



The

ROSE BYTER

Apple Blossom Computer Club
A registered Apple/Macintosh User Group

Jul '10
still only
\$2.00

Next Meeting

July 15, 7 PM
American Legion Hall
406 SE Oak Ave

Agenda

1. Meeting starts at 7 P.M.
2. Intro's of members and guests
3. Old business
4. New biz
5. Program: [Ed: still beats me!]
6. Questions & (maybe)Answers

FBI looks at AT&T iPad security breach

(AP) -- The FBI is investigating a data breach at AT&T that exposed the e-mail addresses of more than 114,000 owners of the Apple iPad, including government officials. AT&T Inc. said it has no comment. Apple has not commented on the breach, referring all questions to AT&T. The Dallas-based phone company acknowledged Wednesday that it had exposed the e-mail addresses through a Web site, and had closed the breach.

The vulnerability only affected iPad users who signed up for AT&T's "3G" wireless Internet service. An AT&T Web site could be tricked into revealing an iPad owner's e-mail address when supplied with a code associated with their particular iPad. A hacker group that calls itself Goatse Security said it got the site to cough up more than 114,000 e-mail addresses by guessing which codes would be valid.

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Robert Ripley and Me

by Dave Archer <dave@davearcher.com>



American painter, Dave Archer creates painting on glass by spreading the paint with 1.5 million volts of electricity instead of a paintbrush!

Retreaters can be lonely in crowds. Some of us learn the difference between loneliness, and being alone.

Somehow, I understood this in high school, in the art department on the second floor, absorbed in painting, every lunch hour like some crag-dwelling monk, wet-taping "stretched" watercolor paper onto boards for painting.

From time to time I would turn to the window to observe my classmates eating sack lunches on the grass below, trading sandwiches, horse-playing, laughing. Never though, looking down on them because I was an artist and thought that made me "cooler." Only because painting is a discipline that

takes "alone" time to get good at. Actually, I wanted to be with them on the lawn. A calling was moving in me, one I simply had to follow. Sometimes I claim classic loner status, joking about being a hermit. I had good friends in high school and we did a lot together. "Alone," was simply a condition of the painter's craft, and it was as if I came into the world knowing this.

One day our junior high art teacher, her back to the class, and sadly, a woman whose name I cannot remember, was using a standard color-wheel to explain color theory, when she said, "Yellow is a bad color."

With a life of it's own my hand flew up while I fairly yelled, "WHY!"

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The **Apple Blossom Computer Club** (ABCC) is an Apple Computer Inc., registered Macintosh and Apple][family user group. The ABCC publishes *The RoseByter* newsletter monthly which is posted to each paid up member and reciprocating user groups. ABCC participates in user group newsletter content exchange. The ABCC also maintains a WWW site at:

<http://www.abccmug.org>

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<-1 Robert Ripley and Me

She whipped around, pointed me out and yelled, "WATCH DAVID! HE'S AN ARTIST!" Classmates turned toward me. To this day I carry a psychic photograph of those student faces, a mixture of curiosity shaded toward wonder. She confirmed in me that day, something I already "knew," yet could not speak.

Artists are like shadowy pearls growing beneath the cultural tongue, eavesdropping on the so-called "normal" world with impunity, using keen observation as a tool amongst our art supplies. My great teacher, Phil Paradise taught me, "Artists are spies, voyeurs. We see how people stand, interact, how they eat, celebrate, run, dance, play, and what they wear, and how it hangs on their form, and we express that in our art."

Looking over my drawings of local folks one day, Paradise said, (I paraphrase freely; however. this is close), "There is a Grand Canyon of difference between 'looking' and 'seeing'. Most people look and simply do not see. A trained artist sees. You are learning to see, David; training your eye like a hunter piercing vegetation for game, seeing through trees and undergrowth. A visual artist with no trained eye is not much of an artist. Think of it. Professional dancers, athletes, musicians, singers, jugglers, high-wire walkers, even horses and dogs are trained. Becoming a trained artist requires jumping from looking into seeing, and the only way that comes is seeing and marking, and seeing and marking, every day for years. Once you have that, you can paint anything you want; abstract even, that's up to you, but without a trained eye even abstract paintings mostly fail. All of the abstract painters, the famous ones, had highly trained eyes first, even Jackson Pollock, then they did as they pleased. Picasso was a fine draftsman for years, with an eye gained from intense drawing from life, way before he ever painted abstract

women."

