readers were sitting next to each other and looking mightily worried. Finally one of them heaved a long, deep sigh and the other one said, "You're telling me!"

After a magic show in Chicago most of the magicians congregate in a little all-night restaurant cafeteria to talk shop. The owners, disturbed by the light-fingered antics of the magi, erected this sign:

"Our silverware is not medicine — Please do not take after meals!"

One of the sweetest bits of deception I have ever heard of occurred in a small New England town several years ago. A magician hired the opera house for one night but neglected to engage any ushers or staff. Then, a month before the date for which he had rented the hall, he posted a huge sign in the middle of town saying: "HE IS COMING!"

A week before the event he replaced the first sign with one reading: "HE WILL BE AT THE OPERA HOUSE ON JULY 22!" The day before the spectacle it was changed to: "HE IS HERE!" The next morning: "HE WILL BE AT THE OPERA HOUSE TONIGHT AT 8:00!"

The magician himself sat in the box office that night and sold tickets at two dollars per person to a standing room only audience. As eight o'clock approached the entire crowd was sitting on the edge of their seats in anticipation. Finally the lights dimmed, a huge gong sounded, the curtains parted, and there on the stage was a tremendous sign reading: "HE IS GONE!"

A ventriloquist was stranded in a small town with no money and a growing hunger. Undaunted, he bought a miserable looking hound dog with his last fifty cents and entered the town's bar. Ordering a beer, he turned to the dog and asked, "What'll you have?"

"I'll take a Tom Collins," the canine replied.

The bartender's eyes bulged. "He's the only talking dog in the world," explained the ventriloquist and patted his pet on the head.

The barkeep got the drinks while eyeing the dog in amazement, and then watched him lap at the Tom Collins. "Not bad!" commented the hound. "We ought to come in here more often."

This was too much. The bartender leaned over and asked the ventriloquist if he'd sell the dog.

"Well, I don't know," the vent said. "He's a big help to me."

"I'll give you fifty dollars for him," the barkeep eagerly replied, and seeing his customer hesitate pushed a fifty dollar bill into his hand.

"Well, all right," the vent finally said, "but you'll take good care of him, won't you?"

The purchaser assured him he would, and pulled the hound towards him. The vent thanked the bartender and was going through the door when he took one last look at the hound. With a reproachful look in his eye the animal cried, "That's gratitude! After all I've done for you, you sell me for a lousy fifty bucks. Well, just for that, I'll never speak another word as long as I live!"

And he never did.

●

The trouble with the magic business is that too many people who have half a mind to be magicians, do so.

●

Flim: How long have you been doing magic?

Flam: About six years now.

Flim: Well, I'll stick around. You ought to be through soon.

●

The magician was standing in the wings with a large production tube in his hands. As he turned to go on-stage his horrified assistant stopped him.

"You can't do that trick," he protested. "It doesn't work."

"I have to," the magus replied. "Do you want me to disappoint my audience?"

●

A medium successfully produced a deceased husband for his wife, and the following conversation ensued:

"John," the widow began anxiously, "are you happy now?"

"Yes, I am very happy," the spirit assured her.

"Happier than you were when you were alive with me?"

"Yes, much happier."

The widow sighed ecstatically and cried, "Tell me John, what is it like in heaven?"

"Heaven!" the spirit snapped back. "Who's in heaven?"

Gentlemen:

Tuesday I lost a thumb tip of great sentimental value. I immediately inserted an ad in your lost and found column and waited. Yesterday I went home and found the thumb tip in the pocket of another suit. God bless your newspaper!

Then there was the magician who taught his doves to go without eating. He figured that if he cut down a little on the feed each day, he could eventually get them to stop eating altogether. And the idea really worked too! The doves ate a little less each day, until they finally ate no seed at all. The only trouble was, as soon as they learned to go without food, they died on him!

Sim: You say your son does sleight-of-hand just like Cardini?

Bim: Yes —— he uses both hands.

They tell the story of the modest illusionist who one day received a letter addressed to: "America's Greatest Magician".

He refused to accept it. "You see," he exclaimed, "I'm not America's greatest magician. I'm the **WORLD'S GREATEST MAGICIAN!**"

A magic dealer's life is a twenty-four hour merry-go-round of magic, magic, and more magic. When asked how he stood the pace, one dealer replied: "Well, when you're in the business for a few months, you find yourself talking to yourself. After that, you find yourself talking to the talking skulls. In a year, you find the talking skulls talking to you. Then you find yourself listening."

I was standing in a magic shop one day when a big guy gave me a terrific whack on the back and said, "Hello, Milbourne Christopher!"

I turned around and told him, "I'm not Milbourne Christopher

and what's the idea hitting me so hard?"

"What do you care how hard I hit Milbourne Christopher?" he answered.



A magician was being cross-examined on the witness stand. When asked his profession, he replied, "I am the greatest magician in the world."

After the trial a friend asked him why he had made such an astounding statement.

"I had to," the magician replied, "I was under oath!"



Hocus: I wish I had my wife back.

Pocus: Where is she?

Hocus: I swapped her for a set of linking rings.

Pocus: And now you realize how much you love her?

Hocus: No. Now I need a die box.



Art: Don't you think that is a rare bit of magic?

Black: Yes, "rare" is the word for it; it certainly isn't well done!



At the close of a discussion about the feats of Houdini, the magician asked his friends if they had any questions.

"Yes," a soporific blonde replied, "I've never really been clear as to how old Houdini was."

The magician thought a moment and then said, "When? He was different ages at different times, you know."

"Oh!" said the girl. "I never thought of that," and happily withdrew from the conversation.



A ruling that a magician who conjures drinks out of a hat must take out a regular liquor license, was passed by the Michigan Attorney General's office.

(Business Week)



Gimm: I used to teach magic in the Y. W. C. A.

Ick: How did you get in the Y. W. C. A.?

Gimm: I lied about my age.

●

Customer: I want to get a refund on this trick.

Dealer: Is there something wrong with it?

Customer: Yes, it's broken. One of the rings has a hole in it!

●

There was a young man from Green Bay

Who was making flash paper one day

He dropped a live match

Upon the whole batch

There WAS a young man from Green Bay.

●

Overheard at the magic counter in Macy's Department Store:

Father: I'll take that Mysto Magic Set. I'm giving it to my son as a graduation present.

Clerk: It's to be a surprise I suppose?

Father: I'll say it is. He's expecting a Buick!

●

Thurston was writing "My Life Of Magic" when a small-town carnival magician visited him.

"What are you doing?" the man asked.

"I'm working on my autobiography," Thurston replied.

The visitor nodded thoughtfully and then inquired, "What's it about?"

●

"When I was a boy," a small-time conjurer told a confidant, "I made up my mind to become the most famous magician in history."

"But," said the friend, "you never did."

"No," replied the magus, "I decided it was easier to change my mind."

●

"And how did you like my last book?" I inquired of a friend.

"I was certain," he replied, "that it was!"

