

# THE CHAINLETTER

AN E-NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR THE  
ESCAPE COMMUNITY

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## Dean Gunnarson



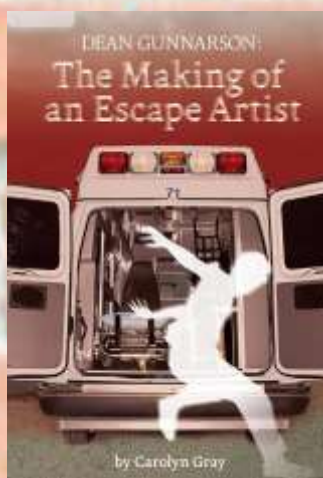
## On Canada's Got Talent!

### This month's Chains...

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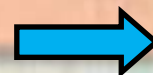
## Escape in the Media! Dean Goes to the Movies!



The film I was working on wrapped up in March. The film is called "Escape," and it is based on the book written about me, Dean Gunnarson, "The Making of an Escape Artist," by Carolyn Gray.

The film is set in 1983 when I meet a young Cancer patient named Philip Hornan. I was working at the Children's Hospital as a summer student teaching the children magic tricks and working on their in-house TV show.

Phil and I slowly became good friends and he wanted to learn how to Escape from handcuffs. He was eager to learn and with the guidance of his parents we started escaping from numerous local R.C.M.P detachments. As our confidence grew, we escaped everything from handcuffs, legions, straitjackets, and even jail cells. We arranged with the local Children's Wish association to escape from a medium security prison and the main City Police station. One week Phil, his mom, and I drove 600 Kms to Regina, Saskatchewan to visit the R.C.M.P museum.



We stopped and escaped from every small detachment along the way. Philips Mom would sit in the car and read her book and we would go inside and convinced the officers to lock us up. We always got official letters stating what we escaped from and even some handcuffs or restraints some times. It was n amazing adventure for two young escape artists. We had big dreams of traveling around the world escaping and preforming big escapes on TV.



After that show Randi retired from escapes and named me as his successor. I went on to travel the world doing all the things Philip and I had dreamed of. His Mom and Dad ended up building a magic museum in the shape of a castle and all the things we had escaped from were put on display. Also, things Doug Henning had given Phil and from various Magicians around the world.

I never had an ending to this story until 20 years later, Philip came back and gave me the greatest gift of my live..... For the answer to that, you're going have to watch the film. Or if you can't wait, you can always read the book...



Sadly, Philip passed away from Cancer September 27, 1986. I continued our journey and one later I appeared on my first USA TV special, In Search of Houdini in Los Angeles hosted by William Shatner. On the show was David Copperfield, Penn and Teller, James Randi, Harry Blackstone Jr., Banachek, The Pendragons, and a young Dean Gunnarson. Randi got hurt in rehearsal just before we went live and I had to step in and preform Houdini's original Milk Can escape on live TV for the very first time.



I am not in the movie but act as a consultant with the escapes, magic, and story line. I have worked on many movies and TV shows over my career, but it was a very different experience giving a young Dean and Philip direction on how to escape in certain scenes. To relive and film

memorable moments of my life was very magical and emotional at times. I think it's going to be pretty special. And the production scored a great song from 1982 from one of my favorite bands

Also, just to be clear. I have not received nor to do get any money from the book or the film in any way. I asked any money I would have received to go to Cancer Research or Care. I never wanted to profit from this, but only tell the story of our great friendship, the story of my friend Phil.

Now, 40 years later I'm ready to share our adventures.



# Thou Shalt Not Steal!



Who here can help out our pal and elder statesman in the escape world Dean Gunnarson? If you are an escape artist, and you do not know Dean... Trust me, you

should. Dean is a wonderful man and a brilliant escape artist who trained under the Amazing Randi.

Right now Dean has an issue and could use our help. He was recently the victim of a crime and has had a good bit of his equipment stolen. This is a horrible thing for someone to have done, especially if the thief did not know the real value of the items and the real uses of them.

If you have any Ian McColl locks or handcuffs you would be willing to part with, Dean is looking to buy. E-mail him please at



**deangunnarson@gmail.com**

Lets help him out if we can. Let's get our greatest ambassador back on the road and reminding the world what a good escape show is all about.



## Knotty Knot

from Jim Gerrish  
& The Magic Nook

The Magic nook features instructions on how to build your own magic for those who are up for it, have the skill and want to save a little money. Their instructions are detailed, clear and easy to follow. This particular effect comes from [www.magicnook.com](http://www.magicnook.com), and is found in The Wizards' Journal #47-03 Knotty Knot Jim and Professor Spellbinder have been long time friends of TIES, and here is another magical offering you may like. (Note: there is no exposure here. You must buy the trick if you want the secret. At \$7 per effect, it is certainly affordable.

