

TABMAN MAGIC

TABBY CRABB

Introduction by Pete Biro

On the web at <http://TabmanMagic.com>



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Somewhere in there the earthquake stuck. My office was essentially destroyed. The MAGIC! computer was buried under debris. Like any good wireless operator, I stuck to my post, and, as soon as the power came back up, I had MAGIC! back up and running from a small portable computer that I had to crawl over debris to operate.

You know the connections to Stevens in all of this. Did you ever hear about the letters back and forth between me and his attorney, a guy named David Williams? Not the famous magic guy, another one.

I remember this terrible time on MAGIC! from a user stand point and it ruined the BBS for everyone. I think that David could have picked up after the earthquake and kept him going. His friends and fans of the BBS would have rallied and done whatever we could have to make it work. We were really like a brotherhood. I'm still amazed that Dave Knapp and Steve Youell wanted to ruin it for everyone. And I'm baffled by the lack of a motive. MAGIC! was a good thing.

Richard Robinson told me he didn't want any part of the BBS part of online magic, that it was nothing but trouble. Time has proven him wrong on this score. Look at the success of The Magic Café and the ease of having a conversation. The Café is the closest thing going to MAGIC! even though MAGIC! was easier to use especially with the downloader that Burton the Bizarre first built and then Dave Knapp improved on and later (Knapp is a very smart man because he worked for Livermore Labs) then seemingly used for sabotage to the system.

I went on to sign in with Steven's GeMiNi. Net but I was pretty disgusted by that whole scene with them trying to muscle David Lichtman out of his hard and ground breaking work. As a former Boy Scout, I grew up to believe that Loyalty is the longest and strongest suit in the deck and I've lived my life by it.

The big question for me was how to be loyal to David Lichtman and Richard Robinson and to Pete Biro at the same time. Pete had given me much in the magic field. I couldn't begin to tell you how indebted to him I felt at that time, and still; needless to say it was a difficult time.

All the big players in the hobby magic arena were given free access to the GeMiNi site. The object was to lure magicians with computers capable of

When I put The Music City Conclave together, Max agreed to come to Nashville and do a magicians only lecture, one of the few that he did. He was extremely gracious not only to me but to the attendees of the convention and was a huge hit. There had been some rumblings from some of the local, so called Christian magicians, who for some reason thought that Max was in league with the devil. I never understood this. I just didn't make sense to me, such ignorance in these modern times.

Can you name the magicians in this picture from a magic convention in Chicago well over 50 years ago? I did add Max in for a little joke on the members of the *Genii Forum*. It actually made some of them a little irritated with me for pulling the stunt changing the picture



every hour having Max pop in and out and at different places. I guess some of them must have thought Max really was in league with the devil.

Notice the Okito sticker in the upper right hand corner of the photo. It's an original picture from Okito's collection. That's him standing in front of and to the right of Walter Gibson. Another clue is Bert Allerton who is one of the first restaurant table workers. Jim Sisti can verify this. Bert worked at Chicago's famed Pump Room. If I tell you any more I'll take all the fun out of it but they

SCOTTY'S LIGHT BULB TRICK

How to Cut up Light Bulbs for Fun and Profit.

Who in magic for a couple of decades isn't in awe of Scotty York? I am no exception so when I got a chance to not only meet with Scotty and get to know him I was offered the chance to learn from him how to manufacture the Scotty York Light Bulb trick and become the maker of record. This appealed to me in a big way. I was excited about the potential meeting for weeks.

Bill Wells set it up for the International Brotherhood of Magicians to book Scotty as a lecturer at the annual convention in Quebec City so Scotty and I could get together and set something up. I was in Pittsburgh working with Paul Kozak onstage at a comedy club on the river. I was wearing a black monk's robe every night and playing the part of a hundred year old magician that Koz had found working at the window at McDonald's. It was fun in Pittsburgh with lots of magic and magicians to hang out with plus Kozak's dad, a great hunky cook and practical joker. We were staying at his dad's house working on the show before the run actually started.



