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Finally, much of the credit for this book should go to the two men I consider my formal teachers in magic and, in particular, card handling.

Jack Birnman took me as a student in 1993. He taught me that you don’t have to color inside the lines. He had incredible talent, matched only by his kindness and patience. He is missed sorely by all who knew him.

Peter Galinskas was the top student of Frank Thompson, the late Baltimore card expert. Denny Haney introduced us in 1994. I spent the better part of the next two years with Peter. He showed me wonders I never would have believed—proof of the existence of miracles.

Aaron Fisher

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INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to Aaron Fisher by fellow magician Jamie Ian Swiss. Aaron proved to be a most engaging young man, whose proficiency with a pack of playing cards was quite remarkable. Of particular note was his flawless execution of what was one of the finest top-card cover passes I have ever had the pleasure to witness.

The pass is by far the most difficult of card sleights, and for this reason its use is almost nonexistent in modern-day card magic, most card experts of the latter half of the twentieth century opting for shuffling and cutting as a substitute. But no substitute can equal the magical impact of a well-executed pass. When properly performed, the pass can truly be invisible, and in Aaron’s hands it’s just that. So it is quite understandable that a great deal of the material in this book relates directly to his work on the pass.

Aaron’s technique for his pass of choice, the half pass, is unique, well described, and its many uses well defined. His use of the half pass as a solution for the last card of the four-card diminishing lift sequence is superb and it could well be the method of choice for most card handlers. I was most impressed with his bluff pass replacement subtlety, a subtlety that I immediately added to my arsenal of sleights upon seeing it. Aaron’s outjogged Herrmann pass, although different, is reminiscent of Howie Schwarzman’s handling of the spread pass. The undercover switch is a wonderful variation and improvement of Dai Vernon’s strip-out addition and Aaron’s palm replacement, decking the top, is well explained and executed under the natural cover of raising the deck to one’s fingertips.

I was particularly delighted with Aaron’s following a technique or move with a trick or routine that utilized said move or technique. This is the same type of thinking that made Hugard and Braue’s Royal Road to Card Magic such a great teaching success. After all, the best of moves is meaningless without a use.

The material in this book is top notch, and I guarantee it will enhance the repertoire of any serious student of card magic immensely.

John Thompson
Atlantic City, June, 2002
PREFACE

In recent years there has been a movement among magic authors to more closely align the art of magic with its often forgotten parent, the theater. To this end, we have been encouraged to script presentations and study acting and rehearse in the manner of more traditional theatrical artists. The authors have even shown how theatrical studies teach the student to better block, or position, his sleights within his effects. Thus, as his technique is used in harmony with the dictates of good theater, his technique is improved.

However, the application of theatrical principles can be taken a step further. The theatrical discipline need not only inform the timing and application of technique, but also its structural design, right down to the joint of a finger. The magician who blocks his sleights perfectly into his magic, but uses poorly designed sleights, will find the two layers of construction working against each other. His beautiful building stands atop a poor foundation, and will pay a price. The opposite also follows. When a magician not only executes his sleights well, but designs them properly in the first place, his tower will rise solidly on its foundation. When this harmony is present, good sleight-of-hand can flourish.

To that end, this book attempts to define an aesthetic approach to technique, at its most fundamental level. This approach is a marriage of the classical technique taught by Vernon and the other masters, only viewed specifically through the lens of theater. Many good techniques are described and discussed. These techniques are angle-efficient, invisible, and often of wide utility. Also included are some techniques of a less practical nature. They offer interesting ideas, but are best used as theoretical examples. The academic is not trivial, but integral, when placed next to the practical. The academic informs the practical.

Aaron Fisher

Los Angeles, March 2002
Technique
THE GRAVITY HALF PASS

Half passes, to be deceptive, generally require a covering action, such as the all-around square-up used for the Christ twist or the turning over of the pack during the Krenzel mechanical reverse. The gravity half pass requires no covering action other than raising the deck to the fingertips. The cards appear to stay squared throughout the sleight, with no tip-offs that anything has occurred. Furthermore, this sleight is completely angle-proof.

The half pass is often used to reverse half the deck, but in this description the entire deck, excepting the top card (referred to as the cover card), will be reversed. It may seem contrary to reason, but the more cards reversed, the easier the sleight. The actions, though, are the same whether reversing one card or fifty-one.

The foundation of the gravity half pass is the grip. The sleight will not be effective unless your finger positions are precise. Stand with the deck in your left hand in a deep mechanics’ grip at about waist level. A light touch and a relaxed grip are important. Place your thumb along the left side and tilt the right side of the deck down at a forty-five-degree angle (Photo 1, spectators’ view).

Obtain a fourth-finger break under the top card. With your right hand, grasp the pack from above. Your right thumb joint contacts the cover card near the inner left corner, while the right second finger holds the card near the outer left corner at the middle joint. The first finger remains curled on top of the pack and at no time during the sleight applies pressure anywhere (Photo 2). The outer right corner of deck is in the fork of your right little and ring fingers. The right third and fourth fingers hang over the front edge and appear to hold the deck, but they don’t touch any of the cards below the break. Your grip should be so light that, if you were holding a single card it would not bend even slightly. The right-hand grip will at first seem rather deep, but with practice it looks quite natural and
aids the illusion that the hand grasps the entire pack.

Pay careful attention to the relationship of the left thumb to the right thumb and second finger. The right thumb contacts the heel of the left thumb and the tip of the left thumb contacts the side of the right second finger at the middle joint. These two contact points are to be maintained throughout the secret actions to follow and will be released only as the pack is raised to the fingertips. Keeping these contact points will create something of an angle-proof wall along what would normally be the vulnerable left side of the half pass.

The sleight will now be broken down into three phases: the left-arm action, the right-arm action, and the optional, but recommended, covering action of raising the pack to the fingertips. Normally, descriptions of sleights reference hands, not arms. In this case, though, to talk of hands or fingers would be inaccurate, because the fingers and hands do not move, except as extensions of the arms.

The left-arm action: For practical purposes, consider your left arm a single unit from the forearm to the fingertips. The hand cradles the pack as a hammock cradles a person—that is, your fingers will move with the arm, but the fingers will not move independently. Take care, though, that thinking of your arm as a single unit doesn’t create tension in it. Stay loose. The arm is a single unit—not a stiff unit.

Slowly begin rotating your left forearm to the right. Your left thumb, which does not budge from its place along the left side of the deck, acts as the hinge or axis around which the movement happens. This action begins the rotation of the pack, and due to the forty-five-degree tilt, gravity will cause the deck to separate from the cover card and begin to turn over
The only visible change is that more of the left thumb comes into view as this action is carried out (Photo 4, spectators’ view). It is crucial that you do not curl your left fingers to initiate the movement of the pack. The left fingers are used only to support the deck as it turns over.

As this revolving action takes place, the positions of your left fingertips become important. The pack must be cradled with only the first phalanges of the left fingers extending over the right side of the pack. This is because the continued rotation of the left arm will eventually cause the deck to flip faceup; the left fingertips make the ledge over which the cards must flip. If the left fingertips extend too far above the right side of the deck, the ledge they create will be too high, and the left forearm will have to extend farther than is desirable to get the cards to flip over—and when they do, they will only spill onto the floor. Photo 5 shows the incorrect grip with the fingers extending too far. Keep your left forefinger planted behind and in constant contact with your right second finger. This tip (in connection with the classic pass) was given to Dai Vernon by anonymous gamblers and is related in Revelations.

Once the pack begins to revolve faceup, the action of the left arm should stop, its purpose completed. The moment the cards will trip over the left fingers can be anticipated, so don’t move your left arm any more than necessary.

The right-arm action: The end of the left-arm action signals the beginning of the right-arm action, which will be described in two parts: stopping the deck (as it is now revolving over the left fingers) and causing the two portions of the pack to coalesce.

Stop a moment to check the position of the card in your right hand. Photo 6 shows the right hand from below, the left hand and its cards omitted for clarity. Note how much unoccupied flesh
there is at the heel of the palm. This portion of the hand will now rescue the revolving deck.

As the pack revolves faceup, its upper edge will begin to clear the right edge of the cover card. When the pack clears the cover card entirely, move your right forearm, hand, and fingers as a unit, applying downward pressure. This action causes the flesh on the right side of the right palm to stop the movement of the pack when the outer right corner meets the fork of your right third and fourth fingers. This is the most difficult moment of the sleight; if this pressure is applied too late, the cards will fall. The entire right side of your right palm is now in contact with the deck. This is a good checkpoint. If the deck goes past your right hand, it will flash to those spectators on your right. When the movement is stopped, the pack is held deep in the left fingers, with the right side imbedded in the flesh of the right palm, and the left fingertips resting against the back of the pack (Photo 7, from below). Using the heel of the palm like this during a half pass is an unpublished Vernon idea, passed along by Larry Jennings.