SECTION TWO

You can blame this little allegory on Paul Curry and Ira Zweifach, it seems from the way they tell it, that a brand new magic act opened at the "State". It was a killer. A man, dressed in tails, becaped and top-hatted, stood on the stage and bowed. A trapeze came down from the flies, and the magician grasped it and was hauled aloft. A blare of trumpets and a roll on the drums, a flash of flame and the magician changed in full view to a penguin. The penguin hung on the trapeze with ribbons hanging from his feet. On the ends of the ribbons were some rings.

Terrific to-do. Biggest hit in years, large contracts for the magician. A week later, this great magician saw another magic act billed and went in to catch the act. You can imagine his feelings, when he saw the curtains open and a man standing in top hat and tails, cape on his back, who caught a trapeze that descended from the flies, music, flash of flame, and the magician changed into a penguin, hanging on the trapeze. Ribbons hung from his feet with rings on them

First magician goes around to dressing room in a screaming fury. Sees second magician and demands to know how the man dared to steal his complete act. Second magician stares at first one a moment and then says: "What's a matter, dincha ever hear of two guys having the same idea at the same time?" Black out

(Bruce Elliott in THE PHOENIX)

Then there's the tale, (true) of the mind reader who got the cue from his assistant that something had been lost. The mind reader alert to the possibilities went into the "It's not lost, it's just misplaced Now Madam, if you will look in your bureau, the top drawer, when you get home and look under the clothes there, I am sure you will find the item which you think has been lost." When the woman tried to speak the mind reader over-rode her by saying, "No, not a word, Madam. Look in the drawer and you will find the article." Later, after the act was over the mind reader asked his assistant what the lost article was. The assistant said, "Oh — just a lawnmower."

(Bruce Elliott in THE PHOENIX)

A magician friend of ours once told us of an event he witnessed while passing a small night club on Long Island. It is, I think, the

world's most outstanding example of a magician turning an awkward situation to his advantage.

Our friend, as he tells it, happened to be passing the club when, through a partially undraped window, he saw a magician walk out on the floor holding a bird cage. The magician pattered for a short while the gist of which was lost on our friend since he could hear nothing through the closed window. Suddenly the magician jerked both arms outward and horror of horrors the cage, instead of whisking out of sight, dangled mercilessly from the performer's wrist.

The magician, our friend insists, did not bat an eye but began to twirl the now elongated cage by the pull cord while he addressed the spectators for a minute or so, bowed and then walked off the floor to applause so deafening that it was audible to our friend outside who was apparently so shaken by the entire incident that he neglected to step inside to inquire as to what the magician in question had said that not only covered up the incident but actually brought down the house. Go ahead, you puzzle it out — it's been bothering me for years.

(Paul Curry in THE PHOENIX)

Blackstone has received national publicity with a story that is a press agent's dream. In case you missed it, it goes like this. Blackstone was in the middle of his show when he stepped to the footlights and said seriously: "Ladies and gentlemen, my next trick will be the greatest of my career. In order to see it, however, will you please file out of your seats and go to the street. There, on the street, I will perform my greatest miracle!"

Well, the audience did file out quietly. When the theatre was completely empty — the audience found out what was happening. The theatre was on fire!

(Bruce Elliott in THE PHOENIX)

A few nights ago while at home, I was running through a pocket act which is still in the making. One of the effects in the routine is the Nickles to Dimes. Only one spectator was in the room, and he was a friend who had seen the coin trick performed several times, but being a true magician, I have never exposed the workings. The stack of nickles and cover were on the table along with a few pieces of other equipment. While placing some other apparatus on the table my spectator friend merely picked up the cover and neatly clamped it over the stack of nickles. To his utter surprise when he lifted

the cover the nickles had vanished! The unusual part is he still doesn't know how the nickles vanished. He later told me he didn't even dream they would vanish.

(Jack Yeager quoted by Loring Campbell in TOPS)

Bill Nye, the humorist, once was traveling with James Whitcomb Riley and stopped in a town where Alexander Herrmann was showing. They all stopped at the same hotel, and sat next to one another at the table. Herrmann didn't know Nye at all, and the humorist only knew the magician by sight. In the middle of the meal one night Herrmann leaned over, and separating the lettuce leaves on Nye's plate, disclosed a large diamond there.

"Dear me, how careless!" exclaimed Herrmann, expecting to see Nye start back in surprise. But Nye didn't do any such thing. Coolly picking up the gem he remarked:

"I'm always leaving things like that around. Here, waitress, here's a little present for you," and he handed it to the girl who was waiting on the table. Herrmann had to get the proprietor of the hotel out in the kitchen before he could get the stone back again, the girl absolutely refusing to give it up.

(John Mulholland in THE SPHINX)

(Reprinted by courtesy of The Sphinx)

Dai Vernon, who is conceded to be one of the nation's best card manipulators, was recently asked to investigate a certain poker game. He was soon convinced from the play that the cards were marked, but no matter how closely he scrutinized them, there seemed to be nothing wrong. So on his next deal he memorized a number of cards as he scooped them up from the table and kept them on top of the deck through the following shuffles and cut. Then as he started to deal, he stopped suddenly and said, "Why, look — these cards are marked. Here is the five of clubs, the nine of hearts, the jack of clubs, the eight of diamonds —" turning each card face up after naming it. One player seemed even more startled than the others and begged him to read more — which Dai did until he had named all the cards he had memorized, and then tossed the deck aside in apparent disgust.

It was some while later that the very amazed gentleman slid up to Dai and said, "That was my work on the cards — but how in the devil could you tell the suits?"

(John Brown Cook in THE SPHINX)

(Reprinted by courtesy of The Sphinx)

On one occasion I witnessed an incident which was very humorous to the audience but which nearly ruined the performance. The magician on the stage did a trick in which he made a silver dollar disappear. He then asked a boy to come up from the audience and he announced that he would find the dollar in the side pocket of the boy's coat. The boy was instructed to look into his pocket and to bring forth the silver coin. But the boy produced several coins to the total value of ninety-five cents. He explained that he had been hungry and had spent five cents for a sandwich. Needless to say the magician did not use that boy again for a confederate.

(Horace Goldin in THE SPHINX)
(Reprinted by courtesy of The Sphinx)

Paul Stadelman's dummy, Windy Higgins, actually ran for the governorship of Kentucky!

Entered as Winn D. Higgins, his name was formally filed with the Secretary of State, and he campaigned for six weeks, traveling 6,552 miles around the state. All this was accompanied by terrific press notices all over the country. At election time, Windy received 143 "write-in" votes for governor on the Democratic ticket! The idea was so good that Edgar Bergen had Charlie McCarthy run for mayor of Los Angeles the next year, but Charlie only received 89 votes. Windy then called Charlie nothing but a dummy!

(Robert Orben in MAGIC IS FUN)

Dell O'Dell once told me that the greatest compliment she ever received came from a wide-eyed youngster who exclaimed: "Gee you're almost as good as Superman!"

