

THE CENTURY

When the list of the 100 "who shaped the art in America" is completed in September, there will be a ballot for subscribers to vote for the "Top Ten of the Century." The results will be published in the December issue. Those who have appeared since the series began in January are listed here.

PERCY ABBOTT
MICHAEL AMMAR
THEODORE ANNEMANN
AL BAKER
HARRY BLACKSTONE SR.
HARRY BLACKSTONE JR.
DAVID BAMBERG
THEO BAMBERG
ROY BENSON
J.B. BOBO
LANCE BURTON
BEN CHAVEZ
T. NELSON DOWNS
JOSEPH DUNNINGER

ALEX ELMSLEY
S.W. ERDNASE
DARIEL FITZKEE
AL FLOSSO
NEIL FOSTER
MARTIN GARDNER
JOHN GAUGHAN
URI GELLER
WALTER B. GIBSON
A.C. GILBERT
HORACE GOLDIN
WILL GOLDSTON
U.F. GRANT
ROBERT HARBIN

DOUG HENNING
JOHN NORTHERN HILLIARD
PROFESSOR HOFFMANN
HARRY HOUDINI
JEAN HUGARD
GUY JARRETT
RICKY JAY
FRED KAPS
WILLIAM W. LARSEN SR.
BILL LARSEN JR.
MILT LARSEN
RENÉ LAVAND
NATE LEIPZIG
SERVAIS LE ROY

HARRY LORAYNE
ROBERT LUND
JEFF MCBRIDE
BILLY MCCOMB
ED MARLO
FRANCES MARSHALL
JAY MARSHALL
GARY OUELLET
PENN & TELLER
CHANNING POLLOCK
JOHN RAMSAY
RICHIARDI JR.
MARVYN ROY
JOHN SCARNE

P.T. SELBIT
SIEGFRIED & ROY
SLYDINI
JIM STEINMEYER
HARLAN TARBELL
HOWARD THURSTON
EDDIE TULLOCK
DON WAYNE
DR. A.M. WILSON
MARK WILSON

Max Malini (1873-1942)

At an elegant dinner, the host was about to carve into a magnificently garnished roasted chicken. Malini halted him, offering to show the assembled party "a leetle trick..." With a mystical gesture, the bird sprang to life, jumped off the plate, and squawked its way back to the kitchen!

As with many of magic's extraordinary characters, tales of their feats often became legendary within their own lifetimes, making it difficult to distinguish history from fantasy. So it was with Malini. But therein lies the true greatness of his magical persona.

Max Malini was a most clever conjuror. A study of his skills, methods, and diabolical misdirection reveals only a small part of the secret of his triumphs. He knew when to, and when not to, do a trick. Yet, he stood in readiness to amaze people when they least expected it. Conditions had to be just right, and he was never in a rush. He would wait for the precise moment, sometimes it was hours — "once I waited for days" — before performing one of his impromptu miracles.

Perhaps Malini's greatest influence on performance magic was his earnest understanding of the importance of creating legend.





Lewis Ganson (1913-1980)

He was a pragmatic word smith, and because of his extensive background as a practitioner of magic, Lewis Ganson was extremely qualified to teach.

In 1946, as Ganson wrote his first book, *Expert Manipulation of Playing Cards*, he was performing a cabaret act of split-fan productions, card fanning, and fancy flourishes. A decade later, when the *Dai Vernon Book of Magic* was penned, Lewis actually became one of The Professor's first pupils. He was privileged to take both motion pictures and extensive still photographs of most of Vernon's presentations. Ganson not only mastered, but performed, just about every sleight, subtle move, or bit of misdirection that went into that epic volume. Lewis Ganson practiced what he preached.