With that Phil went to his bookshelf and showed me early Picasso works, fine drawings of circus folk and animals, filled with life in every line. Also etchings of bullfights that were stunning in accuracy, yet "loose" in line, fairly trumpeting: Pasodoble! Thank you Phil Paradise. May you paint with angels.

I graduated high school with a scholarship to study with Phil in his studio. Truly, Master Class for an 18 year old. Paradise was a founding member of what is known today, as The California Watercolor School. A superb draftsman with a trained eye the size of a beach-ball, I lived in artistic awe of the man. Then, tragedy struck. I had barely begun work in Cambria, thirty miles to the coast from San Luis Obispo, when Dad passed away. I left immediately for the funeral, spending some days after with heartbroken family members, until Mom encouraged my return, where Paradise offered a strong shoulder to grieve on, while gently, firmly, guiding me on.

One of the many books I read around age eleven, stunned me to the core. It was about an abused boy named Toby Tyler who ran away and joined a circus. Abused there too, Toby runs again, taking along, yes, an abused and somewhat elderly monkey. At 61 I found the book on Amazon and picked up another copy to make sure my memories were accurate. They were anything but. The day I hit, "Buy Now With 1-Click" I certainly did not expect to end up weeping like a kid again. Originally published in 1897 and never out of print, the ending, which I had completely repressed, had broken my heart back then. It nearly did again. While Toby and Mr. Stubbs are hiding in the woods, his loving friend climbs a tree and is shot by a hunter, by mistake. At age 68 I actually wept again, then spiked into anger, flashing back to boyhood, wanting to strike out at the hunter.

<-1 AT&T iPad

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's e-mail address was among those exposed, but the billionaire media mogul shrugged it off Thursday and said he didn't understand the fuss. "It shouldn't be pretty hard to figure out my e-mail address," Bloomberg said, "and if you send me an e-mail and I don't want to read it, I don't open it. To me it wasn't that big of a deal."

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In retrospect I can say this about author James Otis Kaler. If he thought he was teaching a boy to handle the “real world,” it backfired, especially in his sanctimonious evocation of the “Father to the fatherless” at the end, and how “they” would meet again in heaven. I’m an old man now. Why would a childhood story, the ending long forgotten, hit me so hard in a La-Z-Boy chair in Roseburg?

I pondered the question for days until I remembered just how engulfing the circus had actually been to me in the 1940’s and early ’50’s. Once a year, at times, Ringling Brothers, most often, Clyde Beatty, would raise their Big Top in a field on the edge of town. The entire experience, from seeing the first posters around town, to arriving at the field, Dad finding parking, then our family hiking towards the tents and outrageous painted sideshow banners, the music, and smells of elephant dung mixed with cotton candy and red hots overwhelmed my senses. I wanted to be in the circus to travel with the show.

(Note from Dale) You were too young (I was probably 10 or 11) to work at the circus the year that cousin Rick and I did. We got recruited by one of the circus guys while we were watching them set up. We each got a free ticket for working. Rick got a cushy job holding a pole up while someone drove stakes, but I had to crawl around under the canvass of the big top, all the way around the tent, and got absolutely filthy. The crowning thing I remember of our day working for the circus, was we were all standing behind an alfalfa fed elephant, that was harnessed up and set to raise the canvass of the big top up to the peak of the center pole. When the elephant leaned into the harness, it passed gas in what can only be described as an elephant sized fart, which splattered about 30 little boys in the face with particles of semi-digested plant matter ... green. Ah yes, right there in one

blast I was cured forever from wanting to run away and join the circus.