Recently, Dunninger, who likes to be known as "the master mentalist," called on Blackstone, who doesn't mind being known as a plain magician. When Dunninger arrived, he found the great magician ransacking his bedroom for his white tie. "You're the great mind reader," Blackstone finally exploded, "Suppose you tell me where I put that tie."

Dunninger concentrated. "It's in that box," he said.

Blackstone hurriedly went through the box, found a tie which he held up scornfully. "You're a fine mind reader," he said. "It's black."

Dunninger shrugged. "If you're any kind of magician," he answered, "you can change it into a white one."

(Harriet Van Horne in the
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM)

One day a newsreel company asked Thurston, the world-famous magician, if he'd like to do a little magic before the camera for an audience of kids. Thurston said he'd be glad to, so the kids were assembled and the cameras rolled. The youngsters gurgled with delight when Thurston found pennies in their ears. And is there a kid in the world who doesn't like to see a magician pull a bunny out of a hat? As if he were going to make an elephant disappear for the King of England, Thurston majestically announced, "I will now produce two rabbits!"

He spoke the abracadabra words, snapped the opera hat open and waved his wand. But suddenly something went wrong — a pair of pink ears popped from beneath Thurston's coat. Kids aren't tolerant of mistakes — especially by a magician. "Yah, yah!" they screamed. "We saw the rabbit. It's under your coat!"

Thurston tried to calm them, flung them bright pennies, gave them his rabbits. But they were still Bronx-cheering as he executed a little stage bow and exited. There were tears in the old boy's eyes.

That was Thurston the Magician's farewell performance. A fortnight later he joined Houdini in the presto-changeo corner of Heaven. You see he knew, as those kids did, that he had lost his Magic Touch. Without it there wasn't much point in hanging around anymore.

(From Pitching Horseshoes by Billy Rose in PM)

Harry Blackstone likes to tell about the time he and Harry Houdini were driving around in an old Ford back east. They were going to a magic convention and it was a hot day. On arriving at their destination, Blackstone springs out of the car and turns around to see the Great Houdini struggling with the car door. Finally, in desperation, the most amazing escape artist in the world, said, "Damn it, Harry, get me out of this thing — I'm locked in."

(Bill Woodfield in Magicana in GENII)

Rudy Miller, the magical insurance man, was giving a show for a bunch of G. I.'s last week. Resplendent in white tie and tails, he

was working with his audience close to him, on all sides and partly behind him. It was a hilarious moment when he cut off the Sergeant's tie and laid the shears to his right. He went on with the routine but suddenly sensed something wrong. He looked behind him just in time to see the Sergeant's buddy completely cut off his tails — using Rudy's own scissors!

(Bill Larsen in GENII)

Harry Mendoza gave a show (that is, he didn't really give it; he was paid for it) for the Union Oil Company executives. Union Oil features "76 gas," a red liquid that makes your car go like all get out. So, to be topical, Harry had a red liquid in his Humber pitcher and apparently poured it into a flash paper cone. Touching it with his cigarette it disappeared in a flash of flame. But to the oilmen it was no trick. They figured their product would do just that. "Lucky you let go of it so quick," said one exec, "why you must have had a pint of Ethyl in there."

(Bill Larsen in GENII)

Harry Mendoza, just the other day, was acting in the capacity of technical director in "Night Has A Thousand Eyes," wherein Eddie Robinson makes like a mindreader. The writer was also called in for advisory work on the same picture. Seeing me, Harry asked: "Are you on salary?" On receiving my affirmative answer, he said: "Migawd. For what they're paying the two of us they could have got Dunninger!"

(Bill Larsen in GENII)

The theatrical hypnotist probably has more embarrassing moments than any other type of performer. Ralph Slater relates one which is typical. He was giving a demonstration of hypnosis at a club in Westchester, New York. Among his volunteer subjects was an exceedingly pretty girl barely out of her teens.

The hypnotist told the girl she was a stenographer and asked her to write a letter to the man she loved. Obediently the girl raised her arms and went through the motions of operating a typewriter.

"The letter is finished," Slater said. "Now read it to us."

The girl pulled the non-existent letter out of the imaginary typewriter and followed instructions. "Dear Joe," she read, "I love you terribly and can hardly wait to see you."

Slater sensed from the commotion in the audience that something was amiss. He stopped the girl and brought her out of her

hypnotic state. After the show Slater learned why the girl's words had caused such excitement. She introduced the hypnotist to her husband. His name was Frank!

(Mickey MacDougall in CONJURERS' MAGAZINE)

One newspaper item covered an experience of Blackstone's in San Francisco where just before he went on the stage one evening, he was handed forty-two dollars that he had won from a dollar play on the Chinese lottery. Putting the money in his pocket, Harry forgot about it during the show and when he had the committee on the stage, he pocketed the contents of a victim's wallet, then brought out the man's money and returned it to him. Not until he was in his dressing room did Blackstone realize that he had passed along his own forty-two dollars winnings with the committee man's refund!

(Walter B. Gibson in CONJURERS' MAGAZINE)

Cardini, while in a military hospital after being wounded at the front in the last war (World War I), tried to practise the force on a chap in his ward.

"Would you mind," he asked, "assisting me in a little trick. Just take a card, any card at all."

The patient drew the ace of spades.

"Now remember that card," Cardini said, "and take another." Again it was the ace of spades. When he forced the ace of spades for the fifth time, the man became furious and lunged at the young magician, placing his hands around Cardini's neck and throttling him. By the time they pulled the forcee away, Cardini was turning blue. "I still don't do forcin' very well to this day," says Cardini, frowning. "It always brings back the scene o' forcin' that ace on the pore duck in the 'ospital."

(Maurice Zolotow in CONJURERS' MAGAZINE)

Cardini is responsible for the famous meaning of the letters "I. B. M." Cardini, while playing an engagement in Detroit, was annoyed by a hoard of amateur magicians who haunted his dressing room and who insisted on boasting of their prowess and showing him their ten-cent tricks and crude moves. So, during his act one night, he pulled out a large placard with the legend "I. B. M."

"What," asked Mrs. Cardini, "does that mean?"

"I. B. M.," replied Cardini, "means I Bother Magicians."

(Maurice Zolotow in CONJURERS' MAGAZINE)

Hardeen's fame and bravery and fortitude may well be exemplified by what happened in Allentown, Pa., when he was 61 years old. The milk can was filled with water. He entered it and as usual there was an awed hush as his head disappeared below the water. The cover of the can was placed on, the orchestra struck up the stirring march as six-lever locks fastened the cover to the can. The cabinet was placed about the can. The act was on!

One minute passed . . . thirty seconds more . . . two minutes passed . . . two and a half minutes . . . still no escape . . . still no signal . . . the curtain fell! Theo's assistants dashed to the milk can with an axe. A few sharp fast cuts on its side! The water rushed out! The locks were unfastened! Theo was taken from the can unconscious. Revived by a physician, he looked up, saw the worried look on the faces of all of us, murmured "Fooled you again" and lapsed back into unconsciousness. In just another week he again was presenting the Milk Can Escape!