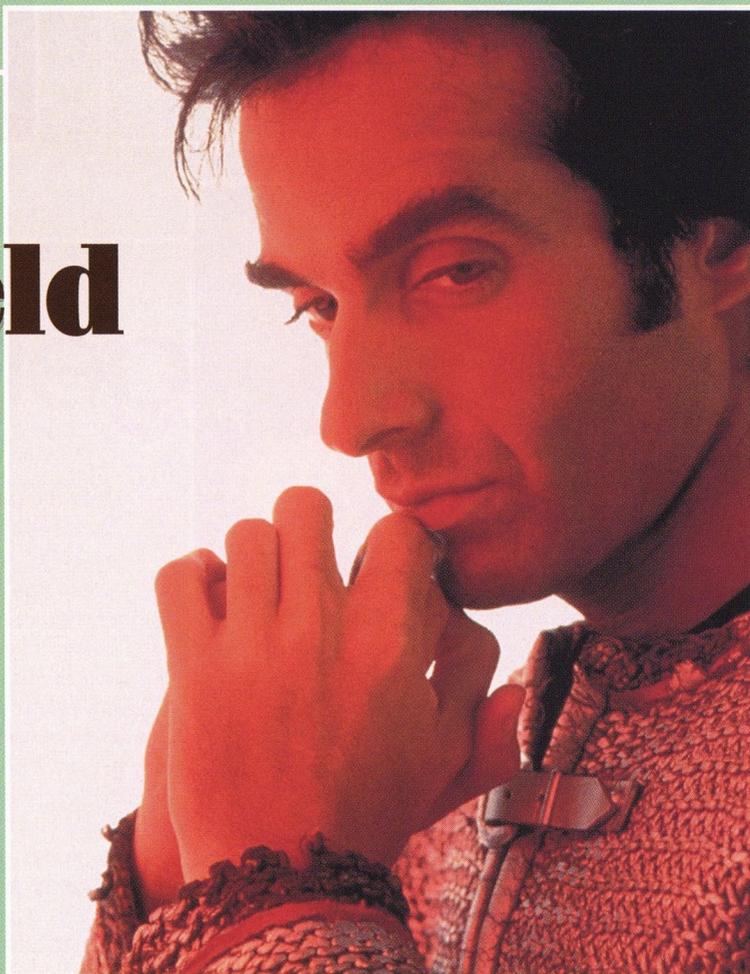
Focusing on teaching the effects of some of the world's finest close-up performers, he went on to write and edit 65-plus publications, including 15 years of the trick-filled monthly magazine, *The Gen*. Lewis Ganson's contributions to the literature of magic were impetus to the popularity that close-up has enjoyed since the middle of the century.

David Copperfield

At a time when the science of television seemed to eclipse the magic of the stage conjuror, David Copperfield realized that this powerful electronic media was capable of making the whole world his glittering stage.

David captured the fancy of America and the rest of the world by transcending the technologies of television with his magic and illusion. Here was a dashing young man who vanished seven-ton Lear jets, caused national monuments to disappear, then walked through the Great Wall of China. Copperfield was not yet 30 years old, and he had already succeeded in launching a new creature of contemporary show business — the superstar of magic.

Augmenting his extraordinary accomplishment of producing 18 network extravaganzas is his mind-boggling schedule of 500-plus live concerts annually for the past 20 years. David Copperfield has repeatedly made the *Fortune 500* top-ten list of the world's wealthiest entertainers, proving that elevating the art of magic and the magician to celebrity status has its just rewards.



“Never, ever tell how it’s done” is a cardinal rule of many conjuring books. Charlie Miller cherished the secrets of magic. For him, secrets were always to be kept as the hidden tools of the genteel art of deception.

Strongly influenced by the writings of Erdnase, Charlie believed that the mechanics of legerdemain were the earned skills necessary to create the desired effect. As a young man, he was relentless in his pursuit, practice, and performance of all genre of magic, be it stage, parlor, or close-up. His longtime studies with masters Dai Vernon, Faucett Ross, and Max Malini caused Charles Earle Miller to flourish as one of the century’s greatest exponents of pure sleight of hand.

Miller was often criticized for being clandestine, attaching too much sacredness to the “real work.” However, it was this motivating spirit that instilled a practical sense of the power of secrets in others. And, when Charlie Miller did share his knowledge and boundless expertise, it was not only for the benefit of the privileged individuals who surrounded him, it was for the enrichment of the entire art of magic.

