

THEIR FINAL ACT – SHOWBUSINESS - COLON LAKESIDE CEMETERY

1. Kempton, George (1868-1931) and Mattie (1868-1946) were the Kempton Komedy Kompany in vaudeville. They played the Hill Opera House in Colon and liked the area and retired here and began organizing weekly shows with local talent at the Hill Opera House. (There is no marker for this grave site) Sec 4; Row 45; # 6&7
2. Lamore, Skippy (1893-1942 and Jean (1888-1962), Skippy and Jean teamed in vaudeville for several years, showing in the leading theatres. In 1930 they opened their own show, known as “Skippy LaMore’s Comedians”. Traveling through Colon on the train they saw the beautiful lakes and decided to stop for the day. That was in 1929. They spent the rest of their lives here. At one time, Skippy hired Percy Abbott in his act. Upon Skippy’s death, the Abbott purchased his tent and it was used for the Get-Together for many years. Sec 5; Row 27; #1
3. Coppin, Ted (1886-1942 and Della (1909-1977). Their stage names were “Ted and Sally Banks. Della started in show business at the age of 8. In 1927 she became a “box hopper” for Blackstone’s act. She soon married Ted Banks, Blackstone’s stage manager, who had come to the United States from England in an act with actors Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel. Ted died and Sally, then 42, remained to look after the Blackstone property here in Colon and help raise Harry Jr. The locals remember her as the “Avon Lady.” Sec 5; Row 21: # 2
4. Thornton, Jesse (1901-1943) Velma Wagner (1917-1987) Jesse began as a boy to experiment with magic tricks. For several years he was a professional magician, but then he turned his attention to inventing magic apparatus for the Abbott’s Magic Novelty Company. Jesse was in an automobile accident with serious leg injuries. For 12 months he was bed ridden. His mind, kept working on magic and he was able to describe many of his ideas to his assistants in the plant. Sec 5; Row 23; # 1
5. Bouton, Harry (1885-1965), who used several stage names including Harry Blackstone. That name occurred when World War I started and Harry was traveling under the name of “The Great Frederick.” Deciding that name was too Germanic, he noticed a cigar store sign while performing in Wapakoneta, Ohio. He became one the world’s most famous magicians and brought Magic to Colon in 1926 when he bought some 200 acres on what is now known as Blackstone Island where he spent the summers. Harry Blackstone and Percy Abbott started the Blackstone Magic Company together but it was dissolved after only 18 months after the two had a falling out. Harry and his look-alike brother Peter were in show business for over fifty years. Colon’s Main Street was renamed Blackstone Avenue in his honor. What had been Townsend Island or Evelyn Isle became Blackstone Island. Sec 5; Row 28; # 4
6. Bouton, Peter (1887-1968) and (Millie) Mildred (1902-1979). Peter was the look-alike brother of Harry Bouton (Harry Blackstone). He and his wife stayed at Colon after the Blackstone Troupe left the stage until their deaths. In Pete’s hand the physical equipment of the show appeared like new. After his brother had to quit the stage and moved to Hollywood, Pete and Millie stayed in Colon the rest of their lives Sec 5; Row 28; # 7
7. Gwynne, Jack (1895-1969) and Anne (1896-1979). “The Royal Family of Magic.” Jack invented the “Temple of Benares.” Gwynne regularly attended the Pittsburgh vaudeville theatres. When an aerobatic act missed the opening, the manager asked Gwynne to fill in for the day. The result was a lifetime career. After a number of years the family moved the graves of Jack and his wife to be closer to the other magicians. Sec 7; Row 17; # 5
8. Robbins, Kenneth (1902-1971) was teamed up with his father Marvin (Dud) as jugglers, slack wire walkers, comedy and acrobatics in vaudeville. They settled permanently in Colon and still have many descendants and relatives here. Sec 5; Row 5; # 4
9. Stern, Duke (1913-1973). He was famous for comedy magic. He was married to Barbara Maurer, a Colon girl. Duke had many years of experience in various branches of the entertainment world. Fundamentally of course, he is a magician and expert musician and his favorite instrument is the violin. He and Gladys Abbott were the “band” for the Get Together for years. At the start of World War II, Stern tried to enlist but could not see the eye chart due to a scarlet fever in childhood which had damaged his eyes permanently. Duke opened Abbott’s first retail store in Indianapolis in 1945. In later years he was near totally blind. In 1970 he moved to Ft. Lauderdale, forming an association with Paul Diamond at Paul’s Magic and Fun Shop. A year later he joined the Harris Magic Company in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was employed until his death. He was well known as a “stooge” for Monk Watson and Karrell Fox. He was a well-known demonstrator of magic for Abbot’s in Colon. Sec 2; Row 15; # 13
10. Merrill, Fred R. (1888-1976) and Caroline E. (1900-1991). Before the First World War, Fred was with the Merrill Brothers and “Morris Cronnin and his Merry Men”, a comedy European Juggler Act in vaudeville and he and his wife moved to Colon where he worked for Abbott Magic Company for 32 years and Caroline for 23 years. Fred and Neil Sweet trained a young Colon boy (Hugh Frisbie) to juggle and it became his life profession). Sec 6; Row 27; # 4