(Julien J. Proskauer in CONJURERS' MAGAZINE)

Jarrow once played opposition to Horace Goldin, who was then at the height of his "Sawing A Woman" fame. The manager of the theatre where Jarrow was booked was much distressed to see the rival house plastered with big signs "Sawing A Woman In Half" so he begged Jarrow to cook up something that would compete with the great new sensation.

Jarrow already had it; his lemon trick. All it needed was the right billing, so Jarrow provided it. When the manager of Goldin's theatre heard that the opposition had suddenly begun to do a big business, he looked across the street to learn the reason and saw it. Rivalling Goldin's sign in size was Jarrow's. It said:

"Sawing A Lemon In Half."

(Walter B. Gibson in CONJURERS' MAGAZINE)

I know one medium who charges \$25 for a reading. After he's collected the money, he tells the sitter, "This entitles you to ask me two questions."

"Isn't that a lot of money for only two questions?" the startled sitter demands.

"Yes, Madam, it is," says the medium gravely. "And now, what is your second question?"

(Bob Nelson as quoted by Jules Mannix in COLLIER'S)

SECTION THREE

I felt as if the audience had really enjoyed my show and so, with supreme confidence, I tore into my finale — SOFT SOAP. This too was progressing smartly until, horror of horrors, I pulled out the crucial handkerchief upside down. For a moment a dead silence enveloped the audience as the ungainly object dangled from my hand. Then from the first row the eager voice of a child piped out: "Gee Mom, look at the parachute!"

(Robert Burkhard)

Several years ago a magician introduced an illusion involving the disappearance of a donkey. With great gusto he made his opening remarks concerning the effect.

"And now, Ladies and Gentlemen," he concluded as he backed toward the rear of the stage, "I will attempt to make the ass in this act disappear!" At this exact moment he accidentally stepped into an open trap door and vanished completely from sight!

(Nelmar)

It was 1935 and the country was in the midst of the Great Depression. Economic specialists and college professors were being appointed to high government positions. Both the common man and the nation's leaders were looking for some solution to the problem, and "Brother, can you spare a dime?" was a common question.

This was the state of the nation when I drove up to the White House to make arrangements for my performance at the Roosevelts' Easter Monday party. As my taxi drew up to the gate, a White House guard opened the door and peered inside.

"Who are you and what's your business?" he asked.

I reached out and produced a shiny new half-dollar from the air and answered, "Christopher, the Magician."

He looked wonderingly at the money plucked from thin air, then at me, and with an expression of infinite relief murmured, "Thank God, at last!"

(Milbourne Christopher)

A good assistant never parts with his master's secrets. Years after Houdini's death, one of his loyal assistants was asked how it

was possible for the magician to vanish an elephant in full view of the audience. The only answer he would give is that one assistant led an elephant onto the stage, while another assistant brought a cage into view. After the vanish——eight men pushed the cage off the stage!

(Al Wolff)

There was a lull in the fighting so I was sent up to the front lines to entertain the infantrymen there. As I was doing an effect, a young G. I. suddenly jumped up, raised his rifle, and fired a shot over my head. I turned to see a dead Jap tumble from a palm tree and hit the ground not five feet from where I was standing!

It was the highest price ever paid to see my show.

(James Swoger)

Last year I gave my six-year-old son, Jerry, a PENNY TO DIME trick. The one in which a penny is magically changed into a dime. All day long he showed it to every youngster in the neighborhood, and it goes without saying that they were fascinated by his ability to make dimes out of pennies.

But I didn't realize the full effect of the exhibition until that evening when the doorbell rang. I opened the door to see two six-year hopefuls standing there——each holding out a handfull of pennies and asking for Jerry.

(Seymour Kessler)



SECTION FOUR

THE STORY OF MY LIFE OR ONE HAM'S FAMILY

I was born in a little town outside New York called Creeping Girdle, Wyoming——Yes, it was quite a stretch My mother and father couldn't afford a baby, so they had me I was born with my mother's features and my father's fixtures My ears were so large they didn't know whether I was going to walk or fly And I was so small everybody said I was just a waste of skin In fact I was so thin, all I could eat was shoe-string potatoes.

. . . . I remember how my mother used to use my legs for knitting needles But I was one baby who was born with a silver knife in his mouth. My father was a sword swallower There was a guy! Was he bashful! My mother told me if he hadn't been so bashful, I would have been three years older He was so bashful he wouldn't even whistle at a taxicab He was 26 before they allowed him to look at the ladies side of the wash-line Ah, but it was father who gave me my musical background. He used to spank me with a violin It was then that they discovered I was full of music — I swallowed a harmonica And so at the tender age of 3 I taught music. Yeah, I taught music was easy — but it was hard!

Years went by. Orben was no longer an infant! Leaving the talcum behind . . . I became the boy bootlegger of P. S. 17 Yes, I still remember that little black school house—it was in Pittsburgh you see I still had troubles. I was so skinny that if I stood sideways in class, the teachers used to mark me absent And was I dumb! I used to sign all my examination papers “Mae West” because I knew I done 'em wrong But I got 100 in my examinations! 50 in arithmetic and 50 in spelling The only thing that was right on my examination papers was the date But it wasn't really all my fault. How could they expect me to learn how to spell? My teacher was always changing the words Then one day she tried to tell me that 6 and 4 were 10. That's ridiculous! 5 and 5 are 10 I was in hot water so much I felt like a tea bag But I did get 101% on my final examination. I answered one question they didn't ask And I had my moments. I was the only one in the class who made spit-balls that received the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval I also was teacher's pet. She couldn't afford a dog How we kept that teacher on her toes! We used to put tacks on her chair And I still remember the day I was promoted to 3B. I was so excited I cut myself shaving Yes, I was a cute little shaver The next term our class gave a play called “The Life of Abraham Lincoln” and I was picked to play Lincoln. I was the only one in the fourth grade with a beard My beard was so tough I used to get five o'clock shadow at three o'clock But I didn't care. It was a good place to hide jelly beans At times though, I found school very dull — which is exactly the way it found me

It was at this time that adolescence leered at me Adolescence — that's the period when a girl's voice changes from NO

to YES My mother began teaching me the facts of life gradually. She started in with artificial flowers And I remember how I used to like going out with the druggist's daughter. She was always suggesting something better than what I asked for I was always very preoccupied though. Some people called me a dreamer — my mother called me a bum I was eighteen years old and the only English I knew was on a pool table That's why I decided to enter Arwhee Normal — a little college near Oom-pa, Pa.

