

Percy's Story (by Percy Abbott)

1956

There have been many stories from various walks of life on "starting from scratch" and "building a successful business." This is my own personal and intimate story in that respect and I trust that you will find in it, not only a general interest, but the knowledge that there are always the heights to climb.

There are many times in life when through what we accept as an unfortunate occurrence, if rightfully used, can become our greatest asset. I believe this is true with most misfortunes of life, if we but knew how to make use of them. They are a prod to greater achievements.

This occurrence in my life was not misfortune, merely a change in my way of life, but one which required adjustment. I had been in show business for many years, had travelled over much of the world's surface, seeking, not alone business and money, but adventure and knowledge as well. Then suddenly, my life changed and another person became important in my scheme of things. In a small village in Michigan where I had gone for a lazy carefree fishing trip, I met the lady who was to be the future Mrs. Abbott. We were married two years later, but already I was enjoying, for the first time in my life, the lazy luxury of a small town. After our marriage, for a period of nearly five years, we were quite content to work a few shows (she became part of the act), in not too distant pastures and to return again to the "home town". Money was not an easy commodity to obtain - these were the depression years - but we were happy and healthy and there were few requirements. Then, I learned that I was to become a father! Needless to say, this was a responsibility that would require more effort, time and money, so what was "papa" to do.

Show business was all I had ever really known and I was convinced that I did not want to attempt the difficult task of raising a child while trouping. Neither did I wish to leave what was now my world to travel around alone, missing much of the companionship which I had enjoyed.

It has always been my habit, when required to do any deep thinking, to play around with ideas in Magic. For me, this has been a beneficial way of clearing my mind. So, having something to think through, I went alone to our bedroom and there proceeded to look over an accumulation of odds and ends - bits of string, rope, playing cards, thimbles. Safety pins - all those little gadgets with which all Magicians are familiar. Suddenly an idea struck! I saw the idea for a new trick - in fact a new principle in Magic. Hurriedly I set about constructing "the thing". It soon emerged in a very crude state. Now, to try it out. My good wife was, of course, the chosen victim for this ordeal. If I could fool her, I really had a good trick. I located her in the kitchen, preparing a meal, and I am certain that when I suggested she cease her labors "to look at a trick", she could have gleefully thrown straight at me the skillet which she was holding. However, being a fairly amicable individual, she stopped and watched the "miracle". AND SHE WAS FOOLED! My conversation went something like this. "We're going to start a Magic business, manufacturing tricks, and THIS is the first one". The trick was named "Squash". It consisted of the instantaneous disappearance of a glass of liquid. Many people have asked me, why the name "Squash"? The naming of the effect was a snap decision, as have been all my decisions through the years, in this crazy business. The name had sprung up from the recesses of my mind - a hangover from childhood, for in my native country of Australia, I had had many times as a child partaken of a soft drink known as "Squash".

Thus, a business was born. Our bank account was well under a hundred dollars and I could see many future bills looming, but in small quantities we purchased the needed articles to produce the little trick. Another and another trick was added from my mental storehouse. (Now I knew the reason for the many years of travelling the world, of seeing Magic in India, China, of going into out-of-the-way places to see Magic never seen by white men before.) This coupled with the kindness of other people made it possible for us to hold on until the business started to build up. In passing, I want especially here to mention the kindness of a good friend, one I had met and known in many countries throughout the world, a great Magician and a great man, Will Nicola. It was to Will I wrote for a small loan to tide me over a short period. Needless to say, my request was immediately granted - His loan gave me not only money, but courage and faith as well.

The business had been started only a short time when a young man, interested in this strange thing called Magic, came to me and asked to toss in his lot with mine to further the interests of this new venture. Thus, the partnership between myself and Recil Bordner got its start, and together, without ever an argument or critical word, we have operated this unique factory for twenty-three years. His patience and ability have been a great balance wheel for my rather stormy and rapid fire nature.



1886

Percy Abbott

1960