

Lawyer entertains out of the courtroom

By Karen Hermes Smith
staff writer

SOME LAWYERS ARE real entertainers when they address the judge and jury in the courtroom.

Mark Kandel could do likewise.

But he saves his jokes, ventriloquism, mentalism and magic tricks for trade shows, conventions, parties and other get-togethers.

The West Bloomfield resident, who grew up in Southfield, is a general practice attorney with an entertainment business on the side. He is member of International Brotherhood of Magicians.

"What both do is keep me sharp," he said, adding that both require problem-solving skills. In law, he finds solutions to his clients' legal problems; in entertaining, he looks for ways to create new effects like making an elephant appear.

Kandel started in show biz long before law. He was fascinated by magic and ventriloquism as a child. He loved Mark Wilson's Saturday morning television show, "Magic Land of Ala-Ka-Zam," featuring ventriloquist Shari Lewis and her puppet, Lamb Chop.

"Later on in my teens, . . . I got interested in sciences and ghosts. As I studied more, I developed a fascination for ESP-type things, and I began to specialize in mentalism (which involves telepathy and precognition)."

KANDEL, NOW 27, performed his first show at a house party when he was 13. He got the job by putting mimeographed "business cards" inside the newspapers he delivered along his route.

"After that, it was all word of mouth."

In the early 1970s, while still a student at Southfield High School, he appeared on WXYZ-TV's "Super Circus," a Saturday morning program with Bob Hynes as ring master/host.

In 1980, Kandel won in both adult ventriloquy and originality for his skit with "Baby Duckie" at a competition in Colon, Mich., the magic capital of the world. "Baby Duckie" is Kandel's hand-held puppet whose "easy, devastatingly cute and precocious" personality he developed while going to law school.

He bills his shows, scheduled through the Seymour Schwartz Agency in Southfield, as "ESP" (extra-sensory fun). His promotional materials read, "Prediction: You will be amazed."

He combines all of his talents in his shows — magic, ventriloquy, mentalism and comedy and will tailor them for specific audiences or guests of honor. His shows are geared for all ages; he develops most of his tricks.

"What I try to achieve more than anything else is entertainment."

One of Kandel's telepathic tricks involves naming, without seeing them, the words in a classified ad randomly selected from a page torn from a newspaper.

KANDEL WAS graduated from Wayne State University's law school in 1980. He was always interested in law — "advocating the rights of the underdog; arguing, analyzing" — and "At the time, it seemed to be a far more secure field" than radio, television and film, which he majored in as an undergraduate.

Occasionally, Kandel will perform magic tricks for his client's children when they come with their parents to his office. While he's never tried it, magic could also be useful in demonstrating to



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Lawyer Mark Kandel, who is also a magician and mentalist, demonstrates a flashy trick using cards with symbols.

jurors that what a witness thought he saw may not be what he actually did see, he said.

And, once in a while Kandel can sense when a person is lying to him.

But, magic and mentalism have no real place in his law practice or the courtroom, Kandel said.

ESP is so limited, he said.

"There's too much going on (in a court case). You're not dealing with simple symbols" (such as the five he uses in performing his telepathic tricks).

Kandel is attracted to magic and mentalism because he likes being able to do things that appear impossible, he said.

"There's no doubt it's an ego boost. (And) I do like to see the people have a good time — I like to watch the reactions."

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