I was a two-letter man at college — then somebody told me about Lifebuoy I was also a big shot in the frat house. In fact, I was the head of it. Yes — frat-head Orben they used to call me Some fellows got to be quarterback on the football team but I just was nickle back on the bottle And what a football team we had! That team played so dirty they were banned in Boston I'll never forget the time they played their big game in the Wash Bowl I got seats on the fifty-yard line. I couldn't afford seats in the grandstand I got into the stadium just in time to see our team kick off. Up till that time, I didn't even know they were sick I used to be pretty good at college baseball though. I once hit the ball with my head and made a home-run. Of course I had bats in my belfry I also did a lot of riding. I rode one horse that was really polite. Everytime he came to a fence, he stopped and let me go over first And I even learned how to ride bareback. Here, I'll take off my shirt and show you We had one professor in college who was always spanking the co-eds. They finally had to stop him though. He was putting too much feeling into his work But I really had the girls running in circles when I was there. I was the women's track coach I certainly was a terrible ladies man. All I needed was a terrible lady And I used to write home regularly too. "Dear Dad: Let's hear from you more often — even if it's only five or ten dollars." Then I'd get a letter from him that read: "I am sorry I couldn't enclose any money in this letter as I have already sealed the envelope." Webster says that taut means tight. Well, I guess I was taut quite a bit while in college After every class I'd drop into a bar to drink it over They say whiskey kills more men than bullets. Well, I'd rather be full of whiskey than bullets Besides, water has killed a lot more men than whiskey. Remember the flood? One day a friend of mine told me that liquor is slow poison. — Well who's in a hurry? I've never drunk water myself. If it can rust iron, just imagine what it can do to

your stomach But I learned a lot of things in college. Now I know why bees buzz. You'd buzz too, if somebody took your honey and nec-tar And I know the difference between a model woman and a woman model. The first is a bare possibility, the latter is a naked fact I found that there is a big difference between the words night and evening too. Think of the different effects they have on a gown And now I know that an epistle is the wife of an apostle And I read of a girl who ran for six years but only moved two feet— that's all she had Finally, in my fourth or freshman year I could define a circle. A circle is a round straight line with a hole in the middle Yes, it was a memorable day when I graduated from Vassar. You're probably wondering how I got in. Well, I lied about my age I graduated in a cap and gown— my father's cap and my mother's gown

Was I ambitious when I left college! I started on a shoe string and worked my way up until I got my face slapped But this didn't stop my attempts at experimentation I immediately decided to become an inventor. Look at the man who invented the davenport. Why millions have been made on his invention For my first experiment I crossed a mule and a cow and got milk with a kick in it Then I crossed a pig and an elephant and got the biggest pork chops in town It was sheer genius that made me cross kangaroos with raccoons to get fur coats with pockets I was the one who put an electric toaster in a mattress. Now I pop right out of bed each morning I also was the one who put badges on frankfurters and sold them for police dogs But my greatest idea was when I put pop-corn in pancakes so they'd turn over by themselves Now I'm trying to perfect women's shoes that are larger inside than they are outside

Always striving for greater things, I entered Salesmanship School. The first thing they teach you there is how to get your foot in the door. The next thing they teach you is how to get it out I've had my foot in so many doors there's a groove in it And what a product I sold! It was a pen that was guaranteed for longer than a lifetime. It wrote six feet under ground Had a pall-bearing point We also sold a pen with a meat-ball point that wrote under gravy Not to mention a typewriter that wrote under water This was a special for people who like to keep up with their correspondence while taking a bath They used to call me a real steady worker. In fact, I was so steady I was practically

motionless It was the business itself that finally went on the rocks. Every year was a bad year except 1942. That year was terrible Business was so bad, even the people who didn't pay had stopped buying In desperation I opened a hand laundry. but that too went out of business. Most people wanted to wash their own hands We used to give same day service. You brought it in on a Tuesday and we gave it back on a Tuesday—six weeks later One day I was offered a job as a baby-sitter, but who wants to sit on babies? Then I got a job working for the government. I stayed in bed all day long. I was an under-cover man Then I really hit my stride. I became a leader of men—an usher in a burlesque show I held a few other good jobs too. I was an announcer—you know, one of those guys who talk till you have a headache and then tries to sell you something to relieve it I also was a census taker—that's a man who goes from house to house increasing the population After that I was a mechanic in a race-track. I fixed the races And I still remember the time I worked in a bloomer factory. Pulled down 3800 a year But I finally quit that job. Somebody stole the cork from my lunch I didn't even sigh towards the unemployment office. I immediately became a bootlegger. I sold Serutan to people under thirty-five And in my spare time I wrote that famous song MARCHING THROUGH GEORGIA—What a girl!
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But I never worry. I always take my fun where I find it. The only trouble is——it always seems to be in the same place They say love is like working in a department store. If you don't watch your contacts you'll end up as a floorwalker I'll never forget Easter Egg, the love of my life. I called her Easter Egg because she was painted on the outside and hardboiled on the inside I met her at a Baseball Party. That's one where all the bags get loaded She was the kind of a girl you'd give your name to—but not your right name They said a man had never kissed her goodnight. Of course not! They never left till morning She was just one of those girls who are weak in the nays She knew that popularity consisted of doing the wrong thing at the right time I'll never forget that outfit she was wearing. It was sort of a peek-a-bosom dress Come to think of it, it wasn't exactly a dress—it was more like a slip cover And was it low cut! It was so low cut I had to crawl under the table to see what she was wearing It was a dress that kept everyone warm but herself She was what's called a Nervy Chorus Girl. She

had guts and she wasn't afraid to show them She had an hour glass figure and she certainly made every minute count Just a well-knit sweater girl An anatomic bomb a sight to be held In fact, she always wore black garters in memory of those who had passed beyond Naturally, I was torn between vice and versa I didn't have any etchings but I wanted to show her the handwriting on the wall So I asked her to go pic-necking

Then I found out she'd been around so long she knew every house detective by his first knock She was married so many times she had a charge account at City Hall She had one husband who came in handy around the house until one day he came in unexpected Then he found that the iceman was delivering the heat But she was really a go-getter. She went into one place by the servant's entrance and came out the family way She was a telephone operator who was divorced four times. She just couldn't take the rings seriously Everybody said she was a grass widow. Well that was one lawn I wouldn't have minded mowing I remember how I used to clutch at her and she'd break away. Then I'd clutch at her again and she'd break away. My clutch was okay but my brakes were slipping Each night I'd hold her and she'd whisper sweet nothing doings in my ear She was always crazy about Sinatra. Sinatra — there's a guy who gets a million dollars a year for making girls scream. I make girls scream but all I ever get is thirty days They sent one of Sinatra's pictures to Europe last week. Now they're going to send food to us Ah, but we had fun together. She used to call me Bed Bug because when the lights went out I got busy And she always thought I was a Latin because I had Roman hands Well after all, if a girl puts on the dog around a man, she shouldn't be surprised if he tries to paw her She once told me she worshipped her figure, so I tried to embrace her religion Some fellows like to read their girls like a book. Not me — I just like to thumb the pages Everytime I saw her I'd say: "Get thee behind me Satan — and push!"