Not much later in life, Kerouac’s “On The Road,” would take me to San Francisco’s North Beach. Talk about a circus. Our midway was Broadway and Columbus Avenue. We had “Big” Davy Rosenburg, fat-man originator of the Topless, snake charmers, magicians, singers like Johnny Mathis just making their start. Steve Martin with his first ten minutes of standup. I was there “working” with Martin as doorman of Coffee and Confusion the first night he put an arrow on his head, then looked at the audience and said, “Now, let’s get serious.” We had Carol Doda with tuxedo midget Homy Stewart dancing between her legs as she descended from the ceiling on a grand piano at the Condor. Woody Allen at the Hungry I, a block away. Not to mention Damon Runyon characters galore, bookies and other assorted scoundrels. When I was “bar-boy” at Big Al’s, a “professional” safe cracker would set up the entire club with round after round of drinks every time he scored big. Janis Joplin was a good friend. Another, Tim Hardin wrote, “If I Were A Carpenter.” We had roustabout bouncers at Big Al’s who not only threw guys out the door, they beat them with hickory ax handles. On the crowded sidewalk out front, passing Beat poets shouted air-poems at the moon. Wilt “the Stilt” Chamberlain, Joltin’ Joe Dimaggio came in every night to Big Al’s. On New Year’s Eve, idiots would throw M-80’s with tacks and nails glued to them at us doormen. Full moon nights in summer were madness. Working clubs, the cops were on our side. Just up the street however, working door for Coffee and Confusion, they were against us Beats with a vengeance, making occasional sweeps of Upper Grant Avenue, cracking heads with nightsticks just for the fun of it. When a Greyline tour bus came by to see “the Beatniks,” we mooned them or worse, which no doubt had something to do with the attitude cops held for “Beatniks,” as

they called us.

Working with Big Al was amazing. We delivered the “biggest hero sandwich in the world” to Union Square and (now trivia question) Fabian sang. Remember Fabian? Tara the snake charmer gave her black snake half a bennie and won the St. Patrick’s Day Snake Race when her entry flew down the slot like an arrow from a crossbow. We sent Batwoman’s bra off her chest tied to a weather balloon from the Coit Tower parking lot and every TV station and newspaper covered it, so to speak. Fifty tourists gathered, mouths agape, and Bronx girlie, Gina (Batwoman) Valentina, flashed them good, snapping, “What’s you’s all starin’ at. Ain’t cha neva seen tits before?”

In old circus days the big shows hired and fired a lot of “roustabouts,” as they moved around the country. New hires were given an embroidered patch to wear reading, “With It” so circus folk knew who was with the show. I worked the North Beach circus for ten years – my twenties. I was “With it,” inside, backstage with showgirls while they got into their massive wigs and sparkling costumes. I helped Big Al’s manager Tom Yates create insanely funny dances such as, “Bonnie and Clyde’s Naked Dance of Love.” We didn’t yell, “Hey Rube!” for help, the old circus call, but we had each other’s backs with saps and clubs. Working door on New Years we carried loose table salt in one pocket, a primitive form of “pepper spray.” A handful in the eyes was both cheap and effective. While the guy was bent double yarping like a sea lion, a flashlight to the back of the head was often all it took. At Big Al’s, if any doorman yelled, “knife!,” five mobsters would take the guy out with ax handles, and I mean, OUT, and the cops would say, “ya shoulda’ hit him harder.”

Anyone who has ever gotten to know me over any length of time has eventually turned to me and said, “you know David, you’re not like other

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How do you take your polyphenols? Sounds a bit like chewing on plastic. But recently some research is showing profound inhibition of cancer tumor growth as a function of polyphenol ingestion, so it may not be all bad. Take into account that red wine and green tea are nominally the means of such ingestion and it doesn't seem too terrible. I guess it's better to be plastered than plasticized, and soaked in green tea. I have to wonder whether we might be better off with the whole tea leaf instead of simply steeping it. Maybe it would go well in a sort of pesto-ish sauce? Probably beats tossing old squirt guns in a blender.

