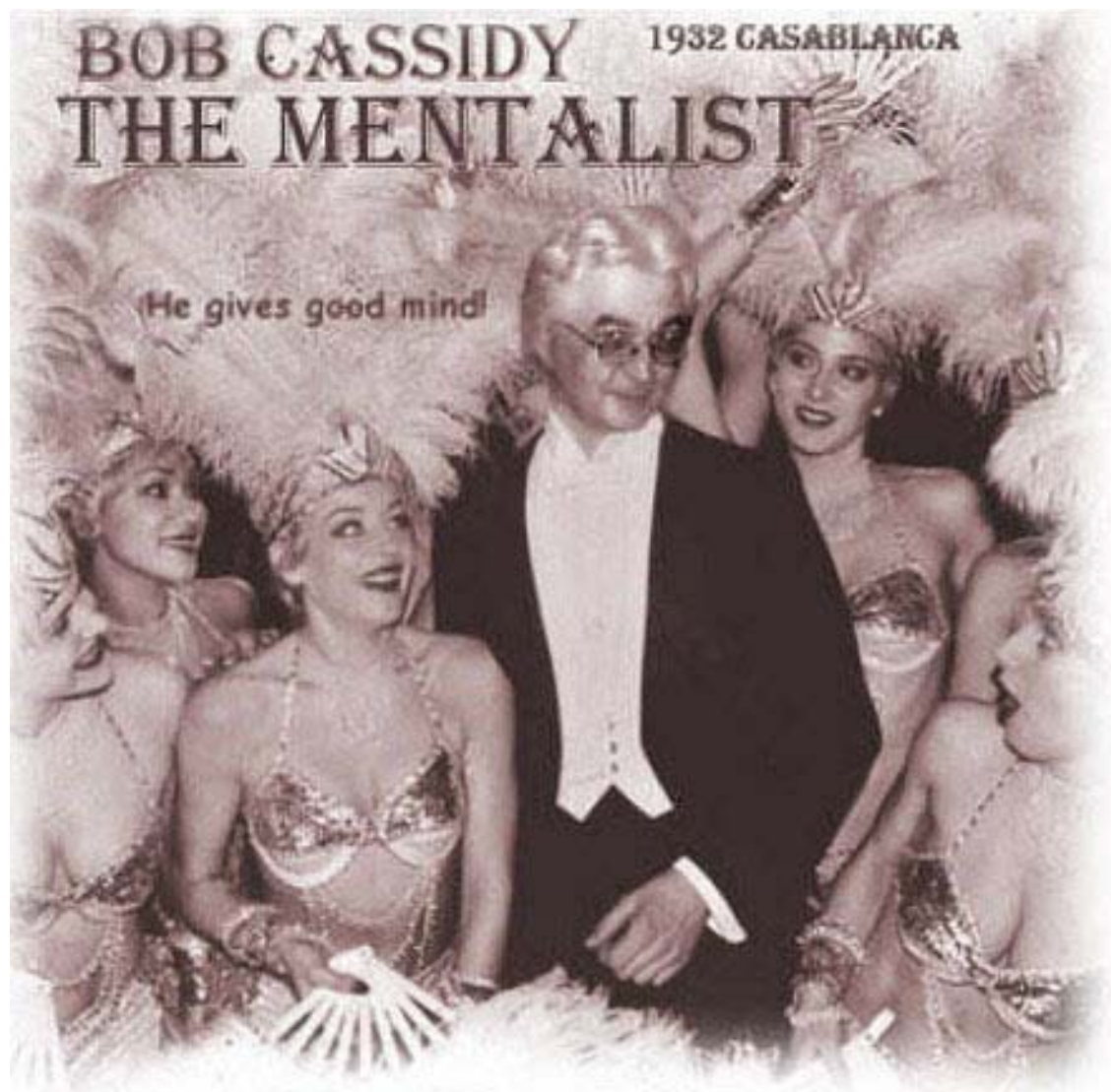


BOB CASSIDY 1932 CASABLANCA  
**THE MENTALIST**

He gives good mind!



**The Black Book  
of Mentalism**

There is another technique, called *Mental Reservation and Secret Evasion*, which is very effective if you prefer to mislead with the truth rather than tell an outright lie. It is most effective when combined with the use of a few irrelevant details. According to Dr. Bob,

*"It's all a matter of adding details and defining your terms. A few weeks ago, a nosy polygraph examiner asked me if it was true that my people smoked marijuana during my sermons. Now I could have said 'No, that's against our religion,' and prayed for the machine to blow a fuse.*

*"But why take a chance? The easiest way to beat a lie detector is simply by telling the truth. You don't have to tell the WHOLE truth or NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH – just THE TRUTH THE WAY YOU SEE IT. So, I didn't deny anything. I just said, 'No one in my church ingests, inhales, or injects foreign substances or drugs of any kind. It is entirely against our religion and is strictly forbidden.' And I was telling the absolute truth.*

*What I didn't mention was that our marijuana isn't foreign; we grow the shit domestically in the church greenhouse.*

- From Dr. Bob's *Reality is Just the Way You See It*

# The Black Book of Mentalism

**By Robert E Cassidy**

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## The Message of Mentalism

In a culture like ours . . . it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message.