At this point the reversed pack has only just passed the threshold; its reversal is not yet complete. The completion of the reverse and the reuniting of the packets will be performed in the same motion. Your right forearm continues moving downward; be sure not to allow the wrist to initiate any action. As this happens, the purpose is no longer to catch the pack, but to complete its reversal. The pressure applied by the right hand must be altered slightly. Instead of pressing down on the right edge of the pack, press down on the face of the pack along the right side. This pressure causes the left side of the pack, with the left fingertips as a fulcrum, to rise up and join the cover card (Photo 8).

**Covering action:** You have now only to complete the action you appeared to begin—that of raising the pack to
the fingertips. As soon as the packets coalesce, the left second and third fingertips move to the right side of the pack, and the first finger curls underneath to provide support for the next action. While you will seem to raise the deck to your left fingertips, you will actually lower your left hand away from the pack. To do this, simply slide your left thumb back along the left edge of the deck in a squaring action, stopping when it is about an inch from the back corner (Photo 9). This automatically moves the palm away from the deck.

At the same time, use your left second, third, and fourth fingers to grip the right edge of the pack, the first finger still supporting the deck from below. Now remove your right hand, completing the sleight.

From the instant your right hand seizes the pack, the entire half pass takes only a moment. It has been broken into sections to explain why each action is made, but each step smoothly and immediately blends with the previous one.

Raising the pack to the fingertips was Vernon’s cover for the top palm, as described in “Topping the Deck” from Select Secrets. Lowering your left hand away from the pack during a squaring action was described in The Complete Works of Derek Dingle by Richard Kaufman in reference to Dingle’s pass work. This lowering of the hand serves a subtle function. It produces the effect of raising the pack to the fingertips without sacrificing any of the necessary angles—the top of the pack does not change in relation to the viewer. This idea can be applied to a number of sleights. For example, if performing Vernon’s top palm for someone short of stature, one might find the very action of raising the hands (even the shortest distance) toward the spectator’s eyes to have undesirable ramifications. While the gravity half pass does not suffer from this kind of weakness, many sleights do. To make this small adjustment as a matter of uniformity will not always help, but it will never hurt.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** Tension can be the Achilles heel of any advanced card-worker. Any time a muscle contracts, there is at least a small degree of tension and this can be detected by audiences, if only subconsciously. Most advanced card techniques are highly susceptible to tension. A friend once quipped that he could tell whether a certain card expert was dealing tops, seconds, or bottoms by the number of veins throbbing in his forehead. While this was a mild exaggeration, it was not
unfounded. It does not matter that the worker in question has visually deceptive techniques; audiences can feel the tension and instinctively sense trickery. One way to alleviate tension in the performance of sleight-of-hand is through design.

The best way to remove muscle tension is to eliminate the muscle's participation in the action—find another way of getting the job done. For example, assume you are standing on the roof of a building, holding a set of keys. If your goal is to loan the keys to your friend on the sidewalk below, you can either carry them down or drop them to him. It is more efficient to drop an object than to carry it. Several items in this book (including this half pass) allow gravity to manipulate the cards, keeping the manipulation on the performer's part to a minimum.

As the sleight commences and the cards begin to revolve, the only pressure exerted is that necessary to modulate the action. One doesn't want to lose control, or go too fast, or not stop at the right time. Pressure is only exerted to focus the moving energy—energy initiated by gravity. This is similar to the steering technique my driving instructor called controlled slippage. Turning the wheel while going into a turn can require difficult, hand-over-hand action. Muscles pull, readjust, and then pull again. Coming out of a turn, however, is far easier. One no longer has to pull, but only allow the wheel to adjust.

Humans should not trifle with the forces of nature. As Spalding Gray quoted Athol Fugard in *Swimming to Cambodia*, “The sea’s a lovely lady when you play in her; but, if you play with her, she’s a bitch.” Keep this in mind if you choose to invoke natural forces such as gravity in your technique. This is a practical matter. Since not much physical force is exerted in this technique, great care should be taken in the initiation of the reversal (the left-arm action). In a standard handling, with the left fingers reversing the cards, pressure can be added or released as needed. In this method there is only one chance to release your control over the packet and then only one chance to re-establish it.

The gravity half pass should never be rushed. If the sleight is hurried, the pack tends to overshoot the right palm entirely. This sort of thing is to be avoided, so take care. Gravity is your friend, but it can also kill.

Those interested in further study of the half pass should know that perhaps the greatest exponent of half-pass applications is Scotland's famed card-expert, Roy Walton. His routines with both the standard half pass and his spread half pass are vital explorations into the subject. Careful study of his work is mandatory for any serious student of card magic.
**A SIMPLE SANDWICH**

The plot is simple. A card is chosen and lost in the deck. One red King is placed on top of the deck, the other on the bottom. The lower King vanishes. When the cards are next spread on the table, the two Kings are now on top, sandwiching the selection.

Start by removing the red Kings and placing them onto the table. Have a card selected and control it to the top. The control you use is not terribly important, as long as the spectators have no doubt the selection is lost.

Hold the deck in your left hand in a relaxed dealing position. As you call attention to the red Kings on the table, get a little-finger break under the top card of the deck. Pick up the Kings and hand them to a spectator. While she examines them, perform a half pass under the top card.

Take one King from the spectator and place it facedown on top of the deck, jogged to the right for about half its width. With your right hand, take the deck from above. With your left hand, take the other King and place it facedown on the bottom of the deck, jogged to the left for about half its width. Your right fingers hold both jogged cards in place (Photo 10).

Square the cards and hold the deck in left-hand mechanics’ grip. As you turn the top King faceup on the deck, get a break under the second card from the top. Do this by using your left thumb to push this card over the tips of your fingers. Pull the card back flush with the pack, maintaining the flesh break with your little finger. This must be done quickly and without flashing the reversed cards, so keep the action subtle and concise. Turn your left hand over once or twice to display both Kings as you say, “A King on top and a King on the bottom. The top card is the one to keep an eye on...” With your right forefinger, tap the top card and immediately grip the pack from above with your right hand. As soon as the right hand grips the deck, perform a half pass beneath the top two cards. “...because the bottom one has vanished.” Immediately turn your right hand palm up to show the bottom King gone.

Turn the deck facedown and spread the cards on the table. The two red Kings are faceup on top of the deck, with a facedown card between them. Cleanly take the facedown card and turn it over to reveal the selection.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** Sleight-of-hand artist Chris Korn has noted the increasing necessity of using “magicians’ methods” (advanced techniques used traditionally for magic-savvy audiences), even though performing for non-magicians. His point is well-taken.
As the information age progresses, people know more about the world than they ever have before, and audiences are increasingly skeptical. They’ve witnessed more magic shows than their parents and have seen more magic exposed on television than some magicians have learned. While an audience will most likely not yell, “Erdnase you ain’t!” at a performer, they do know magicians hide things in their hands. This means they watch very closely. The misdirection used to cover the half pass in “A Simple Sandwich” takes advantage of this reality.

Just as a person can only think one thought at a time, so can he only see one thing at a time (with any clarity). For example, Microsoft Word has a feature that corrects small spelling mistakes without calling the user’s attention to them. It automatically capitalizes the first letter of each sentence and if you happen to put the “i” before the “e” in “conceits”, it automatically transposes them for you. It enacts this correction when the spacebar is tapped at the end of the word. I was not aware of these features until very recently, because I was misdirected.

You see, I’ve been learning to type. I keep my eyes at all times on the cursor to make sure I’m typing the correct letters without looking at the keys. Quite unknowingly, I’ve developed the habit of reversing the “i” and “e” wherever they appear together. I did not notice this for several weeks, simply because I kept my eyes on the cursor. If the program had corrected my spelling as soon as the mistake was made, I would have seen it. Instead, my focus was on the cursor at least two or three letters to the right of the correction. Anyone who has seen this automatic change can testify that it isn’t very subtle. The reversed letters openly move within the text, as in some miniature version of “Run Rabbit Run”. My eyes were focused less than an inch away and I never saw it.