11. Baird, Bill (1914-1978). His stage name was "The Magnificent Fraud." Born William Keckritz, Baird was a professional magician best known for his billiard balls manipulation. I was told by competent authority that he actually had a finger broken and reset at an angle that facilitated his manipulation of the full size billiard balls. Back in the days of the Magic Carpet Restaurant, they had a "Bill Baird Room." Sec 7; Row 29; # 1

12. Bordner, Recil (1910-1981) and Donna (1912-1974). The son of an Ohio farm couple, he tried mind-reading at an early age and then switched to magic. Bordner came to Colon in 1934 to visit Percy Abbott's Magic Novelty Company, That visit ended up in a partnership with Abbott that lasted 25 years. Abbott sold out to Recil who operated it for another 22 years. His son Greg then took over the company. Sec 6; Row 3; # 6

13. Watson, Donald (Monk), (1894-1981). Born in Jackson, Donald was sent to Colon to live with his grandparents when his mother became terminally ill. A veteran of World War I, Donald met Elsie Janis and joined her troop for two years after the war ended. He then teamed with Benjamin Kubelsky (Jack Benny) in vaudeville. As a band leader, he played 5,000 consecutive performances at the Riviera Theatre in Detroit in a four-year period. During this time he hired a young man calling himself "Packy East" to dance during his show. You might know him as Bob Hope! Monk was with the USO in WW II as a magician and showman. Sec 5; Row 21; # 5

14. Kitchen, Inez Blackstone (1889-1983). Inez Nourse was hired to play the banjo in the Blackstone show and became Mrs. Blackstone. In 1926 the Blackstone Magic Show summered at West Lake, near Kalamazoo," recalled Inez. "I was part of it, of course, and afternoons I liked to take the car and go exploring. One afternoon when I came out of an avenue of trees and there before me was this gleaming lake." When she found the peninsula (island) was for sale, that was it. She, with Harry Blackstone Sr. brought magic to Colon. In 1930 Harry and Inez divorced. He then married "Billie". Sec 5; Row 27; # 5

15. Babbs, Arthur Glenn. (1921-1987) and Patricia (1934-). He built magic for U.F grant in his early years and opened a magic shop in Thornville Ohio where he built his creations. In 1961 he came to Colon, Michigan where he worked for Abbott's for twenty-five years. His stage name: "Arturo." Sec 6; Row 69; # 8

16. Fabek, Vince (1947-1991) was involved with magic, balloons and puppets. His stage name was "Holiday." He was employed in the nursing field and lived in Colon for the last 17 years of his life. He was a member of the Puppeteers of America and the Howdy Doody Historical Society. Sec 7; Row 31; # 5

17. Jones, "Little Johnny" (1898-1995) and Catherine (1899-1997), his wife for 75 years. After spending World War I in the navy, Jones spent years in the photography business before first trying his hand at professional magic when the Depression hit. He was the "Conjuring Humorist." His epitaph reads: "Now I have to go and fool St. Peter." He is best known as a nightclub performer and full-evening show. During World War II he was with the USO. He retired to Bangor, Michigan after his final performance at the 1964 Abbott's Get-together 7; Row 29; # 3

18. Lund, Robert (1925-1995) and Elaine (1926-2006) Realizing he lacked the flair for performing, Lund decided to become a student of magic history. His accumulation was called the "largest such collection in private hands." He owned and operated the American Museum of Magic; Marshall, Michigan. Nearly a million items from the 16th century to the present day are contained in the two buildings the museum occupies in the Historic District of Marshall, Michigan, That museum still exists today. Sec 7; Row 29; # 5

