

The Chainletter

An e-newsletter by and for the escape community

Jan 2021
Volume 12
Issue 116



Helen Coghlan



3 Time Fooler!

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Lecture by The Coghlan's

The August meeting of Ring 96 in Seal Beach California was a little bit different than most.

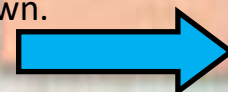
Most lectures are presented as, here is an effect, and here is how it is done. The Lecture by Arthur and Helen Coghlan was from off the beaten path.



Arthur is a highly innovative magician, and escape artist, who is well known for designing his own effects. Further, he is proud of his reputation for designing escapes that can be fully examined by either audience members or even experts.

Arthur told us his story:

He began his career as a mechanic. Eventually he befriended an illusionist and the two went to work on designing and building illusions for a stage magic show. Sadly the illusionist was killed in a car accident and Arthur decided to take his chances in magic on his own.



Arthur told a long and wonderfully entertaining story about how he manipulated a local newspaper into sponsoring a stunt to benefit charity. This was his first 44 gallon drum escape. He not only got Press coverage, but TV coverage as well and he repeated the stunt at Sydney Harbor; this brought agents to see him and his magic career was on its way.

Arthur began appearing at a venue called "The Magic Castle" on the gold coast of Australia. From two shows a day he soon graduated to six shows a day as the demand was just that high. Also worked six nights a week at a classy hotel.

He appeared in Las Vegas, and was soon approached by "The Don Lane Show." This was a huge achievement as Don Lane was a show that was considered to bring the best of the best, and shown all over Australia. He did his 44 gallon drum escape, but devised a brand new method to do it. He offered a \$10,000 reward to anyone who could find a part of it that was rigged, gimmicked, or not what it appeared to be. He even had it examined by a group of Air Force Engineers.



Arthur demonstrated the wrist shackle escape by locking Helen in. Helen made short work of getting her wrists free from the chains. Although many escape artists look down on it and think it looks completely fake, Arthur suggests that the principal behind it has many uses, and he has used it many times. As a standalone it may be limited, but combined with other parts, it can be very strong.

Arthur also recommends the book, "33 Rope Ties," by Burling Hull which can be had very inexpensively.

Arthur published a book called "The Original Escapes of Arthur Coughlan." This book can still be found on the internet, though it is now out of print.

Helen talked about her appearances on "Penn and Teller Fool Us." She said that she felt the entire production company at the theatre was very friendly and very professional. Helen was the first one to appear on the show and fool Penn and Teller three times.

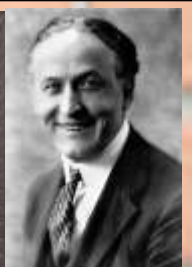
She showed a video from one of the appearances where she and Teller were both restrained the same way, and apparently Teller could not figure out the method.

After the official lecture was over, Arthur and Helen remained online with us to host a Q & A session. The discussion soon turned to the topic of woman in magic, and what it takes for a woman to achieve success in what was traditionally a man's profession.

This was an amazing lecture and probably Ring 96's best turn out since the quarantine began.



"Wild about Harry"
John Cox' Houdini web site
www.wildabouthoudini.com



UKEA Going Strong

On November 26th I had the honor of being invited to attend an on line meeting of the United Kingdom Escapologist Association. The meeting was held in the evening, but using the time difference between England and Southern California made it late morning for me and that was easy.



Allan and Rebecca Taylor were the designers and our hosts for this amazing and wonderful event that brought escape artists and restraint collectors together for a fine time discussing all that we are missing in the quarantine.

The fact that the conversation was on a topic of interest helped of course, but the best part was just having contact with people and being able to talk and share. One of the things I have found in dealing with escapologists and restraint collectors is they tend to be pretty good people. Overall it was great to see some old fiends and make some new ones too.

The Magic Nook
www.magicenook.com

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



Steve Spade was the first speaker. He is known as Ireland's Houdini. Like Houdini Steve has been lowered into a river while chained up inside a box.

Steve was raised in Limerick, Ireland and was inspired to escapes by Adrian Nice. Adrian was another escapologist in the area, and there are not many. Another magician and escapologist at the time was The Great Bedini, another role model and peer for Steve.

When asked about the current state of escapology, Steve said the lockdown has been Hard on all of us, but that we should evolve and take escapology to the next level. He has lost at

least two stunts to the pandemic and is well ready to get back out to performing. Steve agrees that virtual performances really don't work for us.

Steve was inspired by the films of Houdini. It also made him want to improve his own skill level.



A great tribute site to the amazing
David De-Val



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

Asked about his favorite escape to perform, Steve said the underwater box which was his first and he still thinks it is the best. Escapology is largely showmanship after all..