In “A Simple Sandwich” the audience is misdirected in the same way I was by an ordinary word processing program. Using the example above, imagine that the pack is the word “conceits”. You focus the audience’s attention on the cursor, but they think they are watching the entire word. From the time the Kings sandwich the pack until the selection is revealed, the audience should not take their eyes off the cards. Right before the sleight is executed, the audience is told to focus specifically on the top card. Then, as the pack is taken into the right hand and the move executed, the first finger points to the top card. This visual cue aids in keeping the attention where it belongs—away from the bottom of the pack.

Any flashing during the half pass (either the pack itself or flailing left fingers) will not be at the top of the pack. It will be underneath. By keeping attention on the top card, you help whatever may happen near the bottom go unnoticed. Of course, both the top and bottom of the pack can be seen. The question is not what the audience sees, but what they focus on. If you look at the word “conceits”, you see the whole word, but if you are
only focused on the “s”, you are no longer looking at “conceits”—just the letter. Obviously, within the context of the half pass, drawing the audience’s focus to the top of the pack will not make up for inept technique. It will only serve to cover the sleight, properly executed, during an intimate performance where no one looks away.
A HALF PASS VARIATION

This half pass is executed as the performer brings the deck to eye level to look at the faces of the cards. For learning purposes, turn the bottom half of the deck faceup and obtain a left little-finger break between the halves.

Begin with the deck in your left hand, which you hold at about waist level. Tilt the right side of the deck down at a forty-five-degree angle, as in the gravity half pass.

With your palm-down right hand, reach for the deck. As your right fingers come over the top of the deck, the fork of your right thumb catches the inner right corner of the upper packet. Let your right fingers naturally hang over the front of the packet, which is now supported by the heel of the left thumb and the fork of the right thumb (Photo 11). With your right hand, bring the top packet parallel to the floor. This automatically widens the break held by your left little finger.

Now tilt your hands down at the wrists, raising the inner end of the deck. Simultaneously, pull down slightly with your left fingers on the right edge of the lower packet, allowing it to pivot to the right on the left fingers. This pivoting stops when the outer right corner of the packet hits the flesh at the base of your right little finger (Photo 12).

Once this happens, sneak your right thumb behind the lower packet and use the thumb to unite the bottom packet with the top (Photo 13). This action should be completed as the back of the deck is raised toward the audience. With your left hand, regrip the cards, fingers on the audience side of the deck, thumb on your side (Photo 14), and the sleight completed. You can now spread the cards between your hands if you wish.

Thoughts and Commentary: While the fingers do not move when the
gravity half pass is executed, in the present variation a small movement of the fingers is necessary to regain some of the control lost in using a less stable grip. This finger movement is well hidden by the covering action of raising the pack up to your eyes. Remember that the angle of the lower packet does not change until the actual turnover begins. The packet starts at a forty-five-degree angle and the turnover begins from that angle.

Most sleights in this book are of wide utility. This half pass variant, however, is useful only in specific situations, such as the two-phase routine that follows, based on James Lewis’s “Inversion” from his Thinking About Magic notes. What has come to be known as the Inversion plot is apparently a Richard Kaufman invention, first published as “The World’s Fastest Reverse” in his book CardMagic.
REVOLVER

To perform, use the gravity half pass to reverse the bottom half of the deck. If possible, do this before the audience knows the trick has begun. Immediately after the half pass, use your left fourth finger to kick the bottom card of the top half to the right, so that you can obtain a little-finger break above it. (This method for moving a break one card up in the pack is Edward Marlo’s.) Once the deck is faced, take care that you don’t flash the bottom.

Casually spread the top half of the deck and have a card selected. Maintain the break as you close the spread and hold the deck in a relaxed dealing grip. Tilt the outer end of the deck downward slightly, giving the audience a view of the top of the pack. With your left thumb, riffle down the outer corner of the deck to near the bottom and hold a break. The downward tilt helps to hide the reversed cards and obscures exactly how far down the thumb’s break is. With your right hand, take the selection from the spectator and slip it facedown into the gap (Photo 15, spectators’ view).

With the right hand, push the card flush with the pack. Now grab the deck from above and perform the half pass variation just described, bringing the deck to eye level. Do a block push-off of the first few cards, to avoid exposing the reversed card at the face, and spread the deck between your hands, with the backs of the cards toward the spectators.

When you come to the chosen card, upjog it (Photo 16) and close the spread into the left hand. Use your right hand to pull the card completely from the deck as you ask, “Did I get it?” This gives you excellent cover for the next ruse. As you remove and display the card, while checking its face yourself, lower your left arm, ending with the deck in dealing grip (Photo 17). This imperceptibly reverses the deck. While it appears you hold a facedown pack, you actually hold a faceup pack with one facedown card on top.

“This time I’ll do something even better. I’ll make any card you name turn faceup.” When the spectator names a card, place the faceup selection on top of the deck, injogged for half its length, and curl your left forefinger around the front edge of the deck. Tilt your left hand down, letting the selection slide until it hits your forefinger and is squared with the deck. Wait a beat, then spread the cards, showing that they all have reversed. Be careful not
to expose the facedown card second from the top.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** This trick is an example of a specific theoretical approach to technique—that a sleight should be organically built into the natural actions of the presentation. This approach is often very effective, as those who have seen Juan Tamariz will attest. When sleights organically mesh with action, they are cloaked in it, hidden. The results can be powerful.

One of the most important tasks of the close-up magician is to create an environment where people feel comfortable reacting. In a close-up show, the audience is close enough to touch the performer. There is no fourth wall. The spectators are really participants, who can and will react. Often, when a performer’s approach to technique could support this goal of interaction, it instead works against it.

Organic sleights can contribute to this problem. When sleights are tightly joined to actions, like the audio track in a motion picture, everything must be played back in sync to work. If the magician is preoccupied with keeping his different tracks in sync, he cannot spontaneously interact with his audience. I have seen a well-known magician ignore a spectator’s highly relevant comment in order to stay “on track”. I have even seen well-meaning and pleasant spectators interrupted by the performer, lest a sleight be improperly coordinated. When spectators are treated this way, they stop reacting. They stop caring. They watch the show like they would television, and with about as much passion.

Now imagine a more dynamic approach to technique. Certain sleights, which we are all familiar with, have been used in countless routines by generations of magicians. Why have these “workhorses” lasted for so long and why are they used so often? Because, instead of tying down the artist, they free him up. A performer possessing these sleights, never worried or caught off-guard, is free to go where the show
takes him. You will know these items because of their wide utility in actual performance. They usually start with a square pack (the most common condition), take only an instant to execute, and are ready at a moment’s notice.

Imagine for a moment a magician who wishes to utilize the classic pass as a packet switch, as described for “The Exclusive Coterie” in The Expert at the Card Table. Some think this switch is antiquated, but our hero doesn’t care. In fact, he doesn’t think about the switch at all. He knows that when the time comes, the switch will take but a moment. He holds his break surely, without giving it the slightest attention. Thanks to his choice of technique, his mind has been freed. He can now focus on his audience and their good time. He does not worry, for all he needs are his fine flesh-break and a single, perfect moment. The artist will sense the moment just before it arrives. There will be a certain lull or laugh or point of interest, and by the time the moment has arrived, it will be over and the sleight completed.

A magician’s attention must be on the audience and nothing else. Every one of his choices can either facilitate this or work against it. By all means, develop routines that use customized sleights and covering actions, for in the right time and place, these routines will be ideal. But do not neglect your workhorse sleights: shifts, reverses, steals, and switches. They free the mind from the fingers, so that the organic bond will not just be between your brain and hands, but between you and your audience.
THE ONE-HANDED POPOVER

This is a version of J. K. Hartman’s popover, wherein a card appears to jump faceup from the deck and protrude from the center. There are a few notable differences between this technique and Hartman’s, which appears in his book Card Craft. First, since this method is performed with only one hand, it can serve as a sleight, as well as a flourish. Also, there is no finger movement in this handling; the card seems to leap from the center of the pack entirely of its own accord.

Although the one-handed popover can be performed with a full deck, it is suggested that, for learning purposes, you use only half. The grip will be the hardest part of this technique to master; take special note of the photographs. With your right hand, hold the facedown packet from above in the following modified end grip. Your thumb holds the back edge of the cards at the inner left corner. Your second fingertip holds the lower half of the packet at the outer left corner. Your first finger rests alongside the second finger, but does not grip the cards. Your third and fourth fingers extend over the front of the cards, but do not grip them either (Photo 18, spectators’ view). The cards should be beveled backward a bit. Do this by using your right thumb to push forward on the bottom of the packet (Photo 19).