Charlie Miller (1909-1989)

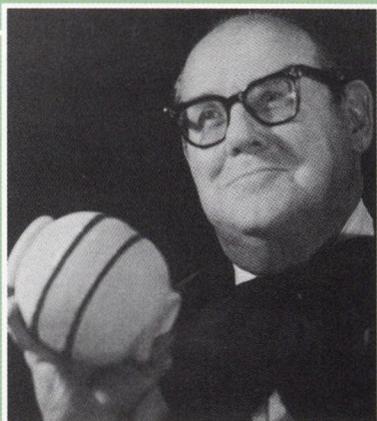


PHOTO: MIKE CAVENEY COLLECTION

Paul Curry (1917-1986)

A beautiful young lady’s severed head appeared to rest comfortably on a sword; yet, she was able to smile, laugh, and even whistle a tune for young Paul Curry. It was only the ballyhoo stunt of a side-show magician. However, at age nine, it was one young man’s fatal fascination with the principles of deception.

Curry went on to become a successful executive with a medical insurance firm, but his formidable hobby of magic remained a passion all his life. As a distinguished amateur, he originated many sleights and tricks, wrote a column, “Curry Favors,” in *The Phoenix*, and published at least three volumes of highly original effects.

By 1977, he was recognized with a Creative Fellowship from the Academy of Magical Arts. Of his numerous creations and inventions, none had the universal impact of “Out of This World,” the trick that he originated when he was 24 years old. Paul Curry’s feat of pseudo precognition — where a spectator miraculously separates the black cards from the red cards — has been, still is, and apparently will forever be in the repertoires of thousands upon thousands of professionals and amateurs alike.

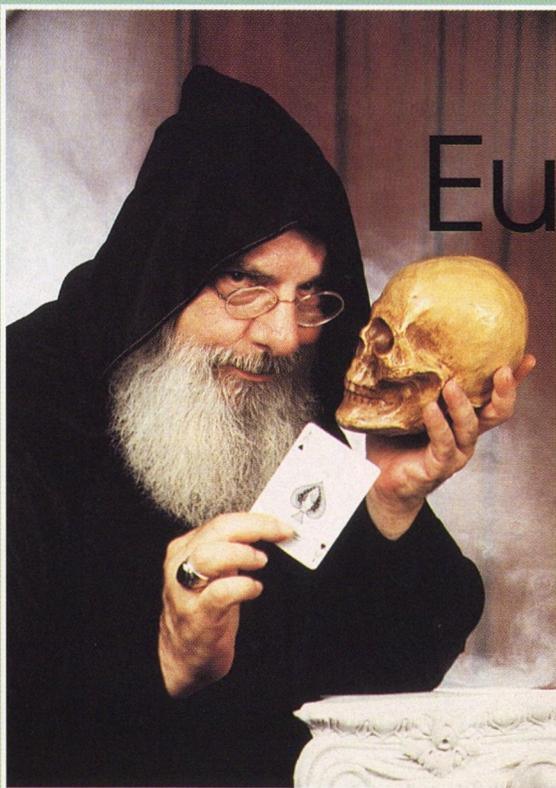
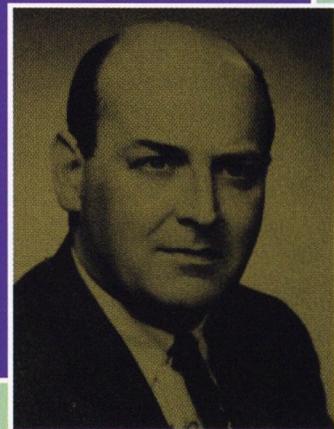


PHOTO: MICHAEL LAMONT

Eugene Burger

In the last quarter of this century, Eugene caused us to think about our magic. Maybe it’s because a whole lot of serious thought went into his brand of bewilderment. Before becoming a professional close-up conjurer in 1978, Burger was an academic, pursuing a career as teacher, a historian of religion, and a philosopher.

An “experience” best describes a close-up performance by Eugene Burger. His simple parlor tricks arouse feelings of astonishment, as well as a host of other indescribable sensations. Because of his dramatic ability to emotionally involve an audience in his magical presentations, each person is not only thoroughly entertained, but genuinely spellbound.

Burger has lectured and written much about the creation of meaningful and memorable performances. You see, Eugene really believes in the power of magic. Over the century, many masters have speculated about the principles and the *why* of magic, but it is doubtful if any have been as successful in communicating their philosophies and theories as Eugene Burger.