The I.B.M. convention dates worked out perfect for me to fly from Kozak's to Quebec City right after our show, *Wicked*, ended. I was detained by customs in Canada for a few hours while they measured the length of my hair and tried to get me to tell them what I really was in Canada for. It worked. There really was a magician's gathering in town and yes, it was a big deal. They let me go and released my Anvil case full of props, tools and road gear. I headed to the hotel to check in and take a look at the venues for the hotel shows. I was serving as Hotel Shows Director and working for the convention committee.

My job involved making sure all the venues for the lecturers had sound and lights plus running The Comedy Club. I attended Scotty's first of three lectures. Bill introduced us and Scotty and I headed into old Quebec City to find some dinner and to talk things over. Over Canada pie and alcohol we eventually

MAYHEM

Reno and Las Vegas with Amazing Johnathan and Paul Kozak

Pete Biro asked me if I was interested in building the props for a show that was going to run in Reno and Las Vegas as well as fly out and set the show and also stage manage. The show was slated to be called, *Mayhem*, and it was starring Amazing Johnathan and Paul Kozak.

Pete sent me a rough outline (reproduced elsewhere in this chapter) of what they wanted me to build for them and we worked out a budget. I agreed to build everything for under \$10,000 and to work the show for a weekly salary and a bonus. I started in on putting the props together. They asked if I would move to Las Vegas with them and I thought it sounded like a good idea.

The show opener involved skeet shooting at some rabbits that flew out of hats every time AJ shouted pull and then after that gag, Kozak and AJ were going to shoot each other with cross bows. I had to make a crossbow that would absorb an arrow and two special vests with pop up arrows, the end with the feathers or fletching to appear as though they had been actually shot.

OK, so far so good.

The big trick was a reverse substitution trunk. By reverse I mean that in the end the trunk would vanish leaving the magician, in this case, Kozak as Elvis the Escape Artist who endeavors to escape from a food filled trunk only to find him on his knees on the floor while AJ would proclaim,

Elvis has eaten the trunk ladies and gentlemen. He's eaten the entire trunk.

There was a point in the show where Kozak would fire a pistol into the fly shooting a large black JBL speaker box and having it fall on Amazing Johnathan's head. The speaker was in reality a large lightweight cardboard box painted flat black with two JBL logos from a magazine ad glued on each end and a big piece of foam grill cloth from Radio Shack glued on the front. It was held in the fly by a single length of monofilament fishing line. I would watch through a peep hole back stage and when Koz would fire I'd release the monofilament

NOTES ON THE ERDNASE TRAIN TABLE

Cinders and soot!

After many trials and errors trying to bend mahogany around an impossibly small radius I gave up and started making the curves the old fashioned way. It would only take a few words of change in Busby's copy to accomplish this. I was feeling the pressure from being late in shipping so I made a command decision to make the change in manufacture and finish them up and start shipping.



I printed up this note and enclosed it with each table.

THE TRAIN TABLE

Appologies are due for the delay of your Train Table from Tabman.

After trying to bend mahogany strips around a one inch radius and after destroying almost 500 dollars worth of wood I found out that mahogany does not respond to less than 36 inch circles very well. Live and learn, so I decided to laminate the corners to try to get something in your hands which you would enjoy. I borrowed the design from some turn of the century gambling equipment so the table would be authentic looking and tried to give it the look of an antique. I hope you are satisfied with this product from The Conjurors' Woodworks. If you aren't please return it direct to us for a full refund of your purchase price.