Using the outer phalanx of your right third finger, slide the bottom card to the right until the outer left corner of the card breaks free of the second finger (Photo 20). The bevel facilitates the jogging of the card and prevents more than one card from moving. This is the technique used in Edward Marlo’s no-clutch bottom placement. Take care that the right hand does not
attain an awkward or a claw-like look. You are not doing anything as extreme as the Kelly-Ovette master move—just a bit of flesh from the side of the third fingertip catches the front edge of the bottom card and jogs it. This will require a delicate touch. Once the card is anglejogged, hold it lightly in the outer joint of your third finger.

Place your right forefinger onto the outer left corner of the deck and lift up about half the cards. This is similar to the beginning action of a swing cut, except the packet is lifted straight up; it is not pivoted to the left. Extend the second finger, pushing the lower packet down. As this happens, allow the back edge of the bottom card to break away from the thumb (Photo 21). The downward movement of the lower packet will force the bottom card to swivel up around the front edge of the bottom packet and enter the gap between the halves (Photos 22 and 23). If done quickly, the card will snap silently into position. You will be tempted to pull the card upward with your third finger. This urge should be resisted. The movement of the finger will be seen and the card will likely arrive crookedly between the packets. In order for the next step to work, the card must arrive with its sides parallel to those of the pack.

Once the card has been swung into position, it is held by your second finger on the left side and your fourth finger on the right (Photos 24 and 25). This grip prevents the card from falling as you remove your third finger, allowing the break in the packet to
close. This completes the popover. You can now take the packet between your first and fourth fingers and use your thumb to perform a one-handed fan (Photo 26), or put the deck into your left hand and use your right index finger to fan the cards.

For full-deck applications you will be able to use a two-handed get-ready, which is far easier. Hold the deck in your left hand, your thumb on top, your fingertips pressed lightly against the face. Move the deck up toward your stationary right hand, which is waiting to receive it. When the pack arrives, take it in popover grip, but don’t let go with your left hand just yet. Instead, keep moving the left hand to the right (less than an inch), applying pressure with the left second finger against the bottom card. This light upward pressure, accompanied by the small rightward motion of the left arm, rightjogs the card quite effectively (Photo 27, shown from below).

Keep your left fingers rigid and unmoving as you do this, treating your entire forearm as a single unit. Finger movement would be seen. Once the card is jogged, your right third finger, already in position, holds the card in the outer joint. The get-ready completed, the sleight itself may commence.

Thoughts and Commentary: When I developed this technique, I was in high school. I considered it a “bitchin’ flourish”. I would do it fast and hard and it made a loud snap!—of which I was particularly proud. When I looked at the sleight in the mirror, it positively seemed to sparkle.
Older magicians often criticize the overuse of flourishes by young card workers—the card punks. “Card punks only do flourishes,” some say. “When will they learn to do magic?” Well, they are learning, and right now. As you read this, they are all over the world, snapping, crackling, and popping.

Some say flourishes are immature. Perhaps, but they address the needs of young magicians. They reflect the trend in current pop culture, in that they give instant gratification and do not require much of an attention span. It seems only appropriate they are the province of youth.

I know a card worker who uses flourishes all the time, even now that he is an adult. He has always adored flourishes and, not surprisingly, they pervade his work. Even so, I have seen him mystify people on many occasions, despite his supposed impediment. When he performs flourishes, he is at his most natural. In his hands, flourishes become magic.

Lee Asher, the talented Las Vegas card man, used to tell me card handlers can be classified in two groups: either diamonds or pearls. Pearls are subtle, smooth, and elegant.

As beautiful as pearls may be, they often aren’t appreciated by the unrefined.

A diamond, though it is flashier, is no less beautiful. Diamonds are shining and bright. Diamonds sparkle.
**Hello Goodbye**

Here is the effect for which the one-handed popover was first developed. To begin, have a card selected as follows. With your right hand, hold the deck in popover grip and dribble the cards slowly into your left hand as you ask a spectator to say stop. Time the action so that you have dribbled about half the deck when she stops you.

Tilt your right hand back at the wrist, allowing the spectators to see the selected card. As it is displayed, use the tip of your left second finger to point at the card (Photo 28). You are about to perform a sideways handling of the glide. As both hands bring the cards back to the horizontal plane, move the right hand’s cards slightly to the left, allowing the left second fingertip to rightjog the selection. Your left hand still holds half the deck. With your left second finger (which is under the right hand’s packet) contact the face of the exposed card second from the bottom (apparently the selection) and pull it to the left (Photo 29) for about half its width. Now, with your left thumb, clamp this card onto the left hand’s packet and retain it there in an outjogged position (Photo 30).

While keeping the “selection” outjogged, execute a Charlier cut with the cards in your left hand. Then use your left forefinger to push the card flush. At the same time, perform the popover with your right hand (Photo 31). It looks as if the card instantly jumps from one packet to the other. End by snapping the right hand’s cards into a one-handed fan.
Thoughts and Commentary: “Hello Goodbye” features the visual leap of a card from one place to another. When I first developed the popover, I was unable to perform it fast enough to create the desired visual effect. When I tried, it looked silly. I would push in the outjogged card quickly, just in time for the spectators to watch the selection slowly crawl up over the front of the other packet. This would not do. I wanted to prove the move worked, and since my technique was not up to par, I needed a way to make it deceptive. And thus I was forced to discover misdirection. I devised the following variation.

The handling is the same; the timing is different. Perform “Hello Goodbye” exactly as described, to the point where you have an outjogged card on top of the left hand’s packet. Your right hand should be ready to execute the popover. Raise your left hand to chest level and gaze at the packet as you execute a Charlier cut. Audience attention will naturally be drawn to this “accentuated Charlier”. Casually drop your right hand to the side and perform the popover unobserved (Photo 32).

With your left forefinger, slowly push the outjogged card flush. You must focus all your attention on this action, lest the spectators’ eyes wander and discover the “popped-out” selection prematurely. As you finish pushing the card flush, shake your right hand slightly and notice the right hand’s cards for the first time. The spectators will see the selection when you do. Finish as before, snapping the cards into a one-handed fan.
**PINCH ME, I THINK I'M FALLING**

This is a variation of Daryl’s “In the Pinch” from *Secrets of a “Puerto Rican Gambler”* by Stephen Minch. Perform “Hello Goodbye” as described, until right after the Charlier cut. Push the jogged card flush and hand the left-hand packet to a spectator. Have her dribble the cards faceup onto the table. You will now appear to reach into this cascade of cards with your packet and pull out the selection. As you thrust your right hand into the falling cards, perform the one-handed popover and slowly bring the packet back, showing the selection protruding from the center. If you do not think the spectator capable of dribbling cards, dribble them yourself with your left hand as you “catch” the selection with your right.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** After I learned to do the popover with extreme force and velocity, I started performing it that way—with as much power as could be mustered. That hard practice taught me something about the role finger strength plays in the performance of card magic.

I had been in magic for a year and a half when I started working on the popover. I had it pictured in my head perfectly and I was quite upset when I found it couldn’t be done. At least, I couldn’t do it. So, I was compelled to practice. After six months I was doing the popover full force. In the bargain, I found my right hand was stronger than before. I then began practicing all of my sleights, especially the classic pass, with the goal of developing strength and speed. This misguided experiment was not without results. My hands did become stronger and my speed increased. Certain sleights, performed with force and ferocity, can elude the eye. These qualities do not necessarily make them desirable; as we’ve discussed, audiences can detect tension. However, when used appropriately, finger strength can greatly reduce tension.

I once read a comic book in which Superman “flicked” a villain in the chest, much as an older brother will flick his sibling’s ear. The antagonist was thrown head over heels across a city thoroughfare. I found it interesting that immediately after he knocked the monster across the street, Superman just stood there, relaxed. The beast must have weighed four hundred pounds! Superman tossed him without breaking a sweat. Imagine if Superman were far weaker than he is; that throwing this creature taxes him to the limits of his strength. Superman is no longer relaxed. He strains and sweats. He exhibits tension. Relaxation is only possible when one has more strength available than needed. Superman, at his normal strength, would make a fine card-worker.