Tommy Wonder

His intense intellectual interests and profound philosophies on the art are eloquently expressed in his recent work, *The Books of Wonder*. The two-volume study of the omnibus career of Tommy Wonder is a journey that passionately merges artistry and professionalism. Along the way, Tommy crosses paths with the disciplines of the craftsman, as he designs and creates the tangibles, those marvelous props that play an integral parts in his performances.

The magic of Wonder, whether it be his classic stage act or his exquisite close-up routines, is exemplar of a quest for perfection. He never ceases to develop new skills or invent different methods in order to create something better. He is truly a work in progress.

The theoretical thinking, blended with his zeal for creating astonishment, and his abilities to enlighten fellow performers through the teachings of his *Books of Wonders*, have made Tommy a performer to be reckoned with — a true Renaissance man.

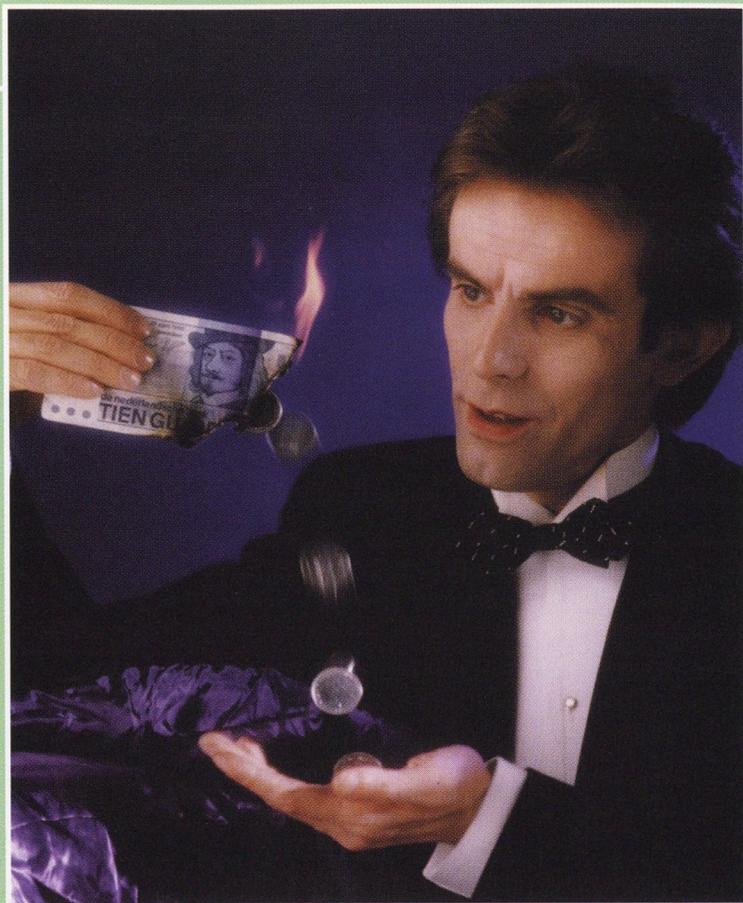


PHOTO: ANNE WHITE

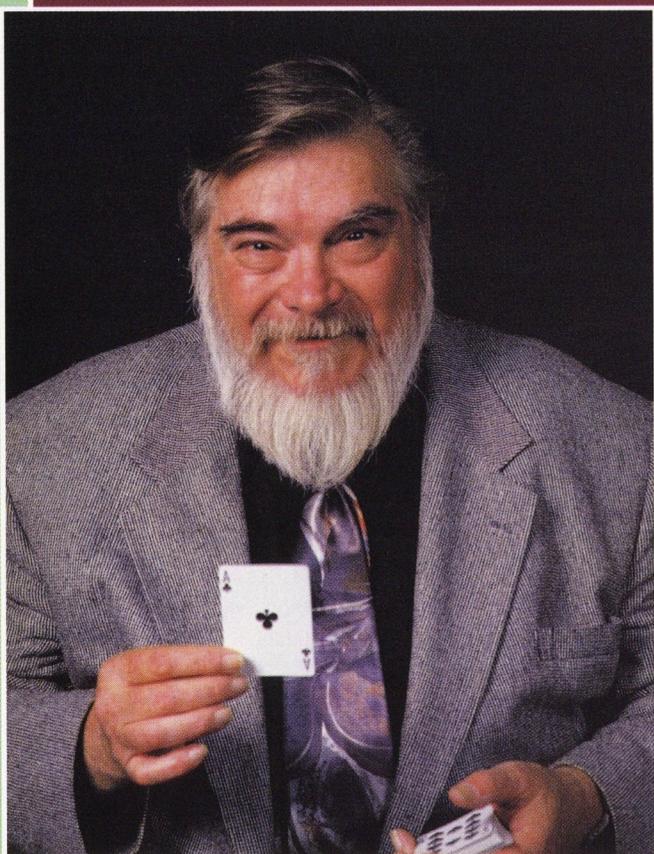


PHOTO: ANNE WHITE

Larry Jennings

(1933-1998)

