

Entertainment

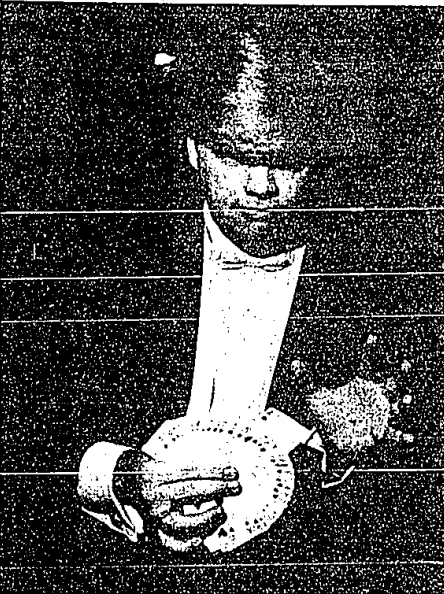
Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100

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Working magic helps young careers



Magician Jim Bergstrom, 17, does a card trick during his Sunday brunch performance at Win Schuler's restaurant in West Bloomfield.

ELIZABETH CARNEGIE

By Carmine Brooks
special writer

A RESURGENCE OF MAGIC in the entertainment world is evidenced by the number of young people who are earning money as professional magicians. Included are Jim Bergstrom, 17, and Matt Jacobson, 12, both of West Bloomfield Township, and Steve Gibbons, 13, of Livonia.

These three have much in common. All became interested in magic at an early age, turned on by seeing magic acts on television. They were encouraged by their parents to buy tricks, practice and join magic clubs.

All look upon magic as a business. They agree the person hardest to entertain is the one who will not relax and enjoy it and the pest who yells, "I know how to do that," and tells.

All want to get a college degree and plan to use their art and skills as a magician in their professions. They name David Copperfield, Doug Henning and Harry Blackstone Jr. as the personalities who have influenced their lives and the growing popularity of magicians in this decade.

BERGSTROM is entertaining Sunday brunch customers at Schuler's West Bloomfield restaurant every week from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. A graduate of West Bloomfield High School, he will enter the University of Michigan on the Dearborn campus this fall. Bergstrom will be working for a degree in business administration with money he has earned from performing magic in restaurants, stores, clubs and trade shows. His style is intimate and close up.

Watching Bergstrom at work, there is a burst of laughter from across the

dining room. The big, handsome, smiling teen-ager, dressed in a tuxedo and carrying a little black bag, moves to another table amidst applause from two couples he has just entertained.

He sits at the table with Schuler regulars Barbe and Norm Ellison of Milford. He asks to borrow the amethyst ring she is wearing, and she obligingly takes it off and hands it to him. It vanishes between Bergstrom's supple fingers.

He can't find it, and there is consternation at the table. The magician is contrite, offering his car keys as collateral until the ring is found. The ring is attached to his car keys.

A child interrupts a card trick to ask for a balloon animal. Kevin Cleaves of Farmington Hills gasps with delight at the final puff of Bergstrom's breath that produces the pomp in a poodle's tail.

ELLISON REQUESTS the magician repeat his favorite trick with a bird cage that disappears with a zap while Ellison is still clutching it. The customers love it.

Bergstrom, who also blows symphony and jazz alto and baritone saxophone, believes magicians give pleasure much in the same way musicians do. "But a piano is much more expensive than a deck of cards," he added.

Bergstrom will continue his magic act while in college, working restaurants, corporate parties and holiday special promotions in stores. He works with cars, coins, rings, spoons, rope, balloons, paper and "everyday kind of things."

Bergstrom said the expense of apparatus has forced him to review old magic books like "The Golden Age of Magic," which gives good advice like "Always look like you stepped out of the barbershop," and Birmingham au-

thor and magician Milton Kort's books, "Kort Is Now in Season" and "Old Color Card Tricks."

Kort, who more than 40 years ago worked his way through pharmacy college as a magician, agrees that television "has brought back the magic act."

"THE LACK of theaters and the cost of transporting the big illusion has placed more emphasis on close-up magic," Kort said.

Kort is one of several teachers of magic in the Tel-13 Mystics Club for youngsters that meets at 7:30 p.m. the third Thursday of every month in the Southfield shopping mall's conference room.

Magical Matt Jacobson is a platform illusionist who works with his parents, Mike and Harriet. Matt cuts his mother in three sections, unerringly shoots a 38-caliber pistol blindfolded, performs the Houdini strait-jacket escape and uses a space-age laser gun "that turns everything in its path to a glittering spectacle of fireworks."

Matt started performing at age 7. The family act has lots of prizes and music and uses about \$20,000 worth of equipment. The act has become a family business and is in demand outside Michigan. Matt has a booking agent and is billed as "the nation's youngest professional magician."

Although Matt seems destined to be a magician, he also wants to become a television producer. Matt was born in the hospital that Harry Houdini died in and has the same birthday as Harry Blackstone. The Jacobsons recently attended Harry Blackstone's 50th birthday party on the magician's estate near Los Angeles.

DOES MATT ENJOY fooling people? "I don't think of it as fooling people. I think of it as making them happy

about seeing things," he said.

Gibbons' mother makes him practice performing a half-hour show at parties, schools and shopping centers. He will entertain senior citizens at special events this fall. Gibbons stands 5-feet-10½-inches tall and works in a business suit. At the rate he is growing he would have to buy a new costume every year, his mother said.

Gibbons attends Holmes Junior High School in Livonia. He first became interested in magic when he was 8 years old, watching David Copperfield on television.

Gibbons is a newspaper carrier and spends all the money he earns on magic classes and tricks. He buys his tricks from Romig in Ferndale, a store that also provides classes. He belongs to the Tel-13 Mystics, where club professionals give freely of their time and offer criticism, he said.

He describes his performance as "something in between the close-up and platform style of magic." His favorite trick is "a sword through the neck."

"A MODERATE price for a trick is \$25, and it takes a lot of time and practice," Gibbons said. In his opinion, "Magicians are born, not made, or they would be just another professional." He hopes to get a degree in theatrical arts.

He is attending an annual magicians convention in Colon (Mich.) this month. Gibbons quotes Blackstone, who said, "Magic is really a presentation of fantasies of reality."

Psychologists explain magic as wishful thinking, but magic as entertainment has inherited mystical and occult concepts from ancient alchemy, astrology and primitive religions that prevailed before the beginning of modern science.

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