Strength is an asset. However, it should not be exhibited for its own sake. Rather, it allows greater force to be exerted with less tension. Only performers with strong hands will have the control necessary to execute difficult sleights softly. Only the devoted can achieve the highest degree of craft, then manage to conceal it entirely.
THE NOWHERE PASS

The nowhere pass—a dynamic sleight with which a card can be controlled to virtually any position in the deck—is a handling of the bluff pass. More accurately, it might be described as a bluff slip cut. The bluff pass can be daunting, as a deft touch is required to hold one card as half the deck. Assuming one has the required touch, one also needs courage to pull off such a masquerade. The nowhere pass was developed to cut down on the time one card poses as many, but more importantly, to find the ideal grip.

This move can be done with any number of cover cards. In fact, the more cards used for cover, the easier the sleight. However, learning with only one cover card will help you to develop the necessary touch.

The right-hand grip is highly specific and, as it does not really change during the sleight, it will be described first. The right hand grasps only the cover card, holding it from above with the joint of the thumb at the inner left corner of the card, and the outer left corner in the middle joint of the second finger. The first finger extends well over the left side (Photo 33).

This grip will at first seem too deep, but the standard grip, in fact, proves too shallow—with the card held so near the fingertips, if half a deck were actually present, there would be no room for it (Photo 34). The closer the card is to the palm, the more naturally people will imagine many cards when they see only one. This concept of holding a single card as many will be referred to as the bluff principle, and was published in What Next! by Tommy Tucker in 1936.

In your left hand, hold the facedown deck in a relaxed mechanics’ grip. Get a left little-finger break below the top card, which will act as the cover card. With your right hand, grip the top
card as described above, except the first finger is temporarily curled on top of the deck. With your left thumb, riffle down the outer corner of the deck and ask a spectator to say stop. When she does, hold the break with your left thumb (Photo 35). With your right hand, lift the upper half of the deck while transferring the little finger's break to the right thumb.

Display the selection by turning it faceup as follows. With your left thumb, push the top card of the left hand's packet to the right. Extend your right index finger to the left and contact the face of the selection with the knuckle. Now lower your left hand approximately six inches, causing the selection to revolve around the right forefinger (Photo 36) and turn faceup on the bottom packet, jogged to the right (Photo 37). If the card lands flush with the bottom packet, use your left thumb to push it back to the right.

The right hand's packet must now be inserted between the selection and the rest of the cards. Lift the right forefinger out of the way and slip the right hand's packet under the right-jogged selection as you slide the packet to the left (Photo 38). During this sliding action, the position of your right hand does not change. Your right index finger projects to the left of the upper packet, above the left thumb, and your other fingers hang over the front. Stop the movement when the packets are flush. You should now have a right thumb break under two cards.

For purposes of time misdirection, pause a moment. You will now appear to slip cut the selection into the deck, but will actually place it second from the top. Rotate your forearms slightly to the right, raising the left side of the deck so that the following action will be seen. With your left thumb, riffle down the outer corner of the pack. Stop about halfway and hold the break for a moment, allowing the audience to see where the pack has been
separated (Photo 39). Then, rotate your forearms back, bringing the deck again parallel with the floor. Simultaneously, release the left thumb’s break and clamp your left thumb down onto the faceup selection. Immediately, use the thumb to pull the selection to the left, along with the rest of the deck below the right thumb’s break. Your right hand does not move or adjust, but retains the single cover card (which is apparently half the deck) in a nice light grip. It should look from above as if you are cutting the selection into the center of the deck. When the cards in your left hand clear the cover card, drop your left hand, as if pulling the selection down onto the lower half of the deck (Photo 40, spectators’ view). It helps to sell this conceit if you drop your hand a bit more than would be necessary if your right hand actually held half the pack.

With your left thumb, push the selection to the right and bring your right hand under the right side of the jogged card. With your right forefinger, touch the underside of the card and lower your left hand, turning the selection facedown as before (Photo 41). As the card is turned, let your left hand fall slightly back toward you, putting the right hand in the forward position.

You will now steal the top half of the deck under the cover card as you reassemble the “packets” and apparently outjog the selection from the center of the pack. Draw your right fingers together to eliminate any gaps or “windows”. Move your right hand back and lightly drop the cover card flush with
the deck. Your right hand is not arched straight above the pack, but is pivoted rightward. This will protect against flashing along the right side during the steal. As your right second finger and thumb contact the upper portion of the pack, lift half the cards as your right hand continues backward (Photo 42). There should seem to be no pause as your right hand moves back and picks up the top packet. When your right second finger reaches the center of the bottom half of the deck, stop the backward movement of your right hand. With your right second fingertip, press down on the top card of the bottom packet and push it forward (Photo 43) until your right thumb hits the back edge of the deck, outjogging the false selection. Drop the upper half of the deck squarely onto the lower half. The “selection” can now be pushed flush with the pack at your discretion.

Thoughts and Commentary: Perhaps the most common error seen in the bluff pass handling is an over-strong grip. A light touch is of utmost importance. The cover card must remain flat—a buckle or flutter will spoil the effect. To adjust the right-hand grip to your hands, try this. Stretch your right fingers to their natural limits and grasp a card from above by the second finger and thumb in the deepest end grip possible. You have reached your limit when the card cannot be held any deeper without bending. Then relax your grip, allowing the flesh of the finger and thumb to lightly but surely hold the card. Gripped in this fashion, it will be found that the card can be held perfectly still, with no discernible tension.

When the selection is turned faceup for display (Photos 36 and 37), it might seem more natural to invert the card by raising your right hand, rather than by lowering your left. However, you will later duplicate this action with a single cover card in your right hand, and when you do, raising this hand will be risky. First, the hand that moves draws attention to itself. Bringing attention to the right hand when it holds but one card would be unwise. Also, if you were to turn over the selection with your right hand, you would almost certainly rotate the hand at the wrist, bringing the left side of the cover card into plain view. So, while raising your right hand the first time is not problematic, it might be disastrous the next time, and the two actions should appear identical.

The right hand’s steal of the upper packet (Photo 42) will be ruined if rushed. There will always be some pause the moment the packet is stolen under the cover card. With practice, this pause can be imperceptible—but only if the sleight is paced slowly. Another reason to proceed slowly is
that you need time to properly aim the right hand on its descent toward the deck. This situation is similar to landing an airplane, in that it takes a certain amount of time and distance to accurately gauge the landing point and not miss the runway.

Finally, this technique will tolerate no finger movement. Since the right fingers are already in position, they need not move in the slightest to squeeze. If the approach for the steal is done quickly, the finger positions will not be exact or sure. The instinct to grip will come quickly amidst the rushed overt actions, and the fingers will seem to clutch at the pack. Not only are the spectators alerted by an unmotivated pause, but now they can actually watch the fingers grip the cards. If the performer insists on performing the sleight quickly, he will need to devise a different technique.
**ADDITIONAL HANDLINGS**

With the nowhere pass, a selection can be controlled to any position in the deck. For example, begin by obtaining a right thumb break under six cards. Perform the nowhere pass using these six cover cards and the selection will end up seventh from the top.

To control a card to a specific position near the bottom of the deck, you will simply reverse the bluff action. The left hand will hold a single card as half the deck and the right hand will hold fifty cards as the other half. Begin by acquiring a left little-finger break above the desired number of cards (one or more). You can do this by using the imperceptible get-ready described in the undercover switch on page 59. For descriptive purposes, assume you have a break above one card. Proceed with the nowhere pass as described, but do not hold a right thumb break under the top card. When you get to the position depicted in Photo 39, the handling changes.

Rotate your forearms, bringing the deck again parallel with the floor and simultaneously release the thumb break as you place your left thumb across the face of the selection. Pull the selection to the left, along with the card below the little-finger break. Your right hand remains still, retaining the rest of the pack (Photo 44). The selection is pulled onto the left hand’s card, which is apparently half the deck. With your left thumb, push the selection to the right and place your right index finger beneath it, touching the back. Lower your left hand, turning the selection facedown. Finish by replacing the right hand’s packet on top of the left hand’s cards. The selection is now second from the bottom.

A total bluff handling (with no cover cards, in the fashion of the seminal Frederick Montague handling) will obviously enable you to control the selection to the top of the deck. No breaks are needed to begin. Angles are more problematic, however, so turn slightly to your left, protecting the vulnerable left side. Have a card selected and proceed as in the original description. As you start the actions depicted in Photo 39, take the entire pack into your left hand. Your right hand holds nothing, yet keeps its position as if holding half the deck. With your left thumb, simulate pulling the selection off the right hand’s imaginary cards, rightjogging it onto the lower half of the deck. Contact the right side of the selection with your right forefinger and lower your left hand to turn the selection facedown. Conclude by apparently reassembling the deck and outjogging the “selection” as described above. Make sure, at all times, to hold the right hand the same way you would if it actually held cards.
Thoughts and Commentary: After developing the nowhere pass, I was thrilled with it. I had decided that to display an outjogged selection before pushing it flush was to the universal good. I would have a card selected, switch it out, and leave another protruding in its place. I would expound with great sincerity on how lost the selection was—as when Iago declares to the Moor, “I persuade myself to speak the truth.”