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media:  
The Extensions of Man* (1964)

Magic has been a popular form of entertainment for centuries, not because people are inherently fascinated by tricks or because they like to be fooled, but because the figure of the magician remains an unconscious symbol of man's triumph over the relentless and impersonal forces of nature.

On a conscious level it can kindle a childlike sense of wonder in the most jaded, and inspire the imagination with its implicit question "What if?" (Apart from all that, it's always been a great way to pick up women.)

The message of magic doesn't lie in the tricks themselves, but in the sense of wonder and control provided by the character of the magician himself.

What, then, is the message provided by the mentalist? The answer, I believe, is what determines if he is a charlatan, an entertainer, or an inspirational motivator. Unfortunately, I cannot provide the answer for you; you have to find it for yourself, within yourself. (I will provide you with a suggestion, though.)

The reason I raise this question at the beginning of *The Black Book* is that the methods and handlings that follow are ethically neutral. Because of their minimalist nature, the meaning of which I'll explain shortly, they can be used to defraud as easily as they can be used to provide thoughtful, dramatic, and perhaps even inspiring, entertainment.

Just as the true illusion of magic doesn't lie in its secrets, the methods and handlings of the mentalist are simply the tools he uses to create his chosen stage persona.

I mentioned that I would give you a suggestion that might help resolve the ethical dilemma of mentalism. Here it is:

You might consider calling yourself a "mentalist."

I can't think of a single charlatan working today who calls himself that. Do you want to know why? If you look up the word in a modern dictionary you will find that the word has two definitions - it either refers to a nineteenth century school of philosophy, or to "A stage performer who pretends to read minds." That pretty much explains why no spirit medium or New Age psychic would get caught dead calling himself a mentalist.

Not that you should read the definition to your audiences... just read it to yourself once in a while and you should be okay.

## **Minimalism**

Joseph Dunninger has often been credited with saying. "Every time you add a prop to your act your price goes down." His reasoning should be obvious - every additional prop takes the illusion one step away from what "real mind reading" would look like. And, as I have noted many times in my previous books, every additional type of mentalism you demonstrate (apparent telepathy, precognition, psychokinesis, clairvoyance, etc.) also detracts from the overall illusion.

Recently a so-called mentalist challenged me on the last point, stating, essentially,

**"How entertaining is it to demonstrate the same ability over and over again? It is much more interesting for an audience if you do a prediction, then perhaps a blindfold test, a key bend, a memory test and maybe a picture duplication. My business is to entertain them - and that means variety. How entertaining is it to watch the same billet test presented five or six different ways?"**

I think the problem with his reasoning is obvious. Why not throw in a few jokes, a tap dance and a piano solo? There's some variety for you! (Reminds me of the heckler Dr Bob wrote about in an earlier book - the guy who yelled at Frank Sinatra after he finished a song, "So ya can sing, what else do ya do?")

But beyond that, the objection also assumes that the entertainment is provided by the effects - which, as we've seen, is simply not true. To maintain the illusion of mentalism, the effects must remain secondary to the mentalist's persona. As the variety of effects increases, the persona becomes less defined. [Think of a three-ring circus - when the star act appears in the center ring, the lights go out on the other two.]

The rule applies to the number of effects as well - less is better - if you do too much and make it look too easy, it just won't be as believable.

This is what I mean by minimalism. Fewer props, fewer effects and less variety in the type of effect. The entertainment value comes completely from the performer himself. That is why mentalism is probably the most difficult kind of magic to present well.

The ability to transcend one's material is the hallmark of excellent performers in all areas of show business, but for some reason, even well informed "authorities" on magic and mentalism miss this point. A recent work on mentalism contained the following passage:

. . . Rare is the performer who can mesmerize a crowd by performing only mentalism. Usually these performers have some dynamic effect that will be remembered by the audience. Some performers can do this successfully. Others try and fail.

The fact is that you CAN'T mesmerize a crowd with **only mentalism**. The statement that those mentalists who do "mesmerize" rely on "some dynamic effect" that people will remember, simply is NOT true. Those laypeople old enough to remember seeing Dunninger perform; rarely recall the exact effects he performed. They just remember that he was able to read people's minds. As his confidante and behind-the-scenes man David Lustig once said, "It not what you do, it's what they THINK you do that counts."

Several paragraphs back I alluded to ethical problems that could be associated with a minimalist approach. If you have a ton of props and do twenty-five separate effects demonstrating every conceivable type of paranormal phenomena, it doesn't matter if you call yourself a psychic, a spirit medium, or Nostradamus' direct descendant and sole surviving heir - no one is going to believe you anyway.

The more minimalist you get, however, the more likely there will be audience members who believe you are doing the "real thing." Think of the leading "psychics" and "mediums" who nowadays have their own syndicated television shows. They use no props and only do one effect - the most popular being the claimed ability to converse with the dead. They never call themselves "mentalists" and you will never catch them at an SAM or PEA convention.

If you feel that they operate within an ethical "no man's land" that you would rather avoid, the solution is simple. Compromise- but just a little. Use a minor prop here or there. Call yourself a mentalist. Avoid doing private readings. Confine your "strong" performances to the stage and limit your speaking engagements and so called "educational" gigs to memory training, self hypnosis, and other similar non-paranormal themes.