If you're one of those people who just can't get through life without Microsoft Office, you'll apparently have to wait for a 2011 version to get one that works on Mac OS X or put up with MOFm 2008. But, **if you're a Windows 7 user, the long pre-orderable Microsoft Office 2010 is now sitting on at least some shelves.** I suspect that those of us who've been comfortable without MS Office for quite some time, will start noticing the usual spate of mindlessly transmitted documents from people who don't even bother to think about the fact that not everyone on the planet uses the very latest MS Office. That misery will, I suspect, cause more and more people to consider banning that particular proprietary "standard" from their operation. Sadly, that's not a really great solution to the problem of being able to freely interchange documents amongst operating systems. Once upon a time, PDF was considered to be such an animal, though it was only free for the receiver. These days, PDF has so many incompatible variants, it's essentially ash-canned it's value. Admittedly, a catch-all format for data interchange is not a trivial thing to create, much less promote into general use. Were it not for the main difficulty in such promotion, I'd recommend trying to teach people what

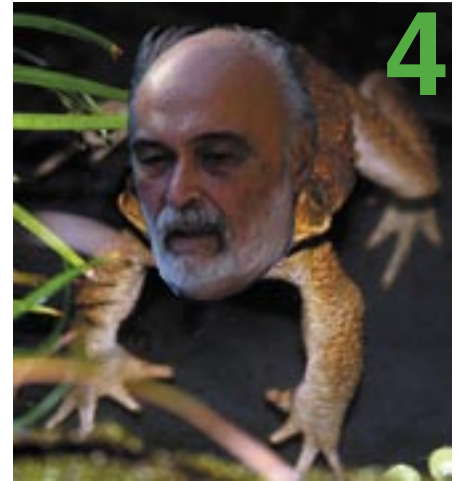
Croak of the MUGwump

Any trace of organization in these paragraphs is entirely coincidental

makes sense to do when exchanging data with others. But long experience indicates that to be a hopeless cause, so I don't try any longer.

Oy! Speaking of Micro\$hapht Awface ... It seems there's a bit of angst in Redmond that people might not care to follow the herd so much as they used to. For example, **they've decided that Word non-up-graders can point their browsers at <http://www.microsoft.com/mac/downloads.msp>** and get a copy of Open XML File Format Converter. To quote the web page as I found it: "Open XML Converter allows you to convert Open XML files that were created in Office 2008 for Mac or Office 2007 for Windows so that you can open, edit, and save them in earlier versions of Office for Mac. Open XML Converter can convert Word documents, Excel workbooks, and PowerPoint presentations ..." This also means that you can open the results in earlier versions of other programs as well. I find it mildly interesting that, so far, it doesn't have much to say about Office 2010 documents. Not surprising really – after all, if they don't have something proprietary to hang their hats on, what do they have?

I occasionally find it expedient to buy something at Staples. As a result, **I get daily emails and frequent snail mail from Staples.** While the email probably doesn't cost all that much to send, it's basically a web page offering discounts on whatever



muck they've decided to push that day – so it represents some considerable cost just to create and support. The snail mail generally consists of a sheet of plastic with a detachable discount card. I doubt these are dirt cheap to make compared to a post card and, of course, require paying for bulk rate postage at the least. Sometimes I wonder what their business could be if they didn't spend all the money they do now on such marketing.

Does it bother anyone else that all of a sudden you can buy any number of 3D TVs? Before the advent of the movie Avatar, I don't recall anyone seriously attempting to market at the general public anything that could be construed as a 3D TV. There a number of very good reasons for this, not the least of which are technical. It's not that it's particularly difficult to produce something that can create illusions of depth in viewing a planar display. Indeed, there are numerous techniques for doing it. I guess that makes the problem less technical than political – we've endured a number of these bouts amongst the Deep Pockets, perhaps the prototype being the war between BETA and VHS video tape. If you think you want a **3D TV, I'd suggest not being in a hurry.** This battle is just starting and shots being fired have hit few targets so far. That, and there are potential health issues that have yet to be explored, much less resolved, in at least some of the techniques.