We were the only couple who ever won a dancing cup for loving It was the Bunny Hug After all, there's only one difference between dancing and wrestling. In wrestling, some holds are barred But she was always complaining. She said I was either all feet when dancing or all hands when sitting Can I help it if I'm ambidextrous? But I was beginning to have

my suspicions. I called her up one day and said, "Is this you, sweetheart?" She said, "Of course it is, darling. Who is this speaking?" She was the girl who took a chance on a blanket and won a new Cadillac She didn't know much about cooking but could she bring a man to a boil Every night she'd complain to me that I didn't have a car. "That's all right," I told her. "There are plenty of couples who don't neck in cars. In fact, the woods are full of them." Then she asked me for something for a rainy day, so I gave her a rubber check The only trouble with her was that she was penny-wise. I didn't have a penny and she was wise to it I told her the only ring I could give her was one around a bathtub She just said I was making her as sick as a dog — so I called a veterinarian Yes, she used to be my heart's delight. Now she's delight that failed I guess I was just a passing fiance I went through fire for her and just made a silly ash of myself But she finally made a big name for herself. She married a guy named Pantobrowsklobnicki Well, it's better to have loved and lost — much better And remember — gold-diggers are paid by the weak!

Continuing my quest for knowledge I joined the BOOKIE-OF-THE-MONTH-CLUB And what interesting books they sent me! I got Sally Rand's new book: LIFE WITH FEATHER Then, the autobiography of Harry James: THE LEG AND I Finally they sent me FOREVER AMBER — the story of a broken traffic light or I WONDER WHO'S KISSING HER NOW FOREVER AMBER — the story of a girl who climbed the social ladder, lad by lad Not since Manhattan Island was sold for \$24 has so much dirt been available for so little money After that I got the KINSEY REPORT. That's one book that ought to have a zipper on its fly-leaf And it's surprising how much you learn from those books Seriously, one of them said a man is run over in the United States every minute. I just don't see how the poor guy stands it

And so, to make a long story nauseating we come to the current episodes in the life of Robert Orben, boy anarchist Time flew by and I was soon a full-fledged adult, high heels and all You all know what time is — that's the stuff between pay-days And while I'm at it: ADULT — that's a person who's stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle I got my first start in show business at this theatre. They had a knife-thrower appearing here and he asked for some intel-

ligent, good-looking, strong member of the audience to assist him. But the audience fooled him — they sent me up And was he a miserable knife-thrower! He threw twelve knives at me and he didn't hit me once He said he also swallowed swords. So what? I inhale Camels He was on a diet when I saw him though. He swallowed nothing but knives and forks Then I fell in love with his daughter. She was a sword swallower too. Every Friday night I used to take her to the corner hardware store for dinner Yes, she was a real sharp kid

I'll never forget my first words in the theatre — "Peanuts! Pop-corn! Cigarettes!" Some entertainers suffered from stage-fright, but not me. With me the audience always got it But I've got a wonderful cure for stage-fright. You take a thirty minute walk two minutes before curtain time I first appeared in what was called a "problem" play. It was a problem to get customers It was a jazzed-up version of that old favorite NIGHT MUST FALL. Ours was called NIGHTIE MUST FALL The critics said it was the best play in the country. The only trouble was, we brought it to the city The first night there was nobody at all in the audience, but the second night — attendance fell off completely What business we were doing at that theatre! I looked at more empty seats than a tailor One night we sent the audience home in a cab But the management was very reasonable. They even let one-eyed people in for half-price But nothing could save it. That show was so bad the audience hissed the ushers After every show a big crowd would try to get my autograph. They wanted to see if I could write Was I popular! My audiences not only asked me to come out in front of the curtain — they dared me to They liked me so much in Toledo, the mayor gave me the key to the city — and told me to lock the door behind me In no time at all I was living in the lap of luxury. I didn't realize that it was the last lap though

So I went on tour. I got letters from ladies in every town I played in — landladies Believe me, I've played in spots Rand McNally never heard of One theatre was so small, when the curtain went up, the first three rows went up with it It was so small the balcony was behind me It looked just like a cigar box with ushers But we really wowed them! We had the most unusual two-headed man in the world with our show. He only had one head For the big finale he used to put his right arm into a lion's mouth. We used to call him Lefty But I always got rave notices. One critic wrote: "By all means catch

Orben's act — then catch Orben!" I didn't mind people looking at their watches when I did my act — but when they shook them, that was too much It got so bad, the ushers were walking down the aisles backwards But I took it in my stride. Why my act's been cancelled so many times I have my contracts printed on timetables Finally my act got so bad the world turned against me. But I didn't mind my friends snubbing me. And I didn't mind my wife leaving me. But when I went home and found my mother trying to erase her name from my birth certificate, that was too much My agent still was wild about me though. He threw me a big dinner last week — but it didn't hit me What a dinner! Everybody was drinking sarsaparilla and Coca-Cola, but not me! I stuck to milk. I had to drive It was really a fancy affair though. I wore soup and fish — had a little egg on my tie also And was I surprised when he presented me with a 2000 piece dinner set — the delivery boy dropped the box He even got me an audition with the Theatre Guild yesterday. They wanted me in Oklahoma, but finally they decided that wasn't far enough And I might even go into television. You know, that's where you can see where the smell is coming from

MY THIRD IMPRESSION OF AN EVENING WITH A PUSH-BUTTON RADIO

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. This is station S-M-O-G broadcasting from the heart of sunny California Our first program is the Hay-Fever Hour featuring the music of Horace Heidt's brother — Gesund Heidt This is brought to you by the makers of Giddlestein's Girlish Girdles Girls! When you wear a mid-rift — does your mid hang over your rift? When you step on a scale, do you get that sinking feeling? Doctors say that one million American women are overweight. These, of course, are round figures Giddlestein's Girlish Girdles will make you so thin, people will have to look at you twice to see you once Take the case of Bertha Buttonbuster Just two months ago Bertha weighed 700 pounds. Of course she was carrying a safe at the time She had always tried to keep her weight down. The only trouble was she kept it all down in the same place She was so fat she could take a shower without getting her feet wet When the Pot of Gold went off the air, everyone thought she had the pot And did she have trouble

when she tried to play golf! If she put the ball where she could see it — she couldn't hit it And if she put the ball where she could hit it — she couldn't see it She was always holding up the other golfers too. They couldn't play around her Yes, she was one girl who had really gone to waist She had so many chins you'd think she was looking at you from over a stack of wheat-cakes Some girls look like they were poured into a dress. She looked like she overflowed Store detectives were always searching her. They didn't believe all those bumps were hers She once fainted on the street and it took four men to carry her home — two abreast But then someone told her she'd look more spic if she had less span So now she's the kind men look at twice — they don't believe it the first time Yes, she's lovely! She's engaged! She uses Airwick! Remember, with Giddlestein's Girlish Girdles, you look slimmer or your tummy back And Giddlestein's Girdles will stick to the end! So don't stand at the doorway and wish you were thin — Giddlestein's Girdles will pull you right in!