The effects and handlings that follow reflect the degree to which I have compromised the minimalist concept while maintaining a believable illusion of mentalism.

<paid advertisement>

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## The Mirror Box and Tray

These are two of the most versatile gimmicks you will ever use. As far as the audience is concerned, one of them is just a box that has no apparent function other than to hold the pencils, papers and markers that the mentalist uses during his performance. The other is a large plexiglas tray.

After reading, and, I hope *using* the routine I've described, you will, it will become apparent to you how these two items can be used to perform (and in many cases, improve upon) several standard mental effects.

Readers of my previous books may think they are experiencing *déjà vu* upon looking at the following photograph of a partially opened cigar box. In a previous book I described how, with the addition of a simple gimmick, it is easily transformed into an excellent billet switching device.)



Here, however, it is put to a completely different use. Note that there is a 3½-inch convex reducing mirror stuck to the bottom of the box. (The box itself measures 6½ x 5 x 1½ inches.) These mirrors are obtainable for a few dollars at any automobile supply store.

In performance, there are a few pencils and slips of paper in the box to the left and right of the mirror.

What you really have, of course, is an incredibly effective and virtually invisible shiner. It is impossible for anyone to see the mirror in the box unless they are standing right next to the mentalist's table and looking right down on it. But since the box is closed most of the time, the mirror is out of sight should spectators be invited to stand on stage near the table.

The following two photographs show the plexiglas tray. I have spread some playing cards on the tray to give you a reference point for its size. It is constructed of TWO clear plexiglas sheets. Between them is a sheet of transparent blue paper - it is, in fact, the same paper that is used to protect the plexiglas when you purchase it. The two sheets are held together by Scotch Brand blue plastic decorative tape that goes around the edges as shown. (The color of the tray is not critical.)



The combination of the box and tray provide an extremely deceptive, yet remarkably effective, method for several routines I have used successfully over the years. I'll describe a very simple presentation just to make the handling clear and then I'll give you a few ideas on how to elaborate on the concept.

Put five "Sharpie" markers, one black Magic Marker and five 3 x 5 inch pieces of opaque white poster board into the cigar box. Close the box, put it on your table, and you are ready to go. The tray is on the table next to the box.

**EFFECT AND METHOD:** Five volunteers, standing next to each other, are each handed a 3 x 5 piece of poster board and a Sharpie marker. They are told to print their first names on one side of the card and then to pass their cards to the volunteer on the left who is told to mix them up.

The performer collects the Sharpies, returns them to the cigar box, and gets the Magic Marker and tray. He approaches the volunteer with the cards and asks her to deal them, name sides **down**, onto the tray.

The mentalist carries the tray into the audience, emphasizing that he will not touch the cards at any time. He approaches a seated volunteer and hands him the Magic Marker.

"Sir, I would like you to make an 'X' on the back of one of those cards." The performer holds the tray behind his back, thus making it obvious that he cannot see which card the volunteer is marking.

"As soon as you've done that, put the cap back on the marker and put it aside for a moment. Pick up the cards, but be careful not to turn them over - I don't want you to know the name of the person on the other side of the card you just marked. Close your eyes and mix the cards around so you don't know which is which and then turn them over so they are name-side up. Mix them a bit more and then open your eyes. [The mentalist's back remains toward the spectator throughout this sequence, the tray still held behind his back ready for the return of the cards.]

"Now deal them in a row onto the tray - name sides up, and tell me when you are finished."

It should be obvious to all that it is impossible for anyone to know which card has the 'x' on its back.

The performer carefully brings the tray from behind his back to the front and, holding it with only his left hand for a moment, retrieves the Magic Marker with his right. The performer walks back to the front and places the tray on his table. He puts the marker back into the cigar box and closes it.

At this point, the performer already knows which card has the "X" on the back. The cigar box was left halfway open - as in the photo - when he returned the Sharpies and got the Magic Marker. In placing the tray back on the table, he simply has to pass it over the box and he will see a reflection in the convex mirror, which tells him which card, has an "X" on it.

The mentalist now steps away from the table and stands with his back to it as each of the five volunteers are told - one at a time - to approach the table and pick up their card - being careful not to expose the underside.

When all of the volunteers have their cards, they are asked to turn their backs on the audience, secretly look at the other side of their cards and then fold them up and hold them in their closed fists.

Using a lie detector theme, the mentalist asks each volunteer a series of questions. Apparently by listening to variations in their vocal patterns and observing their body language and subliminal cues, he is able to reveal whose card bears the 'X'.

Now this, as I said, is a really simple approach. Here is a refinement, which should make the utility of the concept very clear to you:

A ball, a crumpled up dollar bill, or some other object is placed under one of five identical paper cups while the tray is held behind the performers back. The cups are then moved about by the spectators, apparently making it impossible for anyone to know which cup covers the object.

Simply by taking the tray to the front and placing it on the table, the mirror shows the mentalist which cup covers the object. He casually picks up some loose pencils or papers that are lying on the table, puts them in the box, closed it and pushes it to the side.