This URL, <http://news.> 5 -->

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cnet.com/8301-13578_3-20007418-38.html, was recently brought to my attention. I urge you to take a look at it. In it you'll find a link, http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=4ee63497-ca5b-4a4b-9bba-04b7f4cb0123 to download a PDF of the proposed bill. Age is supposed to bring one some knowledge and wisdom. Sadly, when it comes to technology, we seem to have a majority of legislators who not only do not understand it but are terrified by that lack of knowledge. The minds behind this amendment to the "Homeland Security Act of 2002 and other laws" are operating under the same delusions that got us into Iraq. I'd very much like to amend "Homeland Security Act of 2002" by eliminating it altogether. Those of us who are scared out of our wits by world events seem to expect that spending a lot of money on bureaucrats is going to magically make us safe, especially if they're given Gestapo-esque powers. **Here we are, again, usurping more of the freedoms we've taken for granted in the name of "security."** IMHO, one of the primary reasons for much of this is the idiot insistence on using Micro\$hapth's software to "standardize" computer operations despite the fact that they've routinely been compromised for decades. All of which points out that the real problem is not technology. The real problem is us.

The so-called "Smart Grid" is being touted as some sort of panacea for electric vehicles. The main reason I can see for that is marketing hype. For example: "Imagine several EV owners gathering at a meeting or a party, and during this time they want to charge their vehicles. The impact on the local transformer could be quite significant." Indeed. If you consider that a small car's tank full of gas repre-

sents about 300 KW and that a house typically has from 50 KW to 100 KW connection to the present "grid," that better be a really long meeting/party. While I'm certain the power company executives are just slobbering all over themselves in anticipation of a massive demand – you remember supply and demand, right – when demand outpaces supply, the price goes up. We are in a deeper fix than we realize. **There is not enough energy readily available for the population of the world to squander in the manner to which Americans have become accustomed.** Even if there were, expending it wantonly will simply add more and more heat to our environment. Despite the Sun pumping in roughly 131 petawatts, which tends to swamp other contributions, one should realize that a status quo depends on the balance between energy in and energy out. Our activities upset that balance.

Net neutrality is a hot topic. On the one hand, you have a lot of people who believe that the corporations that have come to own the major data exchanges and networks comprising the Internet in this country (and many others, for that matter), should be allowed to do whatever they care to. On the other hand there are people who, for reasons that should hardly need any explanation, expect those corporations to stifle things now done freely to increase their revenue. Since the latter perspective is obviously correct, the former position simply is a reflection that **there's no such thing as "enough" in the American dream.**

I've been puzzled for quite some time by the truly extreme efforts the electronics industry is making to rid itself of the use of lead. It's not that the manufacturers and engineers would not prefer to use lead. Rather, their is a regulatory fervor to eliminate such a hazardous material from our environment. That very notion bothers me.

It's not that I believe lead is harmless. Quite the opposite. However, its toxicity simply cannot be as bad as the fuss over it might cause one to believe. I handled plenty of lead. Perhaps, you'd argue that is why I've got health problems now. I doubt it, if for no other reason than having known numerous people who have been exposed to lead more heavily and far longer than me. Besides, the lead in electronics is largely well insulated from contact with humans ... or most anything else, for that matter. Now I see where **they've developed something to avoid the use of PZT – Lead Zirconate Titanate, a piezoelectric ceramic – to avoid the lead.** Frankly, this is simply asinine. The lead in PZT is chemically bound, not simply stirred in so it can leach out. It's essentially a rock. PZT will probably retain its lead better than the naturally occurring rocks from which lead is refined.

There is suddenly an issue about permitting drones to fly in American airspace. Interesting to me is that **this didn't seem to be a problem until someone asked the FAA for permission** to do it. Up 'til now, people have been flying drones in American airspace without much fuss. Judging from the considerations I've seen in print, these unsanctioned drones would include things like model airplanes.

"Last year the U.S. underwent, with some hiccups, a transition to digital television. Cable and satellite providers acquired some new customers and some people who got snowy pictures with analog antennas got better pictures with digital antennas, once they figured how to work the products." Talk about soft-pedaling the issues! The only people I can think of who would have gotten better pictures digitally when the analog signals came out snowy are people who had their analog antennas pointed in the

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wrong place to start with. **Broadcast digital TV is great ... if you're able to get a strong enough signal.** But if your signal is marginal, it worse than nothing. At least analog broadcast TV was intelligible with fair less signal strength. This is one more case of big business taking advantage of collusive regulators.