What can you do with this? Let's read about it first, and then we can find out.

*You pass around a small wooden box, home-made or store bought. It has a hole in each side, and closes and locks. When the box gets returned to you after making the rounds, you pass out a length of magician's rope1, 3-4 feet or so. You ask each person to tie some kind of knot in the rope, and keep it going from person to person as you continue with whatever magic tricks you like performing. When the knotted rope gets back to you, you make sure everyone has a good look at it to see that it is thoroughly tied up in knots with just the two ends sticking out somewhere.*



Joe Notoro - Houdini Historian

[HarryHoudiniCircumstantialEvidence.com](http://HarryHoudiniCircumstantialEvidence.com)



"Wild about Harry"

John Cox' Houdini web site

[www.wildabouthoudini.com](http://www.wildabouthoudini.com)

*Have someone take the box, put the Knotty Rope inside and thread out the two ends through the side holes before they close the box and lock it. You have some white electrician's tape and use the tape to wrap around the box to keep anyone from opening it. They sign their names all over the tape.*

*Now you send the box around for each person to untie one of the knots. They have no idea how to do that until you suggest they just pull both ends of the ropes that are sticking out the side holes and let the knots untie themselves inside the box. And they do. When the last knot unties itself inside the box, the rope comes sliding out, the box is unwrapped of signed tape, unlocked and may be passed around again to show that it's just an ordinary box.*

*Can't be done? Too late! They just did it themselves and have no idea how they did it!*

A very clever effect for sure, but where is the escape.? Off the top of my head I can think of several interesting things that might be done here, and I am sure you can think of even more. One thought that comes to mind is to tie a doll or action figure up inside the box. This could be "box jumper barbie," "Houdini," "a daredevil" of some type, or any other action figure that you might think of. Perhaps when the rope is pulled out, and the box is finally opened, the

Escape artist has vanished along with the rope.

Another thought that comes to mind is that the rope is well tied into the box, and after it is pulled out, the box is shaken and clearly something is left inside. The box is opened to reveal a key that is either needed for something else in the show or is needed right now to unlock something or someone else.

Once again Jim the Professor and Qua-Fiki have my thanks for continuing to support TIES. I personally have purchased several of the effects here on the Magic Nook, some escapes and some magic. I have enjoyed building and performing all of them! If you have never been there before, go and check them out. Make it quick too. It seems like the time of

The Magic Nook is fast coming to an end. You have 1 month to get all you want and all you can.



**The Magic Nook**  
**www.magicnook.com**

"Do-It-Yourself" Magic for  
"Built-It-Myself" Magicians



A great tribute site to the amazing  
David De-Val



<http://www.davidde-val.com/>

# Who Wrote This?

From Andrew "Cecil" Robertson

*Been messing about with AI software and thought it would be fun to see if it could write a risk assessment for the milk can escape. Its far from perfect but anyone who struggles to write risk assessments, I recommend trying this. It need a lot more work but its made a good start on it and gives you a lot of the information you need to get started. Have a look at what it produced.*

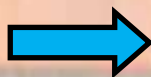
## Escapology: History and Evolution

### Thesis Statement:

Escapology has a rich and intriguing history that has evolved over the centuries from ancient times to the present day, showcasing the ingenuity, artistry, and bravery of escape artists who have captured the imaginations of audiences around the world.

### Introduction:

Escapology is the art and practice of escaping from restraints or confined spaces, often performed as a form of entertainment in circuses, magic shows, and other live performances. While escapology is often associated with modern-day magicians like Harry Houdini, the history of escapology dates back to ancient times and has evolved into a complex and dynamic form of entertainment over the centuries. This thesis explores the history of escapology, from its early origins to its modern-day practitioners, examining the various techniques, performers, and cultural contexts that have shaped this fascinating art form.



# Escape Artist Calendar



In the last issue I put out the idea of creating a calendar that would list cool things on it like escape artist birthdays and anniversary's of world records.

I got 13 birthdays and was able to pull a few more off the internet. I got a few world record dates from a few of you.

That was nice, but I know there is more... A lot more.

I have 22 birthdays and about 5 world records on the calendar. I would love to make it available for everybody, but I feel bad publishing something so sparse. If you have not given me your birthday (month and day only, no years please) or dates of world records, please do. I think this would be a cool conversation piece to have, if we can fill it up.