If a borrowed bill is the target object, it is a simple matter to switch the bill for a duplicate whose serial number you have memorized, before having it hidden under one of the cups. Having determined the location of the bill, you can now stand away from the table as you instruct a volunteer to lift the cups you sense to be empty. When you finally reveal the location of the bill you are all set to reveal its serial number as a kicker.

As I said at the outset, a little bit of imagination will show you just how valuable these two simple devices can be.

Use them well.

## The Match Box

If you already have, or can come up with, a good reason to light a match during your act, I think you will find this little device to be very useful indeed.

It's no secret that some of the top names in mentalism and stage hypnosis go through their entire careers performing essentially the same routines. (This used to be true for comedians and other variety acts as well, but television, by exposing acts to millions of viewers at a time, pretty much put an end to that with its incessant demand for "something new.")

The main reason that many mentalists and hypnotists still get by with the same routines (other than the fact that there isn't much demand for them on television in the first place) is that their focus on the unique "powers" of the performer and plenty of audience participation make every show seem like a new experience.

Since they understand well the principle that the performer's ability to captivate an audience is far more important than his actual methods, there was (and is) a tendency among them to rely on classical and time proven methods and effects, leaving the eternal search for "something new" to the hobbyists and amateurs. I am constantly amazed at how often the skillful handlings of "classic" effects and principles - even those exposed for years in children's magic sets - are still among the professional performer's most devastating weapons. (They didn't, after all, get to be "classics" because they were lousy tricks.)

The oldest device or method, with just the slightest disguise, can, in the right hands, be just as deceptive today as it was centuries ago.

"The Match Box" I'm about to describe provides a perfect example. If you're a typical magical "packrat", I'm sure you already have one of these devices tucked away in a drawer somewhere. If not, you can still pick one up in a magic or toy store for under five bucks - and use it effectively in a fifteen hundred dollar show.



This is not a regular size matchbox. It is the large style of matchbox, which contains "strike anywhere kitchen matches." They're available in any supermarket - usually in the same section where they sell charcoal and barbeque supplies - the box measures approximately  $4\frac{1}{2}$  x 3 x  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

These dimensions, by fortunate coincidence, are almost the same as the ubiquitous plastic "Magic Drawer Box" - the flagship effect of just about every children's magic set sold since the end of the nineteenth century, and whose secret is probably known to more people today than were even ALIVE back then.

They don't normally look like large matchboxes, though. The photo above is actually a "Magic Marvin's" black plastic drawer box to which I've taped, and then trimmed the outer shell of a kitchen matchbox. (Look at the photo closely and you will see that the original matchbox was slightly longer than the drawer box. Rather than cut an end off the matchbox - which would destroy the recognizable symmetry of the design, I cut a small section out of the middle. That's why part of the word "kitchen" is missing if you look carefully.

Here's a photo of the box with the drawer pulled out.



I am receiving the thoughts of many of you right now as you protest, "But wait a minute, there's a black plastic drawer sticking out of the box. It's supposed to be cardboard, isn't it?"

I don't know. Is it supposed to be cardboard?

Are the inner drawers of jumbo matchboxes made of cardboard? Have you checked lately? What about the ones you buy in the "Camping Supply" section of the store - the ones that are supposed to stay waterproof? Do they have cardboard drawers?

**Forget about it, it doesn't matter!** Over the many years I have used this device, no one has ever questioned it. I keep matches in it, which I use to light things when the effect or occasion requires. I sometimes refer to them as 'camping matches' but I offer no other explanation or apology for the box.

It looks like a normal thing and it says "Diamond Matches" on it. That makes it virtually invisible. It used to say - in big white letters on the shiny black box- "Magic Marvin's Magic Box", in which condition it was only useful before an audience of the blind or well separated groups of congenital idiots.

Disguised as a matchbox, though, it is an extremely clever, yet innocuous device. (For platform or stage shows! - Don't pull one out of your pocket to light someone's cigarette or burn their proffered billet during a performance of "strolling mentalism.")

**[STROLLING MENTALISM - a late twentieth century abomination, the very premise of which destroys the illusion of mentalism. You walk around performing the same "spontaneous" paranormal feats for everyone you run into, while doing your duty as part of the "hired help" at the corporate banquet.**

**The only "real" psychic I know who would even consider going this route is Dr. Bob - and that's only because he's an accomplished pickpocket and enjoys mingling (at close quarters) with his "superiors."]**

Again, this is a utility device with many potential applications, but I use it almost exclusively for this perfect variation of the "Living and Dead" test.

**EFFECT:** Five to seven people, well separated around the audience, are each given slips of paper and all of them, except one, are asked to write the names of famous living people, and then to fold their slips into quarters. (Or perhaps you will be original and come up with more interesting categories than 'living' and 'dead'.) The remaining spectator, who may be anyone you select, as they all receive identical pieces of unmarked paper, is told to write the name of "a famous dead guy."

(Which is the way I always phrase it if I am going the living and dead route. By staying away from the names of dead relatives and referring to a "famous dead guy", you eliminate the morbidity inherent in this sort of effect, and get some surprised laughter at the same time. Of course if you are performing at a private party for some rich people in mourning you may want to play this up for all it is worth, but I suggest that you first read the ethics part of this ebook that you obviously skipped over because you decided it didn't apply to you.)