After a while, I began to feel deceived by my best friend, this “convincing” control. Rather, I began to feel deceived whenever I saw others performing it. The first time this happened, I was watching a magician lecture. Having just returned a card to the pack, he left it protruding from the center and placed the pack on the table. He then launched into the conditions under which the effect would happen. As he performed, I stared at the outjogged “selection” for at least a minute. When he declared that the card was lost in the deck and not under control, it was blatantly not the case. The performer and the audience seemed engaged in a conspiracy. The lecturer pretended the card was lost and the crowd pretended to believe him. Yet, any of them could have easily found and removed the card—it was outjogged!

I became more convinced with every moment that it was not the selection. How could it be? It was like an illusionist whose face is unseen for two minutes before he vanishes and reappears at the back of the auditorium. I decided then that convincing-type controls were evil.

As it would be over two years before I saw an appropriate use of a convincing-type control, I hated it and wanted to eliminate it entirely. This left me with a new problem—I had no ending for the nowhere pass. I had seen one or two fellows simply bring the cover card down onto the pack and use their index finger to simulate the thump of two packets coming together. I liked that handling, but when I tried it, it looked horrible. So, I re-examined the nowhere pass, resolved to find my perfect ending. The solution follows.
This technique for the steal is far superior to the one used in the previous bluff replacement; it is also quite easy to perform. It simulates the action of placing the top packet into the left fingertips, pausing for all to be seen clearly, then allowing the packet to drop onto the bottom half.

Perform the nowhere pass as described, until the selection has been turned facedown and your right hand is ready to replace the cover card. Curl your right index finger onto the back of the cover card, making sure not to apply even the slightest pressure, and take care that your right fingers are closed, with no windows showing (Photo 45). Closed windows become necessary in bluff handlings when the right hand is raised high enough for the true state of the card to be seen by the audience through parted fingers. Also, the right-hand grip must be deep; the overhanging of your fingers is necessary for this technique.

Rather than your right hand stealing the top half of the pack, the upper packet will now be delivered to the right hand by your left thumb, which lies along the side of the deck. Your right hand holds the cover card slightly forward of and above the deck, as before (Photo 46). Move your right hand back and down, in a small arc, toward the deck. When your right thumb reaches a position above your left thumb, the following secret action will be well covered:

In a motion similar to the first half of a Charlier cut, use the pad of your left thumb to lift the top half the deck (Photo 47), which then joins the cover card.

The moment this happens, or even a moment before, slightly separate your
right fingers (Photo 48). This allows the packet to be seen through the fingers, though without overemphasis.

You are now holding two packets, the upper packet posing as one you’ve apparently held all along. Now, move your right hand aside and display everything openly in your left hand. Then, with your left thumb, release the upper packet, dropping it onto the lower. Spectators should be convinced that the card is facedown in the middle of the deck. It is actually second from the top.

Thoughts and Commentary: This replacement subtlety can be added to any bluff technique, whether you are executing the nowhere pass or not. It deserves your careful consideration, if not a federal arts endowment.

When you draw your fingers together to execute this subtlety, they must not exhibit tension. It will take practice and focus to develop this ability. As an exercise, try binding your fingers, with either a length of string or Scotch tape, making your hand into something like a “flipper”. Then go about normal activities, including practicing your magic. This will help to develop the new behavior, ingraining it into your body. Until that happens, it will require great effort to keep the fingers from parting when undesired. As long as your focus is on your fingers, your attention will not be where it should be—on the audience.

The bluff replacement can be performed differently, depending on the audience. For magicians (and lay audiences with a high level of awareness) the pause when the right fingers part and the packet is seen between them should last but a twinkling, the left thumb releasing its cards immediately. Attentive spectators will see it and believe it was not “set up” for them. This approach will not work for the less aware. For these groups, the pause can be lengthened to taste, the right hand dropping away to provide a clear picture of the left hand.

Often, performance conditions are less than ideal, with audiences distracted or inattentive. Good performers spot these situations naturally; anyone studied in directing attention is acutely aware when they do not command enough attention to direct. At these times, the bluff replacement subtlety can easily be altered to yield a convincing-type control, as follows. After the left thumb has lifted its cards and the right fingers have parted, you would normally stop the action of the right hand. Do not stop. Continue moving backward, carrying back the stolen packet to the point where the right second finger is directly above the center of the pack.
Now complete the sequence as in the original nowhere pass description, with the second finger outjogging the center card as the deck is reassembled. The false selection should remain outjogged only until the performer senses the audience has registered its presence. The convincing-type control has now served its purpose and should be completed. After this point, the control will only nullify its own effectiveness.

After using the nowhere pass for over a year, its flaws became apparent. They were first mentioned to me by that enlightened card worker, Simon Aronson. After seeing this sleight in 1996, he said, “I don’t know what to tell you, Aaron. It just doesn’t look like a slip cut to me.” At first I figured Simon just “didn’t get it”. Except his statement gnawed at me until I finally decided to examine the sleight and determine what was wrong with it.

I eventually realized the problem is not that it doesn’t look like a slip cut, but that a slip cut in this context is illogical. The problem begins when the selection is first displayed on the left hand’s packet. Normally, the next step would be to use the right hand’s packet to immediately flip the selection facedown. In the nowhere pass, this next step cannot be taken until the deck has been reassembled. Hence, the right hand’s packet is slipped between the selection and the lower half of the pack. Logically, there wouldn’t be anything like a slip cut at all if it weren’t for purposes of the sleight. So, saddled with this new and upsetting information, I developed the advanced nowhere pass.
In terms of difficulties with the bluff pass mentioned in the beginning—the correct grip and courage—the advanced nowhere pass is more difficult than the previous handlings. However, it is more effective in actual performance for two reasons. First, the performer does not see the selection, for the unmotivated pause and display of the faceup selection have been eliminated. Also, the moment of the steal is now covered with a natural action.

To begin, obtain a left little-finger break under the top card, and curl your left first finger over the front edge of the pack, applying slight pressure to keep the top card aligned. With your left thumb, riffle down the outer left corner of the pack and have a spectator call for you to stop.

This done, use your right hand to remove the top half of the deck, and transfer the little-finger break to your right thumb. Draw back your right hand and offer the top card of the left hand’s packet to the spectator. While attention is on her and the card, relax your left hand and let it fall back with its packet, flush with the upper portion of the pack—and immediately release the cards below the thumb break. Make sure not to move your right fingers as the block is dropped. After the card has been noted, lean forward, extend your left hand and have the selection replaced. Drop your left hand to waist level and execute the bluff replacement subtlety as described on page 43.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** Holding fifty cards as half a pack in the left hand takes care. Don’t forget these two important touches: Allow your left thumb to cover the side of the deck, and rotate your forearm slightly rightward. Now the sleight will not offend the eyes, as both sides of the deck are obscured. Relax the tension in your left hand and imagine the deck is light. Treat it as a packet would be treated—gently, with little pressure in your grip; and extend your fingertips farther above the surface of the pack, contributing to the illusion of thinness (Photo 49).

Doubtless it will occur to many that this handling is very similar to the standard bluff pass—the one the nowhere pass was conceived to avoid. My first attempts with the bluff pass were disastrous. As mentioned, it was a matter of courage and grip. As I had neither, I was discouraged quickly. I developed the nowhere pass to avail myself of the bluff principle immediately, with whatever touch I had at the time. Later, disillusioned with the nowhere pass, I came to try the older
methods again. This was two years later and I was surprised and pleased to find these methods looking quite different. These were the ones that made me want to learn the bluff pass in the first place—the very methods I had first attempted, but for which I had lacked the skill. The nowhere pass allowed me to gain the requisite skills. It had served its purpose and it was time to put it away. As I mentioned in connection with convincing-type controls, an action, once its purpose is accomplished, should be ended.
THE ILLUSION CONTROL

The illusion control combines the bluff principle with a frontal depth illusion. With no false moves, cuts, or shuffles, a card inserted into the center of the pack (and pushed flush) can be controlled to virtually any position in the top half of the deck. This sleight was inspired by Chris Kenner’s shifty, published in The Pass by Gary Ouellet.