Let me know. [cliffg37@verizon.net](mailto:cliffg37@verizon.net)



Have the lads at  
Guinness turned down  
your world record?  
**Online World Records**  
can help...  
**Contact Fenyx Fyre**  
**info@fenyxfyre.ca**

## Chapter 1: The Origins of Escapology

Escapology is an art form that has its roots in ancient times, where it was primarily used as a means of survival. From the earliest civilizations to the present day, humans have been devising ways to escape confinement, whether it was to evade capture, avoid punishment, or simply to test their physical and mental limits. The earliest recorded instances of escapology can be traced back to ancient Egypt, where restraints and confinement devices were commonly used to punish criminals and prisoners of war. These devices ranged from simple ropes and chains to more elaborate contraptions, such as the wooden stocks and iron cages used to confine criminals.

In ancient China, escapology was a celebrated art form that was practiced by skilled performers known as the "jugglers of chains." These performers would use their agility and dexterity to free themselves from a variety of restraints, including chains, ropes, and cages, while entertaining audiences with their acrobatic feats.

In India, escapology was also a popular form of entertainment, with performers known as fakirs using meditation, yoga, and other spiritual practices to overcome the physical limitations of their bodies. These performers would often perform extreme feats, such as being buried alive, walking on hot coals, and even swallowing swords. In medieval Europe, escapology was primarily used as a means of evading capture or punishment, with prisoners using their wits and ingenuity to escape from dungeons, jails, and other confinements



One famous example of medieval escapology is the story of William Tell, who escaped from captivity by shooting an apple off his son's head with a crossbow, thereby demonstrating his skill and courage to his captors.



As the centuries passed, escapology continued to evolve and develop, with new techniques and devices being invented to challenge the skills of escape artists. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the rise

of traveling circuses and sideshows, which featured escape artists as a popular attraction. These performers would often escape from elaborate restraints, such as handcuffs, straitjackets, and water tanks, while performing for large crowds. One of the most famous and influential escape artists of all time was Harry Houdini, who rose to fame in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with his daring and death-defying stunts. Houdini was known for his ability to escape from almost any restraint, and he often performed in public, challenging audiences to try to restrain him themselves.

In conclusion, the origins of escapology can be traced back to ancient times, where it was primarily used as a means of survival, punishment, or entertainment. From the jugglers of chains in China to the escapologists of medieval Europe to the death-defying stunts of Harry Houdini, escapology has evolved and developed over the centuries into a complex and dynamic art form that continues to captivate and thrill audiences to this day.



## **Chapter 2: The Golden Age of Escapology**

The early 20th century is often referred to as the Golden Age of Escapology, as it was during this period that the art form reached its peak in terms of popularity and innovation. This was largely due to the influence of Harry Houdini, who not only inspired a generation of new escape artists but also helped to bring escapology to a wider audience through his many public performances and stunts. Houdini's influence can be seen in the many new escape techniques and devices that were developed during this period. For example, the straitjacket escape, which involved freeing oneself from a tightly bound straitjacket while suspended upside down, became a popular stunt among escape artists thanks to Houdini's performances. Other techniques, such as the milk can escape and the water torture cell, also became popular during this period.

One of the most famous escapologists of the Golden Age was the Hungarian-born illusionist, Harry Blackstone Sr. Blackstone was known for his elaborate and visually stunning escape routines, which often involved multiple restraints and devices. He was also known for his use of special effects and illusions to enhance the drama and suspense of his performances.



Another prominent figure of the era was Theo Hardeen, Houdini's younger brother and fellow escape artist. Hardeen was known for his daring and innovative stunts, such as the "devil's jacket" escape, in which he would free himself from a straitjacket while dangling from a burning rope.

Escapology also became a popular form of entertainment in the movies during this period. The 1930 film, *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*, starred Lionel Atwill as a mad sculptor who creates wax figures of famous murderers, including Houdini. The film features a dramatic scene in which the Houdini wax figure comes to life and escapes from its restraints.

However, the Golden Age of Escapology came to an end with the outbreak of World War II, as many of the top escape artists were drafted into military service or chose to retire. In addition, the rise of other forms of entertainment, such as television and rock music, led to a decline in public interest in escapology.

Despite this decline, escapology continues to be practiced and enjoyed by a dedicated community of enthusiasts around the world. The influence of the Golden Age can still be seen in the techniques and devices used by modern-day escape artists, and the legacy of Houdini and his contemporaries continues to inspire new generations of performers.

## **Chapter 3: Modern Escapology**

In the decades following the end of the Golden Age of Escapology, the art form underwent a period of transformation and evolution. New

techniques, devices, and technologies were developed that pushed the boundaries of what was possible and challenged the skills of even the most experienced escape artists.