The first time he witnessed a performance of “Out of This World,” he was stunned. “I wish I could convey the feelings I had when I turned over those cards,” Jennings once wrote. “...from that moment on, I was obsessed with card tricks that had a motive.”

Larry was a quick learner, and because his mentor was none other than Dai Vernon, he soon had a philosophy that went along with his capabilities with cards. The mere synergy of The Professor’s presence at the Magic Castle undoubtedly inspired Jennings to new heights. His early improvements on the works of his predecessors were overwhelming. He devised clever new techniques and subtle moves, as well as elegant solutions to card problems. However, it was his uncanny capacity to develop and construct totally new routines and tricks that elevated him above other cardmen.

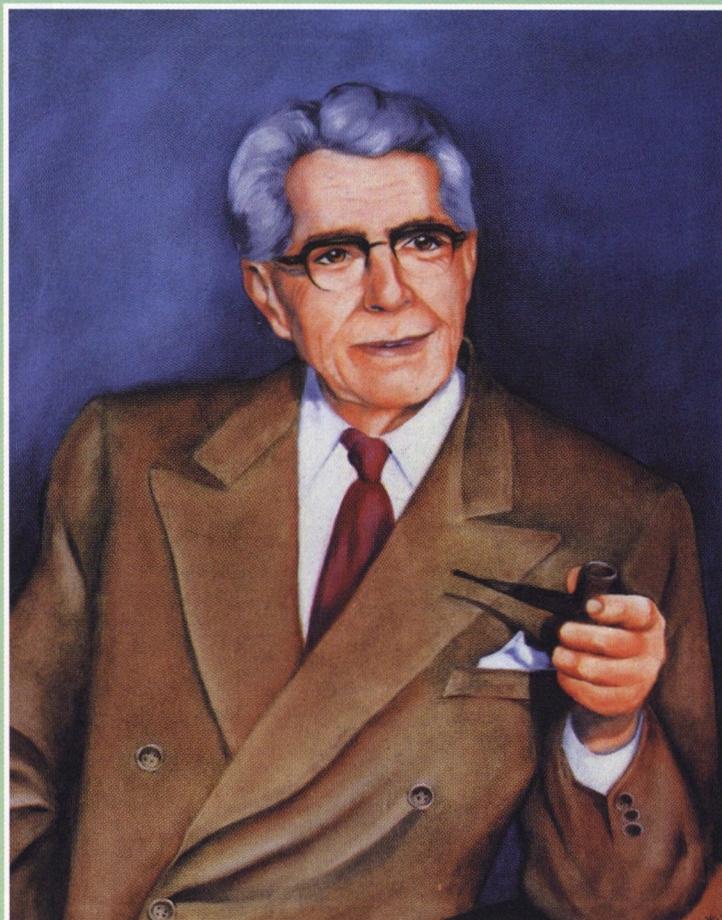
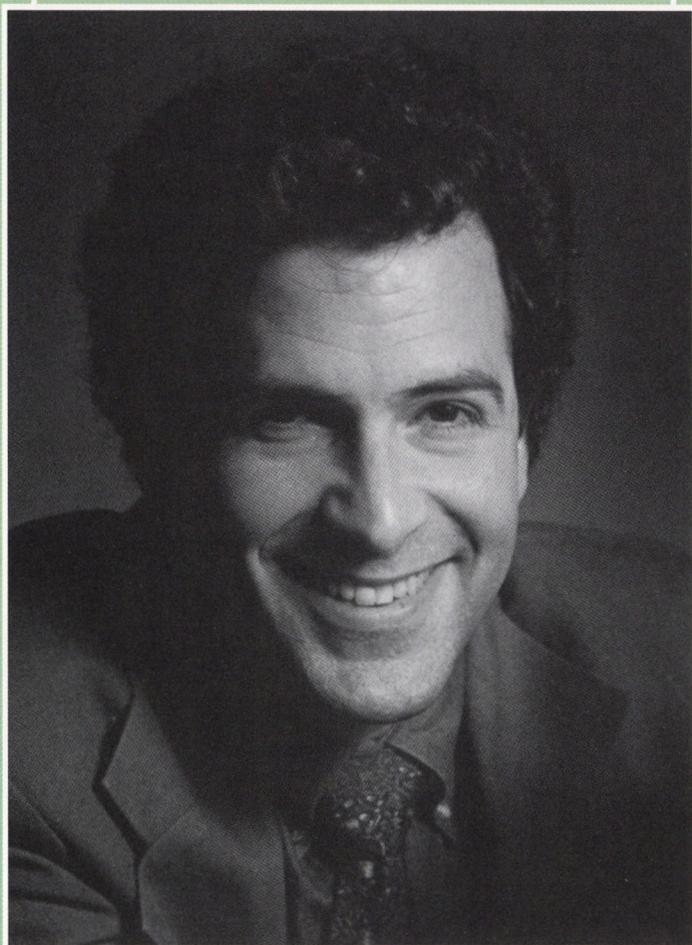
He realized that methods must be the intangible and invisible elements of a card trick — the effect must be everything. Long after Larry’s innovations in sleight of hand are learned, practiced, and perhaps perfected, most remembered will be his marvelous plots — those cardboard creations that are simply known as the mysteries of Larry Jennings.