Whilst on the subject of big biz and its regulators, "Tim Doyle of SNL Kagan has asked the FCC to look into SpectrumCo, the cable joint venture of Time Warner Cable, Cox, Bright House and Comcast that holds 137 still dormant spectrum licenses." Just in case you don't understand what that means, it's about **one big fish buying up the right to use broadcasting ability and then sitting on it to stifle competition.** This was done by the federal government using the FCC. Result: a few billion dollars.

Recall that bill giving DHS gestapo-esque power over the Internet? Well, you can download the actual text of the bill. It's in the form of a PDF file. However, its content is nothing but text (well, to be honest, I didn't peruse the whole thing so there might be something else in it but cursory examination didn't make that seem likely). So, why put a text file into PDF format? Well, there are some minor font changes and some paragraph indents – hardly the stuff requiring PDFs.

But that's not all folks. Nope. **You can't open this PDF in older versions of either Preview or Acrobat Reader.** Sheesh ...

Micro\$hapht may have managed to get some botnet(s) shut down but certainly not all of them by a long way. I noticed today that my gateway has been attacked in a different way from what I've seen previously, It's not uncommon to see a script on some computer bombarding a port with lots of attempts to log in with some list

of IDs. But **these latest attacks must be coming from a botnet** or a very well rehearsed, scattered group of crackers. They are characterized by having only a few seconds from event to event and no more than two events are from the same IP address. These addresses are scattered all over the globe.

Soon your underwear may be tattling on you. Joseph Wang and colleagues at the University of California San Diego, have developed a method for printing biosensors directly onto clothing. To form the sensors, Wang screen-printed carbon electrode arrays directly onto the elastic bands of men's underwear. The tight contact and direct exposure to the skin allows monitoring hydrogen peroxide and the enzyme NADH, both of which are associated with numerous biomedical processes. Stretching and folding of everyday wear, does not affect the performance of the sensor. Such durability should enable many future applications such as enzyme sensors for ethanol and lactate. So, if you get pulled over under suspicion of DUI, no more walking the straight line. Instead, they'll just give you a wedgie and look at the rings on your underwear.

Well, once again, the mice are getting the advantage of a new cancer therapy. Micrometer sized bubbles are currently used in medical imaging as a contrast enhancement technology. It turns out that such bubbles can be selectively burst by application of the appropriate ultrasound. This means that the bubbles can be set adrift in the bloodstream and then burst at a specific place in the body. So far, no big deal. But if you put some very toxic chemicals in the bubbles, then **you can burst those chemicals right on a tumor.** In the end, the actual chemo load on the patient should be lower and the toxicity to the tumor should be much higher than it would be if the chemo had been supplied by general infusion.

It seems that "carbon storage" is thought to be some sort of answer the problem of what should be done about all the CO2 we generate. No end of energy intensive, expensive means are being studied. I have a suggestion. Let's stop planting asphalt and concrete all over creation and start planting trees and their kin. Not only are they very good at sequestering CO2, they produce O2 in the process and a number of other byproducts we generally find quite useful. Further let's ignore the numbskulls who think that we need to manufacture all kinds of chemicals to "aid" in the activity. **Wishful thinking ...**

By stimulating certain areas of the brain, the effects of disorders such as depression or Parkinson's disease can be alleviated. A Tel Aviv University team is working on human behavior, neurophysiology and engineering **a chip to wire computer applications and sensors to the brain,** providing stimulation precisely where and when it's needed. There are a number of ways should a system can be used. Faulty brain circuitry might be substituted for or the stimulation may help develop areas of the brain that have damaged or the brain could be directly interfaced to transducers, ie. the equivalent of eyes, ears, nose, etc. I have to wonder how far this sort of thing will be taken. Clearly, wholesale mind control is not out of the question. And if the stimulation effect of growing new brain tissue works out, whole new sorts of brain activity might be engineered.