And now we bring you the story of Fanny Clapsaddle the girl who wanted two bathrooms OR — The Wife's Other John Special announcement! The program originally scheduled to be cancelled at this time, will now be heard Presenting: The Court Of Inhuman Relations Dear Mr. Agony: My husband has a habit of drinking Martinis, eating the bowls of the glasses they come in, and throwing away the stems. Tell me Mr. Agony, is he crazy? Dear Madam: Of course he's crazy. The stems are the best part! Dear Mr. Agony: I went for an automobile ride with a strange man. Did I do wrong? Dear Miss: Probably Dear Mr. Agony: Last week my wife started to wear a very sheer, black nightgown. Then, two days ago she had on a filmy black negligee and just yesterday she bought all black lingerie. Last night I asked her why she wore the black nightgown, the black negligee, and the black lingerie. She just gave me a disgusted look and said, "In mourning for the dead!" Tell me, Mr. Agony, what did she mean by that? Dear Mr. Agony: Last week I came home and found a strange man making love to my wife. When he saw me he told me to get out or he'd make trouble for me. Now, Mr. Agony, here is my problem. Can he make trouble for me? And so my last bit of advice to you men is this. Remember that your wife still enjoys candy and flowers. Let her know that you remember. Mention them occasionally Mr. Agony was brought to you by Dilly — the perfume that makes you want to dally

This perfume is dynamite girls. Whatever you do — don't use it if you're bluffing And when going to the beach, don't forget Babbitt's Buxom Bathing Suits the bathing suit with the built-in water wings We say don't forget them because nudity is forbidden Remember, a Babbitt suit isn't as big as a postage stamp but it sure will deliver the male Other bathing suits are made of handkerchieves — Babbitt's are made of kleenex You'll be a sensation the moment you leave the water So use Babbitt's Buxom Bathing Suits and remember: "With our product, the thigh's the limit!"

And now we bring you the everyday story of Lulu — girl axe murderer OR — Life Can Be Miserable The program that asks the question: Can a girl be happy when she and her boy friend are going steady — but not with each other? This is brought to you by the makers of Scrunchies — the cereal box without any cereal, for people who hate cereal but like to save box-tops And girls — don't forget to use Glow — the new miracle shampoo with the luminous base. With Glow, you'll never have to stumble around in the dark looking for your hair Your boy friend will never be able to say he couldn't see what he was doing in the dark You'll be one girl who's always lit up And Glow brings out the natural color of your hair. Then Glow brings out your hair Glow is the only shampoo on the market that's made from beer Won't you be the envy of your neighborhood? You'll be the only girl who has a head with a head on it Remember — Glow won't leave your hair sticky! Glow won't leave your hair oily! Glow won't leave your hair! So just send us 25c and a set of sterling silver and we will send you by return mail — a boxtop!

And now — THE ANSWER MAN! Backed by 6000 encyclopedias, 18 researchers, and two mother-in-laws The Answer Man has answers for which there are no questions! His career began in the little town of Hittor, Miss., when a friend came up to him and asked, "Do you know the time?" Quick as a flash the Answer Man said, "No, I don't!" thus giving his first correct answer Our first question reads — Dear Answer Man: Every time I go out on the ice, I fall down. Tell me, will this spoil my fun? Dear Madam: It certainly won't. Nothing spoils on ice And here is some additional advice to ice-skaters: Remember, you can't judge a brook by its cover Question: How can I stop fish from smelling? Answer: Cut off their noses

. Question: What makes people walk in their sleep? Answer: Twin beds! Question: Would you please explain the part Einstein's Theory of Relativity played in the creation of the atom bomb? Answer: I'm sorry, but we answer no questions of a personal nature Do you see spots before your eyes? Well, drink N-R-JEAN Cleaning Fluid — it's guaranteed to remove spots from anything Remember, N-R-JEAN is the spot remover that removes spots left by other spot removers When you buy other spot removers you never know if you're going to be gypped. When you buy N-R-JEAN — you're sure of it Men! Do you put rocks in your shoes to keep you from flying away on a windy day? Is your chest continually at half-mast? Are you puny? You are? Then try the Hercules Hurry-Hup System of Muscular Development Just spend two hours a day with our bar-bells, dumb-bells, cow bells, and sleigh bells — and in just one month you'll be able to look at yourself in a mirror, swell out your chest, and say, "Boy, was I a sucker!" Axel Twinkletoes of Waitfa, Me., says: "Before I used the Hercules Hurry-Hup System of Muscular Development, I was a 90 pound weakling. Now — I'm a 91 pound weakling!" So remember to smoke Nicotines — the cigarette for people who like to live dangerously Nicotines contain apple honey, latakia, and moisture. Now all we have to do is put tobacco in them Three out of every four doctors who tried Nicotine Cigarettes said: "(COUGH)" And remember to tune in again next week folks — same time, same station, same jokes!

NUMBER PLEASE!

The following routine is one of the oldest in modern comedy. It originated somewhere between burlesque and vaudeville and has campaigned in both fields. It's been presented countless times on the radio and in the movies but audiences still seem to enjoy it. All I've done is launder it in spots, touch it up in other places, and present it for your approval.

The only props needed are a squirting telephone, an improvised telephone booth, and a few stooges. Even the telephone booth can be replaced by merely putting the phone on a flat table with a sign beneath it, indicating that it is a public phone. The operator's voice, of course, comes over the public address system of the theatre.

OPERATOR: Number please!

COMEDIAN: I want Main 5595.

O: Did you drop a nickel?

(Comedian steps outside the booth and begins to look around on the floor for a nickel. He spots something shiny and reaches for it but it turns out to be spittle. Mug the reaction until the laughs die out and then return to the booth.)

C: I'm a busy man, operator. Just give me Main 5595.

O: Hold the line please.

C: (Comedian takes the telephone wire in his hand.)

O: Are you holding the line?

C: I'm too old to be holding anything else

O: I'm sorry, but your line is busy.

(Comedian hangs up and steps outside the booth to wait. He stands there, idly twirling his hat, when a stooge comes up chewing a wad of gum. The stooge takes the gum out of his mouth, looks around for a place to put it, sees the comedian's hat and throws it in that. He then enters the booth.)

O: Number please!

S: I want Willie the Weasel in Jersey City.

O: Do you know his number?

S: No, I don't.

O: Do you know his address?

S: No, I don't know that either.

O: Do you know if he has a phone?

S: All I know is that he runs a crooked pinball machine in Jersey City

O: I'll try to connect you.

(Sound of clicking, etc.)

VOICE: Hello?

S: Hello, Willie, this is Ed.

V: What's on your mind, Ed?

S: My car broke down 300 miles from Jersey City, and I have to have \$150 right away.

V: What's that, Ed?

S: I said I want to borrow \$150 right away.

V: I'm sorry, Ed, I can't hear a word you're saying.

O: Hello, this is the operator. I can hear him very plainly.