19. Blackstone, Harry Jr. (1934-1997). Harry Blackstone Jr. was born in Three Rivers, Michigan, west of Colon. Harry followed in his father's footsteps in becoming a magician of considerable renown. He first appeared in a magic act swaddled in a diaper when he was 6 months old. His nanny had to leave early that day, and his mother Billie was left with no choice but to take Harry Jr. onstage, where she usually posed as the Statue of Liberty and was made to disappear. She substituted a baby bottle for her torch. Mr. Blackstone brought his "magnificent, musical, magical show" to the Majestic Theater in 1980. Sec 5; Row 28; # 5

20. Fox, Karrell (1928-1998) started in magic when a customer at his father's restaurant in Hillsdale, Michigan walked out without paying his bill. That customer did leave behind a magic trick. Karrell was hooked! He did USO shows during WW II at age 16. By the age of 18, Karrell had appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show". At one time he managed the Abbott Magic store in Detroit. His epitaph reads "It Was Fun." He was an integral part of the Magic Get-Together of Abbott's Magic with Foxy Follies for over 30 years. . Sec 7; Row 33; # 1

21. Alan, Don (McWethy) (1926-1999), and Lois Jean (Proffer) (1932-1989). Don was a Magician and Entertainer. He appeared on TV talk/variety shows, including The Tonight Show, Ed Sullivan Show, Mike Douglas , Steve Alan and Johnny Carson. In the 1960's he was most noted for his American TV program "Don Alan's Magic Ranch" which aired from 1961 to 1962. He is best known for his presentations of the Chop Cup, Invisible Deck, Rising Cards, Benson Bowl, Ranch Bird. 7; Row 27; # 5

22. Dunn, Ricki (1929-1999) was a comedian and thief as “America’s Greatest Pickpocket.” Dunn ran away from home as a teenager to join the circus, developing his skills in the “Ten-in-One” shows. He was an assistant to magician Card Mondor. By the early 1950’s, Rick’ had teamed with Channing Pollock and Robert Orben. He later developed his pick pocketing act during his "Chick Cups" and "Cards Across" routines. He worked cruise ships, night clubs and casinos in Las Vegas. His signature act was “The Drinking Trick. Sec 7; Row 27; # 8

23. Rench, Jack (1924-2002) Magician, Musician and Circus Drummer. For 54 years he was married to Wilma who is buried at his side. Sec 7; Row 22; # 8

24. Straw, Marx Edward (1935-2005). A sleight of hand expert, Marx was a Colon boy who became a prodigy of Percy Abbott of Abbott Magic Company. Sec 7; Row 33; # 7

25. Nosek, Terry (1936-2005) was a was a magician, comedy mentalist, designer of award winning effects, convention entertainer, author of magic books, magic store manager/demonstrator. He graduated from Loyola in Chicago with a degree in marketing. In 1960 he married Mary Jo and became dad to 3 children, Michael, Marie and Colleen. During his early adult years Terry became a children’s magician, “Swami Salami,” with Colleen assisting. Terry would say, “Now we’ve never met, right?”, she would say, “No dad”. Sec 7; Row 33; # 2

26. Barrows, Ralph “Jack” (1935–2007). Magician and Author, He was a President of Magical Youths International, and served with the Society of American Magicians. He later moved to Colon Michigan to worked at Abbott’s as chie salesman & demonstrator in their showroom. Later he worked for FAB Magic (also in Colon). Sec 7; Row 31; # 6

27. Booth, John Nicholls (1912-2009) and Edith Kriger (1907-1982), John was a M6nister, Author, Magician, Lecturer and Cinematographer. Rev. Booth’s magic career began before his ministry and continued throughout those years and beyond. He was a mentor and wrote several classical books on magic. Sec 7; Row 33; # 5

28. Huston, Kenneth Roy (1940-2009) and Yuka Darlene (1941-). Roy was a magician for 50 years and a professional drummer and dancer. His mother, known professionally as Rita Raye, was one of his assistants in his shows. He was one of the first to perform illusions in the circus. Huston married his assistant, Linda Lee, on December 23, 1966. He starred in some now cult films including The Magic Land of Mother Goose (1967) in which he played Merlin. Huston later worked spook shows from coast to coast, combining shows with Bill Neff. Sec 7; Row 21; # 7

