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FREE



Mr. Magic

Temperance native Andrew Martin
always has a trick up his sleeve page 8

ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR

Martin masters the tricks of his trade

BY REBECCA GOLDEN

"Take a deck of cards. In the deck there are four different suits — hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades. Now I'm only going to use one, I'm going to eliminate the other three, so name one. Hearts? Okay, hearts. Now there are 13 hearts, and I'm only going to use half. Seven is in the middle. Name either high or low. Low? Okay. I'll eliminate low. Now, between seven and King, I'm thinking of a heart. What came to your mind? Jack of hearts? You're not going to believe this, but Jack of hearts is the same card I was thinking of, too."

The magician proffers a card, a Jack of hearts. But how do you know he's chosen the right card in advance? Easy. He's written your name on it, and your card is the only blue-backed card in a red deck.

Andrew Martin, magician and illusionist, does lots of card tricks. In his nimble hands, cards appear with names written on them, or disappear, turning up later in unexpected places. As a strolling magician at Mancy's and TGI Friday's, Martin shares his special brand of family entertainment with the public.

Martin, 38, grew up in Temperance. After graduating from high school in 1979, he spent some time in community college, but had always dreamed of a career in magic.

"I always wanted attention, and in 1972 or '73, I saw a television commercial for magic cards, and that sparked my interest," Martin explained. "I got the cards for Christmas, and someone told me I could go down to the library and get books on magic, and that was that."

"I used to pull other kids off the street, pull them into my garage and do shows for them. I was always looking for an audience."

One of his earliest public performances, a Valentine's Day show for the Bedford Public Library, took place in 1975.

Martin has no clear memory of spending the five dollars he earned for the show, but his wife, Melissa, thinks he probably blew it on magic tricks.

Growing up, he studied with area magicians, spending a lot of time at Ted Carrouthers Magic Studio. As a teen, he quit his job at the Sweden House Restaurant to spend a weekend learning magic from Dick Osland. Osland taught him magic skills not found in books, and introduced him to other magicians, some of whom Martin still works with today. Martin values the techniques he picked up from Osland and others.

"Learning magic is kind of like performing music. There are all these bits and pieces not everyone knows, things a regular person wouldn't notice or find out," Martin says.

His parents hoped he'd pursue a more mainstream sort of career, but magic and



Toledo-area magician Andrew Martin, right, meets his idol, Doug Henning, in 1981.

entertaining had firmly taken hold.

"I think it's funny that his dad told him to 'get a job where you wear a suit, and he wears a tuxedo, so it worked out for both of them,'" Melissa jokes.

"When I became older and said this is what I want to do for a living, my mom said 'What are you going to do for a real job? This is a nice hobby, but...'" Martin smiles ruefully at the memory.

After 10 years working at Ted Carrouthers Magic Studio and a brief stint at Disney World, Martin began his career as a full-time magician. He does more than 400 shows a year, and does strolling magic performances at two area restaurants. In addition to stage shows and restaurant work, Martin entertains adults and children alike at private parties.

When queried about his motivation in life, he laughs and points to his wife. "She's the Siegfried and I'm the Roy," Martin says, grinning.

"All we need are some white tigers," Melissa jokes.

Andrew Martin met Melissa seven years ago, while working a private party. She booked him for the job, and he later became a client of her small graphic design firm.

"She hired me. She had this white and black goofy makeup on. It was a Halloween party. After a year of her doing my business cards, I asked her out," Martin recalls.

Though they both swore "never again" after that first date — a disastrous dinner at Ruby Tuesday's — they married a year later. They now have two children, a son, Ely, 3 and a daughter, Emma, 1.

Andrew and Melissa Martin have made magic their family business. After their marriage, Melissa dropped her other clients, choosing instead to do promotion for her husband. Melissa's cousin, known professionally as Trixie, assists Martin with his stand-up performances, including last year's

stage show at Burnham Auditorium in Sylvania.

"He always wanted to do a really big show, and we said 'How can we do it?'" Melissa explained. "Finally, we decided we'd just do it ourselves. We rented the theater and rehearsed all summer. People came and were just blown away. We sold out the theater."

The Martins say they'll probably book their own magic tour in January and February.

Martin has a number of signature tricks up his sleeve, though not literally; he always keeps his sleeves tightly rolled up all the way to his elbows. He has a way of mesmerizing the casual magic fan, never breaking eye contact, and anyone lucky enough to get a personal demonstration rarely finds the opportunity to look at his hands.

A strolling magic favorite, his sponge bunny trick requires charm and finesse. First, he tells a little story about the bunny, a nearly shapeless toy cut out of spongy material. Placing the bunny in an audience member's hand, he casts his spell and — presto, chango! — the bunny has reproduced. The audience member ends up with a dozen bunnies in her hand, and, more likely than not, a big smile on her face.

Another favorite involves making a piece of the subject's jewelry disappear and then reappear on Martin's key chain. In Martin's strolling act, the bunny trick and the jewelry trick alternate with a variety of card tricks and the making of balloon animals.

Sometimes it seems like Martin's best trick lies in reading his audience, knowing who in the crowd wants a visit from the strolling magician, and who'd rather be left to a quiet, private dinner.

"If it's tables, and you see people really close in and talking, you kind of stay away. But if they're laughing and having a great time, I'm just the extra boost in their party, and can really make their day. Sometimes,

Abra Cadabra

Andrew Martin's "Halloween Spookatorium" will be presented at the Ohio Theatre on these dates:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 21 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 29 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 22 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 31 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 27 | |

when someone seems really grumpy, you can make them feel better by making a balloon animal or doing a card trick," Martin explains.

Martin avoids the more dangerous illusions, underwater escape tricks and attempts at catching a bullet with his teeth, for example.

"I stay away from that stuff," he says with a grin, adding that there is some danger in his strolling magician act. "Sometimes when I do the card tricks I get a paper cut."

Martin loves his work, and sees magic as great family activity. He believes that keeping the secrets of illusions helps people suspend their disbelief, and allows parents to enjoy the show as much as children do. He says that TV magicians who reveal the workings of illusions do a disservice to both their peers and the larger community.

"Here's a poor guy who paid anywhere from a thousand dollars to a hundred thousand dollars for an illusion, and here's this guy saying, for free, on TV, 'This is how it's done.' It's almost like someone going up to a line of kids at the mall waiting to see Santa, and pulling his beard off and saying 'It's just a fake.'"

Melissa Martin says she knows exactly what makes her husband such a dedicated magician.

"He loves doing it because it makes people happy," Melissa explains. "It's a job where you mostly see people at their best, having their weddings and their birthdays, and you come in and entertain them."

Andrew chimes in: "Plus, it's kind of nice that in this job I'm constantly getting patted on the back."

"We tend to lose our sense of wonder," Martin says. "We get bombarded by all sorts of other stuff. The other night, I was looking up at the stars thinking this is incredible, this light show that goes on every night. When you step back and you look at it — wow."

If your sense of wonder needs a little booster, stop by TGI Friday's some Thursday night. Pick a card, get a balloon animal, or just watch the bunnies. They may not be live rabbits — the health department frowns on that in restaurants — but they're magical all the same.