Hold the facedown deck in your left hand in a relaxed dealing grip. Obtain a little-finger break under the number of cards you want to use for cover. As in the nowhere pass, if your break is under five cards, the selection will arrive sixth from the top. For the purpose of explanation, assume you have a break under one card.

With your right hand, grip the deck from above, holding the top card in the outer joints of the second, third and fourth fingers. The thumb assumes the break as it takes the back edge of the card (near the left corner) in its joint. The outer right corner of the card is anchored at the outer joints of your little and ring fingers. Curl your forefinger on top of the pack and pivot the hand slightly to the right; most of the top of the deck is in view (Photos 50 and 51, performer’s and spectators’ views respectively).

With your left thumb, riffle down the outer corner of the deck and ask a spectator to call stop. Time the action so that you are stopped near the middle of the pack. Immediately, without
altering the right hand’s grip, lift off the cards above the left thumb’s break. Ask the spectator to take the top card of the lower packet and commit it to memory. When she has done so, extend the left hand’s packet to have the selection replaced, positioning your right hand naturally behind your left. Just as the chosen card comes into contact with the packet (before the spectator can place it flush) clamp down on it with your left thumb, so that it remains outjogged for about one-third of its length (Photo 52, with break exposed for clarity, and Photo 53, spectators’ view).

You will appear to place the upper packet onto the lower, push the selection flush, and ribbon spread the pack on the table. During these actions, the chosen card will be controlled to second from the top. All the steps that follow should be performed in one continuous, unrushed action.

Place your left thumb along the side of the lower packet. Set the right hand’s packet injogged about halfway onto the left packet, placing your right fingertips onto the outjogged card. With no perceptible movement of your fingers, use the heel of your left thumb and your left third and fourth fingertips to grip all the cards below the right thumb’s break (Photo 54, exposed, and Photo 55, spectators’ view). Without a pause, use the right hand to move the cover card forward, as if moving the top packet. Simultaneously, with the right fingers, push the jogged card forward (Photo 56, left thumb lowered to expose the configuration of the deck; and Photo 57, spectators’ view). The
fingers should not move or extend, but only apply downward pressure as you also lightly press the tip of your left forefinger up on the outjogged card, supporting it from below.

Stop the forward motion of the right hand when you feel the selection clear the two packets. The pressure of the right fingers on the selection will snap its back edge up, until it touches the face of the cover card (Photo 58, action exposed). As this happens, use your left forefinger to keep the selection steady. Now that the selection has been displaced directly beneath the cover card, all that remains to do is to square the pack, as follows.

Move your right hand back, drawing the outjogged card with it. At the same time, use your left forefinger to push the card flush (Photo 59). It will naturally go second from the top, but will appear as if it is below the top half of the deck, which is apparently still held by your right hand. An illusion of depth is created by the relationship of the selected card to the outer phalanges of the right fingers. As the card is pushed flush with the bottom half of the deck, place your right thumb behind the upper packet and push it forward until the pack is squared (Photo 60, left thumb moved to expose the action; and Photo 61, spectators’ view). Take the deck into your right hand and ribbon spread the cards. This ribbon spread is not performed as an afterthought. In fact, the illusion control works best if done while the hands are moving forward, the ribbon spread acting as cover.
Thoughts and Commentary: Your success in executing this sleight will depend to a large degree on your ability to minimize the “click” of the card as it clears the packets. It must be silent. You should be able to feel it; the audience should not.

With so many sleights available to the card magician, one can afford to use each only in its ideal context. The illusion control looks good when performed standing, but it is ideal when you are seated. Most sleights in this book operate on the vertical; the cards moving up and down in front of you. This one moves horizontally, back and forth. The bloody knuckles of those who have tried the dribble pass at the kitchen table are testimony that there is little vertical space to use when seated.

It may occur to the reader that by using a total bluff handling (with no cover card), the selection could be controlled to the top of the deck. I’ve tried it. Believe me, I have. I suggest you avoid attempting such a handling for any lay audience, ever. To do so would be self-centered. Not only are the angles extreme, but the technique would require far too much concentration to execute while focusing your attention outward—that is, on the audience.
A card, outjogged from the center of the pack, is pushed flush. The spectators believe it’s in the middle, yet it is really on the bottom (or top, as the performer prefers). If you already do the Herrmann pass, mastering this control will not be difficult.

To begin, assume you have a card outjogged for half its length from the center of the pack. You will now take the pack into a modified end grip. With the left side of your right second finger, move the outjogged card to the left as you grab the deck from above with the middle phalanx of this finger, and curl your forefinger on top. The card should now protrude from the corner of the deck at a forty-five-degree angle (Photo 62).

Display the jogged card by rotating your right hand back, until the faces of the cards are toward the audience (Photo 63). Then, rotate your hand palm down, placing the deck into your waiting left hand. The outjogged card is now held between the fork of your left thumb, on the left, and the side of your right second finger, on the right (Photo 64). Immediately start the Herrmann pass action. That is, relax your left fingers, and let them drop, allowing all the cards below the jogged card to fall with them (Photo 65). No get-ready or finger break is needed to begin the pass; simply drop all the cards below the jogged one.

Curl your left fingers, levering down the right side of the bottom packet.
The left side of this packet will rise to the right, eventually swinging clear of the upper packet (Photo 66). During these actions, the outjogged card, which covers the movement of the left fingers, should be held perfectly still.

You will now execute the second half of the shift as you reach forward with your right fingers to push the jogged card flush. As you reach, curl in your left fingers on the back of the vertical packet, bringing it up to the left and down onto the deck. This action is completely covered by the right hand (Photo 67, exposed performer’s view, and Photo 68, spectators’ view). As you push the card flush, it will appear to go into the middle of the deck, rather than onto the bottom. Slightly tilting the front of the deck down helps the illusion.

With a small change at the beginning of the sleight, you can bring the card to the top of the deck. Spread the cards facedown between your hands and have a spectator touch one. Break the spread so that the selection is on top of the left hand’s portion. Square these cards and, in preparation for a double turnover, catch a left little-finger break under the top two cards of the left hand’s packet.

With your right fingertips, reach into the finger break and press the right side of the double card up against the underside of the right hand’s spread. Drag the double to the right and turn it faceup, as if turning the page of a book. As the double card is turned faceup, catch a left little-finger break beneath it.
Again, with your right fingertips, reach into the break and turn the double card facedown on the deck. When the double falls flush, use your left thumb to outjog the top card. Reassemble the deck. Now, when you execute the outjog Herrmann pass, the selected card will end up on top.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** This sleight is deceptive even to those familiar with shift work, as a look at Photo 68 will show. This is what spectators see when the pass is half completed—a card outjogged from the center of the pack. The performer actually holds this card between the right second finger and the left thumb, yet it seems to be sandwiched in the pack. Properly executed, this technique will deceive anyone not familiar with it. Please note the use of an outjogged card as a point of reference in a shift is an idea that has been explored previously by Michael Weber and others.

When performing this pass, do not neglect the moment pictured in Photo 63. When the right hand cocks the selection leftward while gripping the pack from above, always remember to tilt the right hand back and display the card. This is the motivation that covers the otherwise purposeless angling of the card.

When I first began demonstrating the outjog Herrmann pass, I was aware that it was not blueprint perfect. That is, it wasn’t completely natural. The angle-jogging of the selection is a technical tip-off—the kind that sets off an alert spectator’s alarms before the sleight even starts. I knew this, but the sleight was in other respects so deceptive, and felt so comfortable in my hands, I decided to let it be.

Later that year I met Larry Jennings, and during our first meeting we did a lot of magic. Toward the end of the evening, I asked him if he had any comments on the material I’d performed. He said, “The only thing I had a problem with is that shift with the outjogged card. Something isn’t natural about it.” So that night I worked out the following, more difficult handling, wherein the selection is jogged straight out of the deck.
THE ACADEMIC OUTJOG
HERRMANN PASS

Assume a card is outjogged from the deck for half its length. Rest your left thumb along the left side of the deck, extended slightly beyond the corner and onto the edge of the jogged card. Curl your left index finger around the outer end of the pack, pressing it lightly against the face of the jogged card. The other left fingers hold the deck on the right side.

Your right hand holds the deck in end grip, with your index finger curled on top. Your right middle and ring fingers touch the back of the outjogged card, and the little finger rests against the right side of the card at the outer right corner of the deck (Photo 69).