29 Conklin, Jerry (1928-2010) and Shirley (1934-1987). In 1961, Jerry moved his family from Battle Creek to Colon and began working at Abbott’s Magic Company. Soon afterwards, he became a professional magician, and the “The Amazing Conklin’s” traveled throughout the United States and Canada, For years he was stage manager for the Sturges Young Auditorium and for Abbott’s Annual Get-together. Jerry lived in Colon for fifty years. Sec 7; Row 30; # 1

30. Henry Louis (Hank) Moorehouse (1934-2011) & Jaculan Joan (1937-) Operating a small magic company in his home he continued to expand the business until 1974, when he opened a retail store in neighboring Ann Arbor called “The Magic Emporium.” Hank worked with Abbott Magic Company for many years. He was a White Pigeon resident and they honored him by naming a street after him. Sec 7; Row 31; # 7

31. Bendix, David (1934 –2013) was inventor of the Bendix Bombshell Wallet. A native of New Orleans, Bendix, was very active in the New Orleans magic community from 1950-1980. He had often expressed the wish to be buried in Lakeside Cemetery in Colon to be near his collogues. After his death his friends arranged for that to happen, despite the complications of no will and no known relatives. Sec 7; Row 41; # 1

32. Willmarth, Philip Reed (1931-2014). Phil was a past-President of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, and was, for many years, the editor of the Linking Ring, a magazine for magicians. Born in New Castle, Pa., Phillip lived the bulk of his life in Arlington Heights, Illinois and Durham, North Carolina. Philip’s interest in magic began as a kid when his father, a physician, gave him a book on magic. He was hooked! Sec 7; Row 42; # 5

33. Thomas Blaine Mullica (1948 –2016), was a comedy magician and impressionist who performed on television specials. On his seventh birthday his mother bought him a “Sneaky Pete Magic Kit” for Christmas. After 3 years in the army, he moved to Colon, Michigan, building illusions and demonstrated magic for Abbott’s Magic Company. His signature effect is the manipulation and vanishing of several lit cigarettes in his mouth. His mentor was Red Skelton. In later years he played many of Red’s characters. Sec 7; Row 20; # 5

34. King, Kevin (1968-2017). He was an accomplished magician, magic man, and "Magicomedian". He loved doing magic and making people laugh. Many lives were brightened by his magical star. He will be sorely missed. He was a longtime member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians and other magical organizations. Performed at comedy clubs across the country and on cruise ships in the Caribbean, the Bahamas and Mexico. Sec. 7; Row 43; # 7

35. Windley, Charles (1942-2017) Charles Windley was a professional magician all his life. He did a season or two with Clyde Beatty/Cole Bros. Circus. He owned a magic shop in Norfolk, Virginia. He said, "I got into magic originally because I stuttered." Ten years later his public speaking was flawless. 7; Row 21; # 6

36. Linsell, David (1953-2018) He worked in technical training and photographic equipment sales at Olympus America for 29 years and then found his true vocation at Potter & Potter Auctions as a photographer of magic memorabilia and other fine art until retiring in 2018. He also thrived as a freelance photographer, specializing in performance portraits of world famous magicians. He was a fifty-year attendee of the Abbott's Magic Get Together and its official photographer. Photographed magicians around the world. Sec 7; Row 21; # 6

37. Odette, David (1965-2018) hailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was a Newspaper photographer, collector of magic memorabilia and performer. He performed magical comedy entertainment for corporate functions, restaurants, schools and private parties. After the birth of his first child, he became a stay-at-home Dad while also working as a professional magician, performing at festivals, corporate and private shows around West Michigan, including several years as part of the But Wait, There's More. Sec 7; Row 14; # 3

38. Watson, William Donald (1931-2018) was born July 27, 1931, in Detroit, but always called Colon his home. As the son of "Monk" Watson, Bill grew up in a show business family; traveling the country, He enlisted in the Air Force where he met and married the love of his life, Marilyn "Mickey". He loved to play the piano and banjo to accompany himself singing. Bill spent his last years living in Colon in the family home. Bill appeared at the 2002 and 2008 Get Togethers as an MC. Sec 5; Row 21; # 7

39. Haney, Denny (1945-2019). Denney was a proud American and Vietnam Veteran who served four tours of duty near the mountains in Pleiku. Upon his return to the US, he began his career as a professional magician. Through the 1980's and 90's he was a successful corporate entertainer. He wanted to give back to the magic community so he took the money he earned on the road, and opened up a studio where magicians could come and learn, practice their craft, rehearse and exchange idea's. A popular college and corporate entertainer, mentor and teacher. He owned magic shops in Maryland and Las Vegas. Sec 7; Row 42; # 4