One of the most significant developments in modern escapology was the use of technology. With the advent of new materials, such as high-strength metals and polymers, and advances in manufacturing and engineering, escape artists were able to create more elaborate and sophisticated devices for their performances. This included everything from high-security handcuffs and locks to custom-built water tanks and cages.

In addition to technological advances, modern escapology also saw the rise of new performance styles and genres. For example, the "street escape" movement, which began in the 1970s and 80s, focused on performing escape acts in public spaces and challenging passersby to try and restrain the artist. This style of performance was popularized by escape artists like James Randi and David Blaine, who gained international fame for their daring stunts.

Another popular genre of modern escapology is the "extreme escape," which involves performing dangerous and death-defying stunts. This style of performance is often associated with the reality television show, "Fear Factor," which features contestants performing stunts such as being buried alive, walking on hot coals, and eating live insects.

Despite the continued popularity of modern escapology, the art form has also faced criticism and controversy. Some critics argue that escape artists are simply engaging in dangerous and reckless behavior for the sake of entertainment, while others question the authenticity of their performances, suggesting that they may be relying on special effects or camera tricks to create the illusion of escape.

In response to these criticisms, some escape artists have sought to emphasize the skill and athleticism required for their performances, emphasizing the physical and mental preparation that goes into each escape. Others have used their performances to draw attention to social and political issues, using escapology as a form of protest or activism.

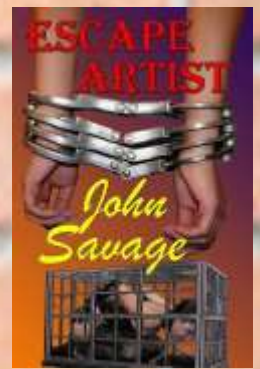
## Conclusion:

Escapology has a rich and fascinating history that has evolved over time. From the early days of street performers to the Golden Age of Escapology, and into the modern era, the art form has continued to captivate audiences with its daring stunts and death-defying acts. Throughout its history, escapology has been marked by innovation, creativity, and an unyielding spirit of determination.

As the world has changed, so too has escapology, with new technologies, materials, and performance styles being developed to push the boundaries of what is possible. While the art form has faced criticism and controversy over the years, it continues to inspire and amaze people around the world, and its legacy remains an important part of our cultural history.

Despite the challenges and changes that have occurred over the years, the core principles of escapology remain the same. It is a celebration of the human spirit, a testament to the power of determination, and a tribute to the courage and creativity of those who seek to push the limits of what is possible.

As long as there are people who are willing to take risks, challenge themselves, and push beyond their limits, there will always be a place for escapology in our world. And who knows, maybe one day a new Houdini will emerge, continuing to inspire us all with their death-defying stunts and escapes.



# The Magic Nook

[www.magicnook.com](http://www.magicnook.com)



For many years, the Magic Nook has been selling amazingly low priced, highly detailed, plans to build magic effects. This was born from a magic summer camp on the East Coast that taught magic to children. The staff wanted to ensure a new generation of magicians and succeeded beyond what anyone could have predicted.

At \$7 per effect, that guaranteed that you would spend little and be able to build the effect inexpensively as well.

But now it is time to say good bye to The Magic Nook. Their wonderful service and products just couldn't last for ever.

So click on over to The Magic Nook, take a look around, maybe make a last minute purchase. Perhaps you will build the effect, and be reminded, with a smile, of this wonderful web site.

Note: The Magic Nook does not want to sell to just anyone. They want to be sure they are selling to magicians. Please feel free, if you are a member of TIES, to mention that you belong to the same Escape Artist club as I do (Cliff Gerstman) and that I will verify that you are indeed a magician.

## CLOSING WEB SITE ON MAY 31.

Click HERE to view on Web Site Security: <https://www.magicnook.com>

CONTACTS: [magicnook@yahoo.com](mailto:magicnook@yahoo.com)

Saturday April 29, 2023

April 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

WORLDWIDE Calendar of  
Magical Events

The Wizards' Journals

#1 - #2 - #3 - #4 - #5  
#6 - #7 - #8 - #9 - #10  
#11 - #12 - #13 - #14  
#15 - #16 - #17 - #18  
#19 - #20 - #21 - #22  
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#35 - #36 - #37 - #38  
#39 - #40 - #41 - #42  
#43 - #44 - #45 -  
#46  
#47 - #48 -

# Do it yourself magic for built it myself magicians!

This site is well worth  
the time to study if  
you want to learn  
about lock picking  
[www.lockpickguide.com](http://www.lockpickguide.com)

**"Without a key"**  
For all your lockpicking needs  
[www.withoutakey.co.uk](http://www.withoutakey.co.uk)