Richard Kaufman

There's hardly anything to do with magic literature that he hasn't attempted and accomplished. He's a publisher, editor, writer, illustrator, photographer, collector of historical books, and discoverer of new titles. The odds are amazingly high that any serious English-reading magician has purchased not one, but instead, at least a half-dozen of the 75-plus publications produced by Richard Kaufman. And he's done it all in just a little over two decades.

Before he turned 40, he became the youngest magician ever to receive the Academy of Magical Arts Literary Fellowship. More amazing than his proliferation is the fact that Kaufman has brought to print some of the most influential magicians and most interesting magic ever.

And even more staggering than the profundity of his output is the impact that he has had on the magic book business. By giving the face of magic books a graphic makeover, he has elevated expectations for quality publications. And because his contributions continue to be monumental, Richard Kaufman perpetuates the highest publishing standards for magic.



PAINTING COURTESY LESLIE C. SMITH

Floyd G. Thayer

(1877-1959)

At the turn of the century, talented young woodworker and magician Floyd Thayer trekked from Vermont to California. Dovetailing Yankee ingenuity with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, he opened his own shop, manufacturing salt and pepper shakers, candlestick holders, and other curios. By 1902, an ad in *Mabatta* advised that Thayer's "Magic Shop of the West" was manufacturing custom magic wands, "turned of highly polished California orangewood, with rare hardwood mountain manzanita tips."

Before long, Floyd was designing and creating props and apparatus for the likes of Kellar, Houdini, Carter, Thurston, Dante, and a multitude of amateur performers. By the time he began issuing his first catalogs, the Thayer name was already synonymous with quality and the artistic use of fine woods — mahogany, maple, rosewood, and walnut — in magic manufacturing.

More importantly, Thayer set high standards for other master builders of this century. The commitment to excellence was carried forward by his partner Carl Owen. Today, Les Smith perpetuates that interpretative craftsmanship of the classics — a tradition set forth 100 years ago by American magic's supreme artisan in wood, Floyd G. Thayer.