Make a difference!

**Come to the next
ABCC meeting and
participate.**

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<-3 Robert Ripley and Me

people.” Fine. Artists are weird. We have our own army though, just in separate studios. And it’s best really, that we stay there making art. We can be hell on, the night.

As a boy I constructed mysterious illusions, becoming proficient in slight of hand, at least around the house. I longed to be a stage magician like Thurston or Carter the Great. In years to come, much to Dad’s penny-pinching frustration, I would spend every cent of paper route money I ever made on illusions and magic books. One could choose a card, “any card,” replace it anywhere in my deck, then I would hang the pack from a hangman’s noose on a stand I constructed, intone the magic word, tap the deck with my wand and all the cards would fall to the floor, except of course, theirs. I could make eggs float in the air of our living room, causing our long time family friend, Barbara “B.J.” Jennings to go mad with curiosity. B.J. would pay me for the secrets. Once, as soon as she ponied up, I put the coin she just gave me, (fifty cents) on the palm of my hand, passed my other hand over it, and, “PRESTO CHANGO!” it became a perfect fifty cent piece smaller than a pea. I drove the woman nuts, sometimes unwilling to take her bribes until her next visit, usually the next night because she simply had to know. She would even call Mom, her best friend, to see if she would tell her.

The dream of eventually touring with a big-rig full of stage illusions, crashed in ruin however, the first, and LAST, time I ever performed slight of hand for a large audience, for the combined junior high school classes, also known as, “The Rainy Day Talent Show.” I enlisted the help of two school chums to carry my table laden with illusions on “stage,” to the center, a curtainless affair at one end of the school

7 cafeteria. Before the show I had stuffed my hands full of multicolored scarves — magi-

cal lore 101: silk scarves, compacted tightly into a fist, then suddenly released, fly into the air with a grand flourish. I had performed the showy feat hundreds of times.

Reaching “center stage,” my chums paused for one, excruciating, pubescent Moment, then dropped one end six inches, knocking nearly every trick onto the floor — glass shattering, illusions bouncing, some into the audience.

“Hey, I see how he does this one, look!”

Attempting to save the unsavable, I stepped front and center for a grand silk flourish. Now, before the performance, using my seasoned middle magic finger for stuffing, I had pushed an extra scarf into each fist, for at least seven, then clinched tightly, waiting my turn, while nervous sweat unknowingly saturated the scarves. So of course, evoking, “Abracadabra!,” instead of flying into the air, the lumpen silks only moved a bit on the palms of my hands, not unlike brightly colored hamsters. Ah yes, dying hamsters, crawling over the edges of my flat palms, falling to the floor along with the rest of my show, splat, flop, splat, flop, flop.

Talk about a disillusioned illusionist.

In boyhood, Mandrake the Magician was my favorite comic strip. When he “gestured hypnotically,” the bad guys floated into the air upside down, their pistols useless. I figured there must be real magic, obsessing over it. The world was too weird not to have it. Words like, ancient lore, spells, fortune telling, hypnosis, strange but true, oracle, omen, voodoo, mystic seer, amulet, charm, hex, jinx and curse were simply intoxicating to me. I became fascinated by hypnosis. Aunt Leona warned me that hypnosis was from Satan, which made it all the more intriguing.

I joined the “The Boy’s Adventure Book Club,” as well as passionately

reading library books on strange customs around the world, never tiring of searching hundreds of books, pulling them out of library shelves at random. Any odd title caught my eye. Countless afternoons were spent in the wandering the shelves like Robert Ripley looking for “lost” tribes. Later, when I ran out of books in the Public Library I began sneaking into the stacks at the California Polytechnic State University, a short bike trip.

One of the joys of my life was a Sunday morning in the 90’s when a friend called from Palm Beach, Florida, to say, “I hope you got the paper today because you’re in Ripley’s Believe It Or Not.” I ran to the newsstand and there I was looking for all the world like Geppetto, from Disney’s Pinocchio. Talk about “making my day.” For me, that goofy cartoon still ranks as my all time highest career achievement, topping even Star Trek and a one-man show at the world headquarters of AT&T on Madison Avenue in New York City.