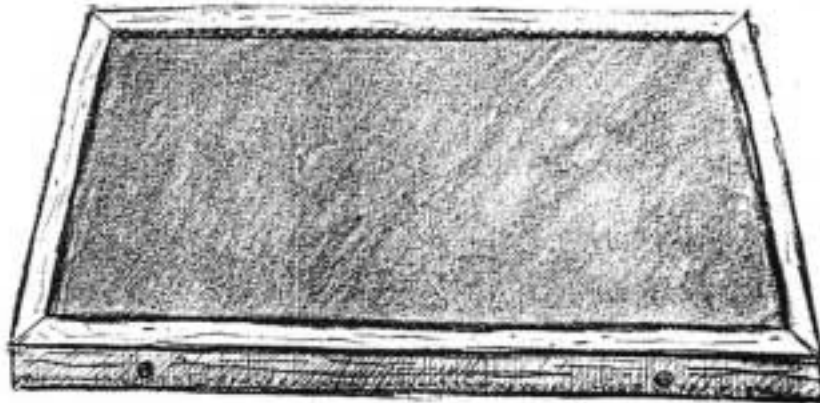
TABMAN
The Conjurors' Woodworks
P.O. Box 590
Charlotte Hall, Maryland 20622

The Train Tables sold like hot cakes and the less I liked making them the more orders I would get. I decided that Jim Patton's table would be my last one but Jim would recommend my work to customers at the Castle bar where he performed on Saturday nights. I wonder if Ray ever gets a call for a Tabman Train Table.

Here's the details. Start with a 24" square of nice 3/4" Baltic birch plywood, To draw the corner radius I used an old and thankfully unopened evaporated milk can I found in the barn to draw the cut lines and then I carefully cut them on a

HOW TO MAKE A TABMAN TABLE

Spider webs and wood dust



The standard Michael Ammar or Ray Mertz type Tabman Table

What I am going to describe is the exact process I would use to make one of the above type Tabman Tables.

Let's decide on a size. You can make yours any size you want but a popular size was one 16" x 20" and I made a lot of them like this. Here's what you will need:

Black suede leather for the top

1/4" Blackjack table padding or other type foam

a piece of green wool Mali cloth to cover the bottom

a 16" x 20" piece of nice 3/4" birch plywood

enough 3/4" x 1" mahogany or walnut lumber to make the top frame

4 black drywall screws about 1 1/4" long

4 brass cupped or finish washers

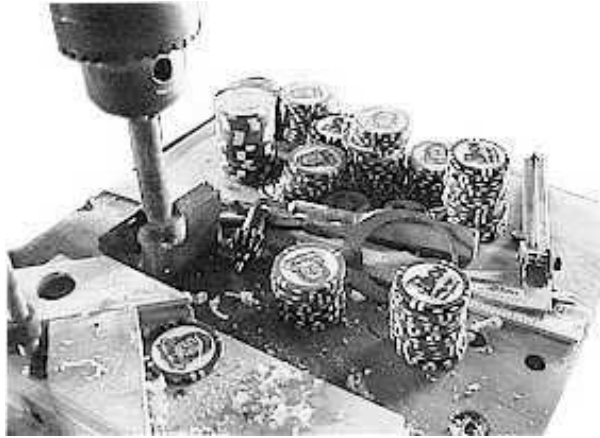
glue for the top frame (I always used epoxy)

3M #77 spray glue (in the black can) to glue the Mali cloth bottom, the top foam and the black suede.

MAKE YOUR OWN CHIP STACK SET

First you get a hundred chips

This was my first rig to drill out the chip stacks. It's a wooden jig set up on a small drill press. I used a 3/4" bottoming bit to drill them out. It was a pain in the ass to do. The chips would have a tendency to get hot and start melting. I had to hold them with my fingers and if they slipped it would burn the heck out of me. I longed for a better way.



So I acquired an old Unimat watch makers lathe from the daughter of an elderly gentleman in Florida. It was set up to work on fixed apertures for view cameras. That sounded right up my alley so I went for it.

When it arrived I had to rethink the chip making. I starting cutting a tapered pocket in the stack and with the glued up stack of chips chucked tightly in the lathe I could polish the inside with fine sandpaper.