The slips of paper should be no more than two inches square. I use slips made of newsprint. They must be thin enough so that the one bearing the dead name can easily be captured and held between the front walls of the real and dummy interiors without jamming the box. (If the paper is too bulky or too large, the box won't close properly - although this is not critical if you are careful with your handling and keep the box above eye level at the times specified in the routine.)

While they are filling out their slips, pick up the matchbox, dump the matches out (remembering to open it the right way so the matches appear), pick one up and light a candle, saying something about putting their selections to "the test of the flame." Continue:

**"When you are done writing, just fold your papers into quarters and drop them into the match box."**

As you approach each volunteer, hold the matchbox above the spectator's eye level. (This is not critical for the first volunteer, but you don't want to give the others an opportunity to witness a vanishing billet trick as you collect their slips. It is better to keep the action consistent by keeping the box above eye level at all times during the collection process.)

After each spectator drops his slip in the box, close the drawer and hold the box high and in full view as you go to the next volunteer. You open the box to the normal interior for everyone except the person who holds the "dead" slip. For this person only, the drawer is opened to the dummy side. (The side that appears empty when you use the box to make crayons and silks disappear - but you'd better not let the Psychic Mafia catch you doing that!) Remember to hold the box above eye level, because if this person can see into it he will wonder what happened to the other people's slips.



Close the drawer and go to the remaining volunteers, who drop their slips into the normal side of the box. Shut the drawer and hand the box to a nonparticipating spectator, asking her to shake them up so no one can know which is which. Let her continue to hold onto the box and bring her to the front of the room with you.

Take the box from her and give it one last shake. Hold it above her eyelevel (and yours) and open the drawer to the normal chamber, which contains all 'living' slips. Ask her to reach into the box and withdraw a folded slip. Close the drawer and put the box on your table.

Tell her to hold the slip in her closed right hand and put your right hand around hers. Act as if you are trying to sense whether she holds the name of a living person or "the dead guy." Announce that you believe it to be a living name and ask her to give you the slip. At this point comes a clever subtlety that will later enable you to secretly get the name that is on the dead slip. Open the living slip she has just give you and misread it for any common name at all - say "Jeremy." (In fact you should stick with "Jeremy" on the misread, because it is virtually impossible that the writer of the dead slip has chosen a famous dead person whose first name is "Jeremy.") Be sure to remember the actual living name that is written on the paper. Say "Jeremy" aloud and then address the person who wrote the dead name:

**"And that is not, I trust, the name of your famous dead guy, is it? I didn't think so."** As you are saying the last line, burn the slip in the candle flame. (It is a good idea to have an ashtray or other suitable container in which you can drop the burning slip.)

Pick up the closed box, give it another shake, hold it above eye level and open it, once again to the normal side, which contains the remaining living names. Have your volunteer reach in and select another name as before. Once more, announce that it is a living name and take the slip from her and unfold it as if you are going to read out the name. But this time act as if you are having trouble reading the writing and ask your onstage volunteer to read it aloud for you. Again, obtain verification that this is not the name of the "dead guy" and burn the slip.

On the third or fourth selection (depending on the number of slips you passed out in the first place) open the box to the side that contains only one slip - the one bearing the dead name. Holding it, as before, above the eye level of your volunteer, ask her to reach in and remove another slip. Since she is following the same procedure for the third or fourth time, she will just reach into the drawer and take out the only slip that is there. (Don't worry about her feeling around for the other slips - she won't at this stage.) Tell her to hold the slip in her fist as you close the box and put it back on the table.

Hold her hand in yours and once more announce that you believe she has another living name. Take the slip from her, open it, take a look at it and remember the dead name that is now staring you in the face. Misread the slip by announcing it to be the name that you secretly noted on the first slip - the one you misread as "Jeremy." You can get an acknowledgement from the person who wrote the name if you like. (Actually, you can do this for every slip except for the first one, but I recommend you only do it once or twice.) In the meantime, burn the slip.

There will now be only a few slips left in the normal chamber of the drawer box. They ALL contain "living names." Pick up the pace at this point. Tell your volunteer to hold out her hands, cup fashion, open the box to the regular chamber and dump the remaining folded slips into her hands.

**"Hold one in your right fist and keep the others in your left,"** you say as you grasp her right hand in yours. Continue with, **"You know, this one feels just a bit odd, but trade it for one of the others for a second just so I can make sure."** Keep the pace up here as you apparently decide by the "vibes" you are getting, which slip bears the dead name. Finally, take two slips from your volunteer and announce that you believe these to be living names.

**"Let's check,"** you say as you proceed to open the slips and read the living names written upon them. Burn the slips.

**"Obviously, the paper that Laura (or whatever your onstage volunteer's name is) has in her fist must be the name of the famous dead person. Let's not quit there, though. Let's make it a little harder."**

**"Laura, I want you to set fire to the slip in your hand without even opening it. That's right - burn it in the candle flame so that it turns to ash, as did the other before it. Let the dead follow the living for a change..."**

Pick up a pad or piece of poster board and go into your best trance state as the paper burns. Begin to write on the pad, keeping your writing concealed from the audience. Print the dead name in large clear letters and hand the pad to Laura so that your writing is facing her body - not yet revealed to anyone.