Karrell Fox (1928-1998)

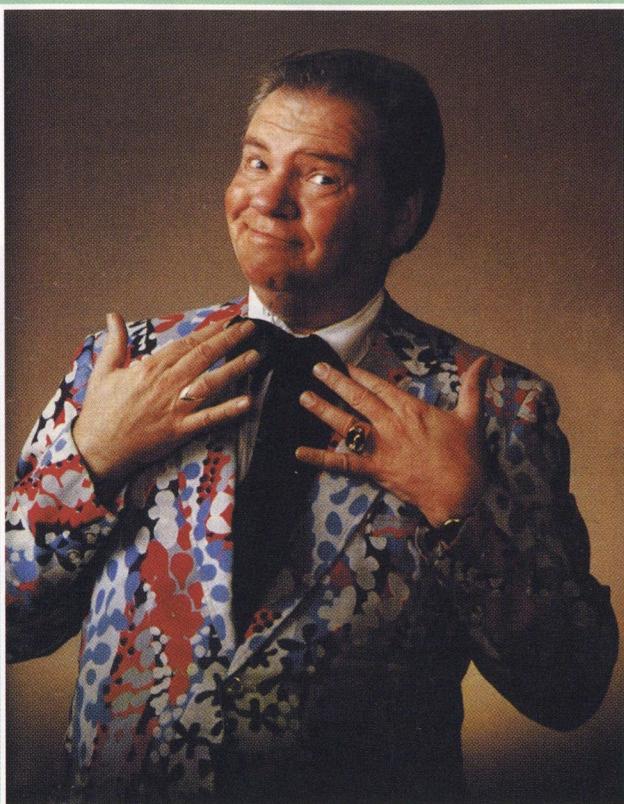
By age ten, he had talked his parents into driving him from his hometown in West Virginia to Colon, Michigan, location of Abbott's annual Get-Togethers. It could be said that this early visit was the spark for Karrell's lifelong love affair with conventions.

Karrell went on to take his magic to greater heights, capitalizing on his remarkable talents and abilities, he created a brand of magic that was fun and entertaining, highly commercial, and as result, financially rewarding. Yet, as busy as he was, working auto shows, industrials, and corporate dates, Fox always found time to attend numerous magic conventions, and rarely missed an Abbott's Get-Together.

"I'll continue to be at as many conventions as I can," Karrell stated, the year he was International President of the IBM. "They're the best place on earth to see new things, learn from the best, and experience the fellowship of other lovers of magic." Karrell was the one who often brought those "new things," shared and taught them to all, and enjoyed every waking hour of the convention.

At conventions, Karrell was King... the king who came not to hold court, but to perform, profess, and parody the art he loved most. His generosity and affection for magic and magicians was boundless, until the very day he died... at a magic convention.

PHOTO: STEVENS MAGIC EMPORIUM



Jack Gwynne (1897-1969)

Jack Gwynne achieved esteem in American stage magic by virtue of his excellence and innovation, as well as through his innate understanding of the changing demands of show business.

By 1927, Gwynne & Company were playing major theaters across the nation. When vaudeville vanished, he reshaped his stage show to tour the flourishing night club circuits of the 1930s. New illusions were created to be performed while completely surrounded by audiences. In the '40's Gwynne continued to streamline, and his spectacular show could practically play any venue. During World War II, he was commissioned to produce a military-sponsored magic revue. Jack and his wife Anne were made Army Air Corps captains, and trouped through India, China, Persia, Tibet, Burma, Egypt, North Africa, and Italy.

Having already made television appearances as early as 1948, Jack foresaw the potential of the emerging entertainment medium. Once again, he tailored his magic to fit the times, and by the early '50s had created his own TV niche. As the featured side-show illusionist on ABC's *Super Circus* series, Jack established himself as one of the true pioneers of magic as seen on TV.

All his life, he was a trendsetter. When Jack Gwynne and his "Royal Family of Magic" took their craft beyond the proscenium of the theater, they added new dimensions to the art.



PHOTO COURTESY DAVID CHARVET

Next month, "The Century" continues...

A performer who claimed his mind reading was merely mental magic, illusionists who have made the classics avant-garde, and one of the great marketers of magic.