Asked if there was a situation that went wrong, he replied that he'd dislocated his thumb in a performance and blacked out while practicing holding his breath.

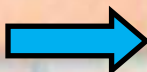
Steve started in magic at the age of 5 and escapology at 10.

When asked about any stunts he's backed down from he replied Blindfolded driving, he could not get the proper authority's permission.



Chris Gower gave a presentation on the difference between copies, reproductions and fakes when it comes to handcuffs. This was a wonderful historical presentation.

Chris shared the background and history behind several different styles and brands of handcuff while showing them off in real life from his very large collection that was mounted to the wall behind him. Some examples included the odd fact that some knock off cuffs were more expensive than the cuffs they imitated. Some were also higher quality.



This site is well worth the time to study if you want to learn about lock picking
www.lockpickguide.com

Begging Box!

Your input
is our output!

This is the part of The Chainletter where the editor begs for you to give him some material to publish. No idea what to write?



Well, How about...

- ♦ Your first escape.
- ♦ How did you learn to escape?
- ♦ Your creative process.
- ♦ Your last escape.
- ♦ Who is your hero? Why?
- ♦ What makes a good escape.
- ♦ Your escape bio.
- ♦ An escape you saw on TV.
- ♦ An escape you saw live.
- ♦ Anything escape related.



If you are interested in occult escapology, you want S. Rob!
<https://www.srob.co.uk/>

"Without a key"
For all your lockpicking needs
www.withoutakey.co.uk

For me the highlight of the presentation was a Chinese device called “the torture chair,” or the “tiger chair.” Pictured here this chair is a real nasty piece of business. It claps onto your ankles, backs you into it with the tray table snapped in place, and locks your hands down onto the tray. There are no locks, but none of the three restraint releases are in any kind of reach. Apparently the Chinese authorities use the chair to extract confessions. There is no brutalization of violence used. The torture is the chair itself. Left all day, the prisoner is sure to cramp up and eventually soil himself. No surprise that the chair has either a 100% confession rate or clearly close to it. Your editor couldn’t resist trying to figure out an escape root from the blasted thing. I believe I came up with an idea, but it would require specialized equipment and police would surely search a suspect before locking him in. Several other people joined in the discussion as to whether or not the chair was escapable. The consensus was it was not. This presentation alone made the whole meeting worth it to me.



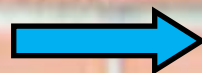
The bottom line on the title of the talk is that copies are just that, knock offs of other models in an attempt to sway profit from one company to another. Reproductions are an effort to bring back cuffs from days gone by, and depending on the age of the original, a good reproduction could be of higher quality than the original. Fakes are an all together different story. This is someone who is trying to sell something by claiming it to be more than what it is. Beware of civil war era restraints that have stamps of certain prisons on them. Many old cuffs are claimed to have belonged to Harry Houdini, and any other historical label that may not seem to make sense. Potential fakes should be avoided as they are the product of

Con men and little more.

Clearly Chris is someone who has spent hours doing the research needed to make the history of his collection come alive.

Stuart Burrell took the floor to make a couple of very interesting suggestions. First he asked permission to use the Annual General Meeting of UKEA to attempt to earn another world record. This was met with a strong and enthusiastic affirmation. Knowing Stuart, this world record attempt could be anything, but will surely be exciting.

Next he mentioned that the Guinness Book of World Records lists us under the category of “Magicians doing an escape illusion.” Keeping that in mind, he pointed out that the world record for most “magicians” doing an escape at the same time is 50. (The editor knows of a larger event, but Guinness was not notified) Stuart wants to take the largest magical gathering, The annual Blackpool Convention, and run a massive group escape. There were several suggestions as to how to do this and what simple escape to use. Thumb cuffs was one thought. Simple to learn, cheap to buy, and a legitimate escape as well.



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

Chris (Fenyx Fyre) Campbell demonstrated a piece of original escape equipment he had created and sold a few



off. Because this is his proprietary equipment, I will not describe it here. Chris showed off a video of the device in action in front of an audience, and the audience seemed to enjoy it. The escape artists at the Zoom gathering certainly did. A long discussion of the pros and cons of the device followed, as everyone was very well taken by the ingenuity of the equipment. Some even suggest alternate ways to use it. I'd say Chris has a winner on his hands.



Your editor did a tribute to the late Thomas Blacke showing off one of his last pieces of equipment. This simple but powerful escape was designed to be easy to perform without too much rehearsal time, and to be accompanied by the appropriate patter.

Following that we were showed a piece of equipment in a similar vein created by Pastor Clyde.