Ask the person who wrote the name of the "dead guy" to announce the decedent's name to the audience. He says, say, **"George Washington."** Tell Laura to turn the pad around and show the audience what you wrote.

If you've paid careful attention to the routine and understand its workings, the pad will bear the words:

**"GEORGE WASHINGTON"**

**AND YOU WILL BE IN INUNDATED WITH WAVES OF AWE AND PRAISE**

**IN A MANNER BEFITTING DR. BOB HIMSELF**

I guess many of you have already figured out why I like this routine so much. It makes use of the same offbeat misreads that characterizes my style of billet work. It's clean, it's subtle, and it's powerful - what more do you want??

Especially now that the wonderful possibilities of the classic drawer box are once more available to you.

## **Mentalism with Playing Cards**

As long as I have been in mentalism the argument has raged over whether or not playing cards can be believably used in tests of mentalism. The answer to the question "**CAN** they be used effectively by mentalists?" is **YES**. They can be and they have been. Dunninger himself included a lengthy sequence of card effects in his programs, and cards - in one form or another - have long been associated with parapsychology testing.

Magicians and some mentalists often object that playing cards make spectators think of magic tricks. Only magicians and some mentalists think that way. Do yourself a favor and memorize the following:

NORMAL PEOPLE **DO NOT THINK OF MAGIC TRICKS** WHEN THEY SEE A DECK OF PLAYING CARDS.

NORMAL PEOPLE **DO NOT THINK OF MAGIC TRICKS** WHEN THEY GO TO THE STATIONERY STORE.

NORMAL PEOPLE **DO NOT THINK OF MAGIC TRICKS** WHEN THEY ARE MAKING LOVE TO THEIR SPOUSES OR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS.

**Only magicians and some mentalists (those who are really closet magicians) think this way.**

NORMAL PEOPLE USUALLY THINK OF GAMBLING, CARD GAMES, OR OCCASIONALLY FORTUNE-TELLING WHEN THEY SEE PLAYING CARDS.

NORMAL PEOPLE ONLY THINK OF CARD TRICKS WHEN SOME SCHMUCK THRUSTS A DECK OF CARDS INTO THEIR FACE, RUFFLES THE EDGES AND DEMANDS THAT THEY

**"Pick a card!"** OR

**"Think of a card!"** OR

**"Watch something really cool."**

(The latter is usually uttered in a monotone mumble by this toked out skinny dude in Central Park who thinks he's an urban Shaman or something, and tells homeless people that their coffee cups are filled with money before he goes and pees on them off a flagpole - or something like that. I heard he was on TV. Probably 'COPS'. That would be my guess.)

Cards are excellent for mentalism as long as the mentalist observes some very basic ground rules. Obviously, fancy or slick handling is a no no. It is not, however, required that he handle the cards like a bumbling klutz - that serves to draw the wrong kind of attention as well. Like his brother, the professional advantage player (read "Card Cheat"), he should handle the cards in such a manner that would not be out of place in a normal Friday night card game. He may not show off - EVER.

That being said, you may be interested to know that some of the finest card workers I have ever met are professional mentalists - but there probably isn't a magician alive who ever saw them work with a deck of cards. To create the illusion of mind reading, the mentalist must never admit to skill at sleight of hand.

[That brings to mind an unintentionally funny posting I saw on the Internet last year. A reader suggested that mentalism could really go through the ceiling and enter a new age if masters of sleight of hand got into the art!

**Reality check time** - they've been there all along, but you may not have noticed because they don't do coin rolls and usually shun one-handed faro shuffles. Your NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW that they can do that stuff. Apparently the strategy has been working for it is still a commonly believed myth that mentalism doesn't require the difficult sleights and moves that are used in traditional magic. In reality, it all depends on what type of mentalism you are doing. If you are a straight billet and swami gimmick man, your sleight of hand should be BETTER than a magician's - because if you get caught doing that stuff - your illusion is completely shot. If a magician drops the cards - so what? Did anyone think he was doing real magic?

The climax of mental effects with cards should ideally take place while the pack is IN THE SPECTATOR'S HANDS, or at least on the table - apparently away from physical control by the mentalist. That final image is what will be left in a spectator's mind.

To my mind, the best mental effects with cards are: the classic version of **"You do as I do"** (For a lesson in how to handle it properly, watch the Anthony Hopkins, Ann Margaret film of William Goldman's *Magic* - it deserves a place in every mentalist's library); **"Dead Name Speller"** from Annemann's *Jinx* or in the current Dover paperback, ***Annemann's Card Magic***; Harry Lorayne's "The Moving Pencil" from ***Close-up Card Magic***; AND Dai Vernon's "Mind Reading Card Effect" or it's close relative, Harvey Berg's "Intercept." Presented properly it looks like the real thing.

If you do the Vernon/Berg effect, try it this way: Invite a volunteer to the stage and position her to your right. Hand her a pack of cards and instruct her to shuffle them thoroughly while your back is turned. Don't provide a table for her, because it is really convincing if she drops the cards all over the stage -REALLY. Say, deadpan, "Would you agree that those cards are pretty well mixed? The audience reaction is excellent. If you use a cheap pack of super slick and stiff cards, you can get this to happen all the time!