The advent of the lathe made it possible to mass produce the stacks but I continued to use the drill press rig in my advertising and promotional efforts on the Internet. I didn't want anyone to really know how I made them. I knew that at some point poachers would start making up the chip magic so I wanted to keep it to myself for as long as I could.

Don England ordered a set of the entire chip magic that I made and then called me on the phone and announced that he was going to go into the chip magic business himself and wanted me to know and hear it from him but I never saw anything from him crediting me with even a little inspiration. Joe Porper certainly knew that I had been the sole chip magic maker for quite some time but didn't call me. Pete Biro was involved with him and I know Pete must have told him about it as I got an email one day from him telling me that he and Joe Porper had been playing around with one of

FAVORITE GAMBLING STUFF

Care to Buck the Tiger?

Magicians are fascinated by gambling and use gambling themes in magic a lot. I based a lot of the craft in my Tabman Tables on early gambling apparatus.

Take a look at the picture from Pete Biro. It was taken in his library in his old house in Walnut Creek, California. I'm dealing a game of Faro using an actual antique Faro Layout, dealing box and Casekeeper. I later would reproduce the Casekeeper and layout as well as a dealing box from Rosewood. I made the Casekeeper from rosewood and Pete supplied me with scans of



THE NO SLOUCH POUCH

The right prop at the right time!

I always loved the name of this busker's pouch. It has a great ring to it and it sold like wild fire as long as we advertised them.

The design was mine and mine alone. Harry Anderson ordered one to use on one of his television specials. I was honored beyond all means. It seems so insignificant, the \$35 that selling him the pouch brought in. These days cool stuff like this sells for a lot more.



No Slouch Pouch is relatively easy to make. First you do need to be able to cut fabric accurately and to operate a sewing machine but you don't need anything fancy. I cut the fabric on a cardboard cutting and measuring grid using a roller cutter and a straight edge normally used for cutting drywall.

The real secret once the cloth is cut is the fold. I'll do my best to detail that and give a few more tips so you might be able to make your own. You'll need some nice black

THE ELLISON WAND COLLECTION

Dave Price Tosses Me A Bone

Everyone knew of my friendship with the wonderful gentleman, David Price, who owned the Ellison Collection. Mr. Price, who has since passed away and the collection sold by his son, gave me free reign to measure the wands and make notes with the understanding that I would be making a commemorative set of reproductions with his blessing.

I spent a lot of time with him the last few years. He trusted me enough to ask me if I would be interested in repairing a box full of broken small illusions from the famous Ellison Cigar Box Illusion Collection. I was more than happy to do it and of course I accepted the challenge and took them back to my shop.

My primary interest with the collection however was not the posters as most coveted but in the Ellison Wand Collection. I was determined that Tabman be the best known and most beloved wand maker of my time. I was also making the retiring president wand for the I.B.M. When the convention was in Salt Lake City Jerry Schnepp told me that John Gaughan had gotten ticked off at the committee for some reason not known to me and didn't want to make them any more and would I do it. Imagine me not taking that assignment. The *wand maker to the president* paid well, And I liked the sound of that and being the mechanic for the *Ellison Collection* at The Egyptian Hall Museum in Brentwood. This fantastic resource was practically in my backyard and I could drive over for a visit often.

After many hours pouring over the wand collection I zeroed in on ten wands I considered special enough to be part of the *Ellison-Tabman Commemorative Wand Collection*. I've spent the morning scanning the original notes in. The plan was to build a beautiful mahogany case to house them in and to make as closely as possible the originals outlined here. The magic wands I planned to include were wands from Okito, Blackstone Sr., Ottokar Fisher, John Booth, Harry Keller, Nicola, Dunninger, Robert-Houdin, Harry Willard and a wand made of wood from the stage where Kellar and Thurston made their final joint appearance.

It's evident that I can't draw but I managed to get enough down on paper to be able to go back to my shop and build something. The creative process came to life in the hands anyway. Notes are just guidelines for the imagination. I doubt I ever complete

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