

Magic!



By Kathy O'Connell
Battalion Staff

Magic means different things to different people, but to Shawn Messonier, it's not a lot of hocus pocus. Messonier, who prefers to be known as Shaun Patrick when performing, got started in magic as a child.

"Initially I'd gotten a magic set for Christmas, like when I was six or seven," Patrick said. "Then, like all kids, you play with it and then throw it away. "Then when I was 14, TV Magic came on TV again. I saw one of the commercials (for the magic kit) and went down and got it. In the little kit there's 15 little affects (tricks) and a catalog. You can send out to this company to buy more tricks. And I did that."

Patrick has been performing magic for about five years. "I'm what you call a semi-professional," he said. "I make money from it but it's less than 50 percent of my income." He has performed on various TV shows, including a program in Houston called Midday, which is now off the air.

Magicians, he said, prefer to use the word "affects" instead of "tricks." As a matter of fact, Patrick said, magicians are trying to change people's attitudes towards magic. "So many people use the word 'tricks' and magicians are

getting upset at that because to magicians it's more than just a trick," he said. "You can call them what you want. I call a lot of them tricks. Doug Henning calls them illusions."

"I do mostly stage magic, which is where you're up on the stage doing bigger illusions, like levitation (raising an object in the air), or making an animal appear or disappear. "Then there's close-up magic where I would do something like cards or ropes, coins, money or whatever."

He said the kind of magic he performs depends on his audience. Over spring break he plans to perform at a nursing home. He said he wants to do something different. "I'm going to try to relate more to the audience—sit down and talk to them, instead of just doing affects and be away from them."

The sophomore animal science major said he doesn't like to show his magic to his peers, because they "try to screw me up." However, his suitmates last year were a good audience. He said he did one trick that had them totally baffled.

He had one disbelieving friend draw a card, write his name on it in green ink, remember the card face and give it back. Then he folded the card, flushed it down the toilet and threw the rest of the deck out the window. "I had them open the curtains

and outside, taped to the window was the card that was just flushed down the toilet. It was the same card he had just signed.

"They tried to figure out how I did it. One thought I never flushed it and one suggested I somehow vaporized out of the room."

Children don't always make the best audiences either, he said. "When they turn 12 years old, besides entering puberty, they start deciding that you're not Santa Claus. They're not going to believe that you can do anything."

Patrick said he doesn't like to use "trick decks" because people like to touch and play with everything.

"The thing that people don't figure out is that if I let them examine them, it's not going to be a gimmick. If you use a trick deck there's not much illusion. If you do something with a borrowed deck—that's real magic."

As for what magic really is, it's still a mystery to the viewer and can often be mind-boggling. However, to magicians like Patrick, it's a challenge as well as an art.

He insists he doesn't have extrasensory perception, but that's difficult to believe when he can ask someone questions, then predict and write down the answers. He may not be totally accurate, but he's close—uncannily close.

"It (magic) is doing something you don't normally perceive," Patrick said. "It's not ESP or mind-reading. If someone says they have ESP, you can do the same thing they do, except you use magic or trickery. So, it's hard to say who can do what."

"Your mind is trained to really jump ahead—to leave things out. If I start talking about the Civil War you may jump to already know who's going to win. With magic it's the same way."

"It's like misdirection—if I move a certain hand you're going to look in that direction." Patrick said he can do some of the same things Uri Geller does, only he uses magic. "Take faith-healers," he said. "You can believe in them or not. I usually don't, but they will take someone who has a complaint about a sore or a lump in their back. They'll rub the back and all of a sudden there'll be blood coming out and they'll get a little tumor and show it to the person."

"I can do the same thing using magic. I won't expose how it's done though."

Patrick said he's interested in doing Oriental magic, because he likes using fire, silk, flowers and a lot of color and flash.

"One way I describe my magic is that I may not be the best magician in the world, but you'll enjoy it because it's fresh—it's new. You won't see the same thing."