When the cards are finally all mixed and in a face down condition in the spectator's hands, take the deck from her, but keep your head turned way to the left so that it is obvious you are not looking at the cards. Your body, though, should be facing directly to the right - your left shoulder is toward the audience.

Now hold up the cards so they are facing the spectator. If you hold them in a left hand mechanic's grip, the face card of the pack cannot be seen by the volunteer. Say, I'm going to **spread these cards out and I want you to JUST THINK OF ONE.** Just spread off the top nine cards. From the audience's line of view, it looks like you spread out the whole pack. Reread the boldfaced line and you will discover the double-speak that makes it all seem normal to the spectator. (...Spread THESE cards out...)

This same approach can be effectively used in any routine where you want to make it appear that the spectator is looking at the entire pack. (BTW - in the Intercept effect, the spectator will usually think of the seventh or eighth card from the top. This happens often enough that it is worth giving it a try if you aren't in a do or die situation. If you should miss, you can always act as if you are bearing down and follow with the standard handling.

## The Cards to Use

I am often asked what are the best types of cards for a mentalist to use. If you asked me what the best cards for ANYONE to use are, I would answer the same way - the best cards are BORROWED CARDS, or cards that you can give away after you are done with them.

The next best are used decks from casinos that have holes punched through them or their edges cut off. I can't think of a magician who would be caught dead using these things. And that's why they are excellent, as are the crappy looking packs of 99-cent bridge cards that you can find in any drug store. Like these:



These are the commonly available "Trump" brand bridge cards, which I believe are distributed by Hoyle, or, more accurately, the US Playing Card Company since they bought them out.

About a year ago, I left a tip about these cards on a popular magician's Internet site. I got one positive response - something like "Wow - thanks a lot, that's great, but what did you mention it here for?"

The consensus was pretty well summed up by the site's resident 14-year-old card expert who solemnly observed that if you were a real magician you used "Bikes." Anything else and it's obvious you're an amateur. (I can't wait until that kid turns 21 and wanders into one of our local card rooms.)

What's so great about these cards other than the fact that they are made from good quality stock and handle very easily?

Look at the jokers. The one on the left is a white guy. The one on the right isn't. The pack on the left says "Made in USA" just above the bar code. The pack on the right says "Made in China." The pack on the right is 1/64 of an inch shorter and narrower than the pack on the left. The pack on the left has a linen-type finish. The pack on the right is a smooth ivory finish. But if you look at both decks and handle them casually, they appear to be ABSOLUTELY IDENTICAL.

If I need to tell you the how to create miracles by "mix and matching" cards from both decks, you really aren't ready to be reading this material and should come back to it in a few years time.

And its not like this is a fluke that will only be around for a little while until all manufacturing is done in China. The two variants have been around, in great supply, FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS. - Usually you will find them in the same bin, all mixed together because the drugstore clerks can't tell the difference - the bar codes are identical and that's all that matters.

While on the subject of cards, I should point out, for those of you who don't already know, that the classic Bicycle Wingback cards praised by Annemann for their subtle but obvious "from across the room if you know what to look for" one-way back designs, are now available everywhere in two-deck sets that the US Playing Card Company calls "Bicycle Rummy Cards." Here's what they look like:



I'm sure that a few magicians have looked at these and thought "Wait a minute, regular Bicycle cards don't have those tiny extra indexes in the opposite corners. The cards are gonna be suspicious."



Wrong. Look at the card case. What does it say? It says, "RUMMY." That's what people will think of when they see the cards. And they will assume you got them at the drugstore, just like normal people do, because you like to play Rummy.

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## My Personal Utility Items



I am often asked what gimmicks I carry around with me as a matter of course. You can see most of them in the photo to the right. You probably recognize most of them, but I would like to touch on an important element that most mentalists miss when using devices of this nature.

There are five items that are missing from the photo. One is a contact lens case in which I carry my undernail writers, and another is a 3x5 pad of newsprint-type paper. The others are a pen, a pencil, and my Remote Viewing Wallet.

On the lower left is an impression device that I will describe shortly. On the lower right is Mark Strivings SUV case, which I firmly believe is the most versatile business card/peek wallet on the market today. I own two of them and I will probably get another two when I see Mark again. I don't even want to THINK about losing one of them. (If you are interested, you can get hold of Mark at [MarkyApril@aol.com](mailto:MarkyApril@aol.com); the wallets go for about forty bucks.)

At the top is a Humber wallet modified to look like a checkbook. (It looks more like a checkbook than it every looked like a wallet, that's for sure.) It's the same one I use in my "Dream" routine from *Dreams and Devices*.

So, what is the element of handling that is often overlooked when using devices of this nature?

### CONTEXT

That's it - context. It makes sense to take the pad of paper and a pen or pencil from your pocket as an aid in performing an impromptu mentalism demonstration. But if you have a pad and a writing implement, what reason could you possibly have to use the business card case or the checkbook? (Forget about the impression book for a minute - that only gets used when I don't use the pad of paper.)