40. Darwin, Gary (1935-2019) Born Gary Lee Meador in Denver, Colorado, he was one of the first magicians to perform in Las Vegas in the 1960s. He began performing death-defying acts as "Darwin, the man with thirteen lives". People had trouble pronouncing his real name, so Darwin it became. He started the Darwin Magic Club in 1968 which met each Wednesday for fifty years. He also wrote many magic books and produced over two dozen video tapes. Sec 5; Row 32; # 3

41. Sonny Fontana (1957-2019) He was best known, especially at The Magic Castle, for his amazing shadow artistry and he was a Shadow Consultant for Francis Ford Coppola's film "Dracula". He could do amazing shadow profile impersonations. It was an act that took him around the world many times. He created many unique and amazing acts including the Telephone Act, Hand Shadow Act and the Invisible Man. He was a published origami expert and created many original figures. Sec 7; Row 41; # 3

42. Thompson, Johnny (1934-2019). Was an American comedian and Las Vegas illusionist who performed under the stage name The Great Tomsoni with his wife, Pamela Hayes had a comedic slapstick act with the well-dressed Thompson and his gum-popping assistant, Pam, performing illusions while enduring a series of mishaps. He was a consultant to many top magicians. Sec 7; Row 20; # 6

43. Nielson, Norm (1934-2020). Norm became hooked on magic at age 10 when his father took him to see a barber who loved to perform magic. Herman was his name. Norm would hang out with Herman who had a penchant of going to bars and drinking on the weekends. He never revealed to Norm the secrets of his magic, yet through observation, Norm stated he was learning quite a bit. Eventually Norm went to his first convention where he met his idol, Neil Foster, who was a teacher at the Chavez School of Magic in California. His signature piece was his floating violin. He and his wife Lupe owned one of the largest collections of magic posters. He also manufactured a high quality line of magic props. Sec 7, Row 27, # 5

44. Blaney, Walter "Zaney" (1928-2020). A true Texan who stood at 6'6". Magician and inventor. Developing an early fascination of the magical arts, he started performing as a magician during his college years. During those same years he met and married the love of his life, Joyce Lottie Sefcik. Together after graduating from the University of Texas in 1940, the couple began traveling the entire country with Joyce assisting Walter performing magic for school assemblies. His famous Ladder Levitation is engraved on his tombstone. Sec 7; Row 43; # 4

45. Carnell, Ronald A. (1950-2021) was born in Battle Creek, Michigan some 25 miles north of Colon. He was a self-taught magic enthusiast who turned professional after his retirement. He has worked his magic on stages throughout the Midwest and performed at places like the Soaring Eagle Casino, Gun Lake Casino, Great Escape Stage Company, and has most recently appeared on national television performing on ABC Sunday Morning News. Carnell is also on the Board of Directors at the American Museum of magic in Marshall. He locally was known for his close-up trickery at the River Lake Inn, near Colon. Sec 7; Row 37; # 6

(46a or 23). Rench, Wilma (1929-2021) Wilma was a local gal, (born in Leonidas, Michigan), about five miles north of Colon. Wilma was an extremely talented organist and became a professional in every way. Wilma was 19 years old in 1948 when she answered an ad for the organist for the Abbott's Get-Together. She related her nervousness waiting on Percy Abbott. He spread out some music for her and it was "American Patrol." Wilma didn't need the music and after a few bars she was hired. The surprise guest that first night was Edgar Bergen. In 2011 she decided to retire but holds the record for most performances at the Get-Together, not as a magician, but as a remembered and talented organist. As a professional organist Wilma played for local bands, the Abbotts magic get together, some of the largest circus's in the country and was the organist for the Colon and Athens Methodist Church's for many years. Buried with her husband Jack (#23 on this list) Sec 7; Row 22; # 8

46. John, Osborne (1939-2022) John was born and raised in Michigan, and spent most of his time in the Detroit area. He was a magician, ventriloquist, magic clown, Master of Ceremonies for variety shows, a Medicine Show pitchman, a Stan Laurel imitator, an agent, and a purveyor of Punch and Judy shows. For more than 50 years John was an American Showman.. Sec 7; Row 45; # 5