A major discussion was had regarding the quarantine and how to keep your sanity as well as keeping your job. Sadly there were no easy answers provided. There is a very inexpensive instructional and informational guide available from Penguin Magic. Put out by the well respected Paul Draper this guide is well rated. <https://www.penguinmagic.com/p/13511> Will it work for an escape Act. I don't know.

One of the best aspects of having a zoom gathering like this is that everyone gets to meet with people who understand how we think. Everyone has their own experience to bring to the table and all f it is good. (Note: not all of it will apply to everyone, but the experience is real) Your editor feels it is good for the escape artist's soul to join together in such situations and hopes there will be more to come.

There was more to the meeting. There was some things I am not reporting on as I was sworn to secrecy. The other thing that tends to happen at these meetings has to do with time. Three hours came and went in a flash. It was just so good to hang out with these great people.



**Has anyone managed
to perform any
escapes or escape
shows by zoom under
the quarantine?
I would love to
hear about it.**

Darkstone Dossiers: featuring Alexanderia the Great



Dr. Anthony Darkstone

For those of you who may not be familiar with either Anthony Darkstone or Alexanderia the Great, this video is a must watch. At least it is for all the escape artists and escape enthusiasts.

Instead of giving the interview away, I will hit some of the major points covered, and then let you watch the interview for yourself (link below)

Darkstone opened with an AGT video, and the obvious comparisons to Houdini, Alexanderia pointed out that she wanted to transcend the work of Houdini, and she has more than succeeded.

Alexanderia and her husband Bill discussed the origin of her escape career, as well as the origin of her unusually spelled name. The training that she went through to be able to do the underwater stunts that she does and what it includes to make that happen.

Alexanderia is very open when it comes to talking about her life challenges ; her stories are both captivating and inspiring.

The full interview runs an hour and a half long and is well worth investing the time to watch.

[https://vimeo.com/483533322?
fbclid=IwAR3JYWmx9HUga_nUg3ox6mkdze
Xev5CwLj5tzqhgMp6P62SRzGuQ](https://vimeo.com/483533322?fbclid=IwAR3JYWmx9HUga_nUg3ox6mkdzeXev5CwLj5tzqhgMp6P62SRzGuQ)



HOUDINI Musical Set Sights on Broadway; Ramin Karimloo and Laura Osnes Take Part in Virtual Reading

.by BWV News Desk Dec. 15, 2020



Producer Karl Sydow (The Last Ship) has just announced that the new Broadway bound musical HOUDINI directed by Federico Bellone (Mary Poppins in Milan, Dirty Dancing), recently held a cross continental

virtual developmental reading starring Tony Award nominee Ramin Karimloo (Les Misérables, Anastasia) as Harry Houdini and Tony Award nominee Laura Osnes (Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella, Bandstand) as Bess Houdini.

Previously announced as THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN, the upcoming new musical is now titled HOUDINI. The book writer, composer and complete design team will be announced shortly.

Casting is by Tara Rubin Casting and Foresight Theatrical will be the General Manager.

Director Federico Bellone said, "This reading has been an astonishing dream, especially for the period we're living in right now. The creative collaboration gave us a definitive idea about how to bring this show to life on stage, presenting to our audience both the spectacular of Houdini's Magic and the strong emotional arc of the characters."

HOUDINI is set during the last show of the great magician's life in the autumn of 1926 and through a series of flashbacks, we experience his life, loves and rise to fame.

For more information
visit www.houdinibroadwaymusical.com.



American EA Zoom Gathering



On Sunday December 20th
at 4pm California time,
Your editor will be hosting
an Escape artist Zoom

gathering. Borrowing the format from our
U.K. mates, we will
welcome any and all
escape artists, escape
enthusiasts and restraint
collectors. I think that
many of us are hungry
for connection after months of being
quarantined, and this may help.



Are we limited to only American participants?
Well no. As I said above all interested parties
are welcome. However the time difference
may play a role here too. 4 pm California
time is 7 pm on the East Coast. This



translates as late
night to our UK
friends, and various
other hours in other
places. If the time
works for you
please do join us.
Participation is free.

Currently signed up we have..



Bruce Thomson speaking about the
potential for a new live convention
in the future.

Dean Gunnarson will
pay tribute to his friend
and mentor the late
James Randi.



Chris (Fenylx Fyre)
Campbell will show off
some of his original
equipment.

Your editor will repeat what he did at the
UKEA meeting and show
off a piece of the late
Thomas Blake's final
work. As well as some
thoughts of his own future
material.



There is room for more if you would like to
show or present something. If you have other
ideas for things escape related to do online
please sing out loud and clear.

Just send your e-mail address to me
cliffg37@verizon.net and I will send you the
Zoom link to join in. Hopefully we can make
this a success, and keep it going, at least
until the quarantine lifts and we can see
each other in real time face to face.