The answer, for me, is quite simple, if you have NOTHING ELSE TO WRITE ON, then you can pat around your pockets to find something, like a business card or a deposit slip from your checkbook. If you are already using a pad of paper, though, the other items can only be rung in naturally by creating the proper context. In a restaurant or bar you would naturally take out the checkbook to pay for your tab. (Unless you are me, of course, in which case the bartender usually demands cash.) If you have an off-the-cuff miracle that requires the use of a Humber wallet, now is a good time to do it, if all other performing conditions are right.

Similarly, when someone hands you his or her business card, it is natural to give him or her one of yours, or to put his or hers into an empty pocket in your case. This sets up a natural context for using the case for an effect.

Whenever you use items of this nature, however, you must keep in mind that your effect will look contrived, and hence reek of trickery, if the card case or check book are handled as if they are props that are specifically required for what is obviously a set performance piece.

The most powerful impromptu mentalism is that which appears almost spontaneous - like you just made it up as you were going along.

I think you get my point. The main thing is to THINK about why you are using these items before you start basing entire routines around them for use in impromptu or casual settings.

## The Black Book of Mentalism

I'll conclude THE BLACK BOOK OF MENTALISM with, what else, a few words about my own "Black Book of Mentalism." I don't intend this to be a complete set of instructions on how to make one of these devices. Until I made the one in the picture, I had no idea how to go about it. But it has always been a very important point with me NEVER to use an item as a regular performance piece unless it is easily available or something I can make or repair by myself should an emergency arise. I made mine from the same type of Moleskine Journal that I described in Volume One of *Theories and Methods for the Practical Psychic*. It looks like this when you open the front cover:

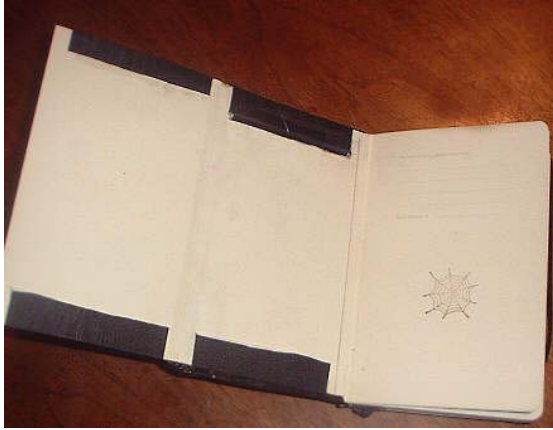


This particular journal was made by Moleskine® in Modo, Italy and, if you are interested in getting one (or two, if you want to try your hand at making the impression book), it is obtainable at finer bookstores and at [www.modoemodo.com](http://www.modoemodo.com). It is not, however, necessary that this exact notebook be used. Any well made journal will probably serve just as well.

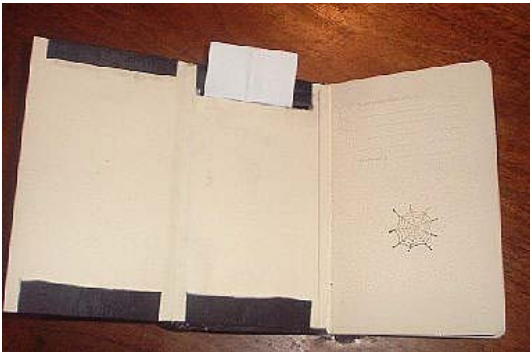
It is the high quality of the journal that made it easy for me to dissect with an eXacto knife. I used TWO identical journals to construct the impression device.

It's hard to see from the picture, but the endpaper on the inside front cover of the book is actually a pocket. When you buy the journal the pocket is actually on the inside back cover, but the gimmicked version has a pocket in the front AND in the back. The extra pocket came from the extra copy of the journal.

It is this extra pocket on the inside front cover that conceals access to the impression sheet. In the next photo, I have folded it out of the way.



Look carefully at these two pictures, and you will see where a piece of paper can be slid into the slot cut into the upper portions of the concealed endpaper. When I cut the slot, I cut completely through the front cover. I took apart the extra journal and carefully peeled away its very thin, yet strong, moleskine cover and used it to recover the outside front of the book, thus concealing the slot.



A piece of carbon paper was carefully pushed through the slot and then down and under the double front cover. (If you look at the closed journal in the photograph on page 25, you will see just how natural the cover looks.)

A sheet of index card stock cut to size was the slid through the slot- the end folded over slightly to prevent it from sliding down between the covers and hard to remove.

The actual paper in the book, of course, is too thick to use for an impression test. That is where I make use of the pocket on the inside back cover. That contains about six or eight 2-inch square pieces of newsprint, which can be used to take impressions, as regular paper billets and for, use in a standard center tear. The rest of the book is filled with the remote viewing target descriptions I use in the original version of my remote viewing dice effect. If you wish to make one of these for yourself and would like to discuss the finer points of the books construction, please feel free to contact me at [bobcassidy@mastermindreader.com](mailto:bobcassidy@mastermindreader.com) and I will do my best to be of assistance to you.

GOOD THOUGHTS TO YOU -

**Bob Cassidy, Seattle Washington, April 2003**