By age fourteen in 1953 I knew the step by step procedure used by Jivaro Indians for shrinking human heads, the finer points of bullfighting, and the legend of the Lost Dutchman’s mine in the Superstition Mountains. I could describe the mating of sperm whales. Or hold forth on the Native American Sun Dance. I’d read in Danish explorer, Peter Freuchen’s famous book on Eskimos, that igloo dwelling women washed their hair in urine, while the men used the penis bones of walrus’ to bludgeon sea-lions to death. I knew the Masai diet consisted largely of cow’s blood mixed with milk. I’d read the lives of Harry Houdini, Blackstone, Carter the Great and other stage magicians. Our boyhood room was decorated with Pygmy arrows, boa constrictor skins, California arrow heads, mineral specimens, and African carvings. Dale picked up a replica of a human skull and sent it to me from Japan when he was in the Navy. A huge hit there I’ll tell you.

In high school I wore blue

<-7 Robert Ripley and Me

swede shoes and narrow white belt to “fit in” as best I could. On dates I wore a skinny tie (barely wide enough to cover my shirt buttons) and used Dixie Peach hair pomade, “For Especially Kinky Hair” (how true) on my flattop. If anyone “stepped on my blue swede shoes,” no bother. A little foam rubber scuff-tool that came with the shoes fixed that.

Looking back, the 1950’s seem like a mad dream. Lying in bed staring at the red ceiling of my bedroom, (Dad painted the ceiling red) awake late into the night, conjecturing on a life of crime. I wanted to be a great magician or a jewel thief, or both. I still love robbery movies. Everyone goes to prison though, or dies. What to do. What to do. Dale was attracted to the military. I was repelled.

Perhaps repulsion came from seeing our uncle Sid shortly after his return from World War II, getting a lecture from Dad in our living room at 644 Mountain View Street. Sid had gone

out drinking the night before and a couple of soldiers had worked him over with brass knuckles. His face was a misshapen hunk of bruised flesh, all stitched together in places. The injured man sitting in our living room that morning, did not look at all like our uncle Sid. With the war over, as so many others, Sid’s personal war was just beginning.

Sid brought us kids souvenirs, sea shells from the beach on Iwo Jima, bullet casings and other military stuff. He also showed us a photograph of a native man holding a machete in one hand and the head of Japanese sniper in the other, holding it by the hair. Sid explained how GI’s paid cash for each enemy head brought in.

My uncle married and fathered two children. He’d become alcoholic during the war and eventually lost everything due to violent drinking episodes. I cringe to remember the day he threw the family TV through the front picture window of their home. Eventually our uncle became a hobo and

was found dead in a freight yard in Coos Bay, either the victim of murder or falling from a train and hitting his head on a rail.

In the 1940’s our personal sense of being “at war” was real. Our family friend “Pappy” Todd, a telephone lineman, reported a Japanese submarine off Shell Beach, only seven miles from town. According to Pappy, as the fog closed in, aircraft arrived and started dropping depth charges. Dale says now, the story may have been fashioned of “whole cloth.” For us then, it added to the fever. Around the same time Santa Barbara was shelled (and missed) by Japanese submarines. There was also an active civilian war effort. Even as children we felt united in something larger. Food was purchased with ration stamps. For emergencies, my parents kept a ten gallon clay jar full of many dozens of pickled eggs in the back of the closet. The sense of fighting a common enemy hung in the air almost as strong as the sulfurous reek that rose from the jar when we kids dared lift the lid for a little gross out fun.

Tune in again next week when TRB radio will bring you the next exciting episode!

Transition: From the MUG Store to PowerMax.com

PowerMax.com, the engine behind The Apple MUG Store, is pleased to announce a new process for Apple user group members. Instead of going to www.applemugstore.com to view a limited selection of items, members can now go directly to www.powermax.com to peruse and purchase (rewrap) almost 50,000 products. By identifying the user group you belong to (either on an online order or over the phone), PowerMax will continue to accumulate points for your user group to use.

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