V: Then you lend him the \$150

(Receiver slams shut. Stooze comes out of the booth and spots the comedian again. He walks over, takes the gum out of the hat, and throws it into his mouth. He starts to go off-stage when he suddenly sneezes. His hand covers the sneeze and so is moist. The stooze looks around for a place to dry it and fastens his eyes on the comedian once again. He goes over and wipes his hand on the comedian's coat. The comedian then offers him the other side of his coat, saying: "I wouldn't want to see you go short, you know.")

S: Thanks. (The stooze keeps staring at the comedian as he begins to go off-stage.)

C: Well, what are you staring at?

S: You know, if it weren't for the mustache, you'd look exactly like my wife.

C: But I haven't got a mustache.

S: I know, but my wife has (Stooze exits.)

(The comedian once again enters the booth.)

O: Number please.

C: I want Main 5595.

O: Will you talk a little louder please?

C: Main 5595.

O: Louder please.

C: MAIN 5595!!!

O: Louder please!

C: If I could talk any louder, I wouldn't need a phone Just give me Main 5595.

O: Are you calling Oswego 7832?

- C: MAIN! M as in mangle — A as in aggravation — I as in impatient — and N as in nitwit — MAIN!
- O: Are you calling Oswego 7832?
- C: Don't you know the King's English?
- O: Of course he is
- C: Oh, a smart one!
- O: No—a republican
- C: Look operator, just give me Main 5595 and try to speed it up a little. Do you know that every time I breathe, a man dies?
- O: I'd suggest Listerine
- C: Please operator! My wife is in the hospital. She's going to have a baby. I'd like to speak to him before he graduates from high school
- O: I'm sorry, but your line is busy. I could give you Monument 5532 or Fordham 8392 — They're both very nice numbers
- C: Miss — I appeal to you!
- O: What makes you think so?
- C: If you were my wife I'd give you poison.
- O: If I were your wife, I'd take it
(Comedian hangs up and walks outside.)
- C: If I get just one more stall, I'm going to sell my 50,000 shares of A. T. & T.
(A shapely girl, smoking a cigarette, comes across the stage at a brisk pace. She pushes him aside and enters the booth.)
- G: Out of the way, small change Operator, I want to speak to Sadie Hossenpheffer in Russia.
- O: Do you know where she is in Russia?
- G: Well, it's either Minsk, Pinsk, or Schminsk. I don't remember which one
- O: One moment, and I'll connect you. (Clicking sounds.)
- VOICE: Da? (Both girls should speak in a manner that is currently known as Brooklynese.)

- G: Hello, Sadie? This is Gertrude—— Gertrude Hammerschlogger from Greenpernt Hold the phone a minute, Sadie. (She leans out of the booth.) Hey, knucklehead! (Comedian looks behind him to see who she's calling. Realizing she means him, he walks over to the booth.) Hold out your hand! (He holds out his hand, palm upwards, and she flicks the ashes from her cigarette into it. Then she turns back to the phone.)
- V: Who's that, Gertrude?
- G: Just a bum Say Sadie, have I got news for yew!
- V: Well tell it to me already—— hey! I'm hangin on top of every woid
- G: I went out with a general last night!
- V: Major General?
- G: Not yet
- V: Is he like your last boy friend or is this one alive?
- G: Oh, he's alive all right. In fact he's very talented in the athletic field. We park there every night And you've really got to hand it to him when it comes to necking.
- V: Ya mean ta say he's that lazy?
- G: He took me for a ride to Albany last night.
- V: That's where you made a big mistake.
- G: No—— that was at Poughkeepsie He tried to get fresh but I told him off. I just said, "I'll give you exactly one hour to get your hand off my knee!"
- V: So what happened already?
- G: I gave him fifty-five minutes too long So how's by you, Sadie? How are things in Mama Russia?
- V: Not so good, Gertrude. We can't seem to get out of the red And I keep worrying about my boy friend, Ivan.
- G: Well listen, Sadie. Just because he shaves with toothpaste doesn't mean he's nuts
- V: I know, Gertrude. But I'm getting awful sick of eating strawberry shortcakes made with shaving cream
- G: Well, we all have to grin and bear up with a lot of things, Sadie.

Remember what Jake Spear wrote "Life is but a stage, and we're all ham actors on it."

V: That's a beautiful thought, Gertrude

G: I thought so Well, I've got to get going now. I'm late for the Sewing Circle.

V: So what's the rush?

G: Tonight we're going to sew a triangle Well, as one eskimo said to the other: "Call up some night and we'll chew the fat together"

(She hangs up and leaves the booth. The comedian is standing beside it and tips his hat as she goes past him.)

C: Say, you look like a million dollars!

G: Yeah——and I'm just as hard to make!

(She exits. Comedian enters the booth and picks up the receiver. The minute he holds it up to his ear.)

O: Sorry, the line is busy!

C: I didn't even give you the number yet!

O: Number please.

C: I want Main 5595.

O: You want to call Maine?

C: No I don't want to call Maine. I want to call Main 5595! Operator, it's a little candy store just four blocks from here. I **COULD WALK THERE IN FIVE MINUTES!** Operator——I don't want the world on a string——I don't even want a special favor——All I want is Main 5595!

O: I'm sorry, the line is busy

C: Look!——there are four phones in that candy store. The bookie only uses one of them They haven't had a customer in there since the time they lost the floor polish in the chocolate syrup The last time all four phones were used was when prohibition was repealed Now are you still going to tell me that the line is busy?

O: Number please

C: Are you crazy?

O: I'm sorry, but I'm not allowed to give out that information

C: Look operator! A guy comes up to the phone and asks for Willie the Weasel in Jersey City. He doesn't know the number, he doesn't know the address, he doesn't even know if Willie the Weasel has a phone. The guy's dead and he doesn't know it! There's a click, clack, click — the next thing you know he's talking to Willie the Weasel Then a girl comes up. She asks for Sadie Hossenpfeffer in Russia She doesn't know where in Russia, but she's trying. She narrows it down to Minsk, Pinsk, or Schminsk Before you could say Stalin, she's talking to Sadie Hossenpfeffer But I can't even get Izzie's candy store four blocks away! If Alexander Graham Bell could see me now, he'd shoot himself (Then the comedian's face suddenly lights up.) Wait a minute, operator — I think I've got an idea.

O: Be kind to it. It's a long way from home

(Comedian hangs up with a fiendish smile on his face. Then he picks up the phone once again and speaks with diabolical cunning in his voice.)

C: Operator Give me Niagara Falls I don't know who I want to speak to in Niagara Falls If I knew, I wouldn't know their telephone number In fact, I don't even know if I have the money to pay for this call All I know is that I want Niagara Falls

O: Niagara Falls?

C: Yes, Niagara Falls!

O: Are you sure you want Niagara Falls?

C: I'm positive I want Niagara Falls

(As the last word comes from the comedian's lips, a solid stream of water squirts from the mouthpiece into his face. Blackout!)

Although this routine is built around gags, it is for the most part situation and visual comedy. The comedian must mug his way through the entire skit and it will be his reactions to the lines of the stooges, that will get the biggest laughs.