The outjogged card is held in place by pressure between your left thumb and your right little finger. With the card gripped in this position, the pass can be executed exactly as in the original handling.

Thoughts and Commentary: After I worked out the academic outjog Herrmann pass, I was quite satisfied that the anglejogged card—the technical tip-off—had been eliminated. So, in a card classroom, on a card chalkboard, I had solved a card problem. However, what I really did was trade a technical tip-off for a technical monstrosity.

I didn’t perform the new method. I never quite worked up the nerve. Upon examining why I didn’t want to do it, three weaknesses were uncovered; these were not apparent when the handling was developed that night at Jennings’s house. In the original handling, the right second finger holds the selection during the shift. In the “improved” handling, the card is held by the outer phalanx of the little finger. Since the upper half of the pack rests on the outjogged selection during the shift, it must be held surely, with a strong finger. I can name perhaps ten card men with pinkies strong enough to support this weight while seeming to barely contact the card. The second finger, however, can do the job—and with little tension.

There is a depth illusion at work in this shift that is also harmed in the academic version. The spectator thinks he sees the outjogged card pushed into the center, but it really goes to the bottom. As in the half pass or the nowhere pass, a deep right-hand grip greatly aids this illusion. In the original handling, the grip is indeed deep. In the academic version, the grip is shallow; the outjogged card, positioned near the center of the pack, looks like it is near the bottom.
The third weakness of the academic handling is the view from the right side; the shift is fully exposed. With the card cocked to the left, purists may wince, but at least spectators along the right side will not double up with laughter as they watch the packets transpose. In the original handling, the right side of the right hand provides a good deal of cover, as it always has in a Herrmann-style shift. With the outjogged card protruding straight from the pack, however, the right hand must be arched directly over the pack, and this leaves the entire right side exposed.

So, while the academic outjog Herrmann pass is theoretically more natural, it is a handling that looks good only on a chalkboard. I have never performed it for an audience, outside the context of an academic discussion. If you need to perform the sleight, use the original handling. But note the key to masking the weakness of the handling is giving the hands a good reason to come together. After the right hand tilts back to display the protruding card, it returns the pack to the left hand; the shift must be executed at the exact moment the hands meet.
THE UNDERCOVER SWITCH

This method for switching outjogged cards as they are stripped from the pack is simple, direct, and invisible. The basic switch is a reinvention of a move by Daniel Rhod of France called le change intervisuel. Rhod’s switch can arguably be called an improvement on Dai Vernon’s strip-out addition, and those conversant with the Vernon move will have few problems acquiring this switch. An additional handling offered here takes Rhod’s technique into a whole new realm of utility.

DON’T FEAR THE REAPER

The switch will be described within the context of this basic, yet powerful effect. It is based on Alex Elmsley’s “Pick of the Litter” from Volume One of The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley by Stephen Minch. Four cards are chosen by four different people. These cards, cleanly removed from the pack, prove to be the four Aces. After seeing this, magicians sometimes think the classic force was used four times in a row.

Begin with three Aces on the bottom of the facedown deck and the fourth one, say the Ace of Spades, fifth from the top. Hold the deck in your left hand, thumb along the left side, fourth finger at the back edge. This finger will help keep the cards in line during the spreading action to come.

With your left thumb, start spreading the cards into your right hand, which takes them, thumb above, fourth finger at the back edge, and the other fingers providing support from below. Anchor the right edge of the spread at the base of the right fingers (Photo 70). This grip will prevent the cards from entering the fork of your right thumb when you later close the spread. A light grip also keeps the deck “aired” when you spread the cards, and will stop them from binding during the strip-out.

“Four people will each touch a different card. I’ll go first to show you how it works.” With your left thumb, touch the fifth card from the top (the Ace of Spades). Think of this as doing the classic force on yourself. Outjog the card for two-thirds of its length, then continue to spread the cards in a wide, but mild arc. Invite each of three spectators to touch a card. As each spectator’s card is(216,408),(893,997)— but for only half its length (Photo 71).
Spreading the cards in an arc, rather than in a straight line, obscures the fact that the first card is outjogged farther than the other three. Ideally, the last selection should be made near the bottom, because you need to sight the bottom three cards (the Aces) and get a left fourth-finger break above them. If you continue to spread through the deck after the last card is chosen, the action may seem suspect.

The break obtained, you will now appear to close the spread and strip out the four jogged cards into your left hand. In reality, as you strip out the cards, you will switch the lower three selections for the three Aces. The description will be broken into steps, but the actions should be performed in one smooth motion.

During the following action, your right fourth finger at the back of the pack will act as a brace. Also, allow the left thumb tip to extend beyond the front end of the pack. This will cover the switch on the left side. The right forefinger remains straight, against the right edge of the pack (Photo 72).

Now, close the spread, making sure that no cards enter the fork of your right thumb—this would cramp your hands and make the subsequent switch difficult. As the hands come together, pull down slightly on the three Aces, allowing the right second and third fingers to enter the break. Simultaneously, place the tip of your left forefinger on the front edges of the lower three outjogged cards (Photo 73, an underview). The uppermost Ace, outjogged more than the others, covers the finger’s movement. With the right thumb on top of the pack, square the cards loosely against the base of the left thumb (Photo 74).

With your right thumb, press down on the deck and push forward, slightly beveling the top cards as you use your left forefinger to push the lower three outjogged cards flush with the deck. The right fourth finger, held staunchly at the back of the deck, gives pressure against which the left forefinger can push (Photo 75). Don’t worry if the three cards remain slightly
outjogged. The forward bevel and the top outjogged Ace cover these cards. At the same time, move your right hand inward with the deck, leaving the cards below the left little-finger break in the left hand, which does not move. Finally, when your left hand is directly beneath the uppermost jogged Ace, clamp your left thumb down on the card, stripping it from the deck and pulling it onto the bottom three Aces, which remain on your left palm (Photo 76). When the deck has cleared your left hand, the switch is complete. There are now four facedown cards in your left hand, all Aces.

This switch is only illusive if performed in one motion. There must be no pausing from the time you close the spread until the four cards arrive in your left hand. This is not to say you should rush. The switch should be made slowly, but without hesitation.

You can obtain a break above the bottom cards before you spread the deck by using Cliff Green’s imperceptible get-ready (a refined form of buckle) from *Professional Card Magic*. Briefly: Position your left first fingertip at the outer right corner of the bottom card and press firmly inward. This will cause the bottom card to break from the deck at the inner right corner. Simply apply your left little finger against the side of the deck to retain the break. You can obtain a break above more than one card by increasing the left forefinger’s pressure (Photo 77).

**Thoughts and Commentary:** In 1996, an earlier version of this move (called the strip-out switch) was printed...
in Steve Beam’s *The Trapdoor*. The strip-out switch did not use a cover card and required some rather heavy misdirection to succeed. The illusion achieved by that earlier handling was not exactly stellar, but the primary reason it needed such heavy misdirection was that the moment of execution was terribly conceived.

Repetitious actions can lull spectators’ minds, ripening them for misdirection. If the first three cards are removed singly, the performer might lead the spectators to overlook a switch taking place on the fourth. In the strip-out switch, however, the switch is executed after the selection process, during a completely new action. The original strip-out switch taught me that after outjogging four cards from the pack and calling attention to them as you do, your audience will watch closely as you remove them from the deck. To allow the audience to watch the strip-out closely, I added a cover card, developing the undercover switch, and reinvented Rhod’s move.

That the cover card is not switched out with the others creates a slight problem. In contexts such as “Don’t Fear the Reaper”, if the first card is not selected by the performer, it has to be switched separately or forced. The following handling employs a variation of the Hofzinser spread force to switch the card.
THE FORCED UNDERCOVER SWITCH

Have three Aces on the bottom of the deck and one Ace (the force card) fifth from the top. As you spread the deck, use the Hofzinser spread cull to pull the force card underneath the spread. Briefly: Put your left thumb on top of the fourth card from the top (which is immediately to the right of the Ace) and hold this card in place. With your right fingers, contact the Ace from below and slide it to the right, under the spread (Photo 78). Pull the Ace far enough to the right so that its left edge clears the card below it. Since you know the position of the Ace before you start spreading the cards, you needn’t look at the pack as you cull the card.

The Ace is hidden under the spread, held lightly against it by the right fingers. When the spectator touches a card, break the spread below the selection, bringing it to the bottom of the right hand’s portion, with the Ace hidden under the spread to the right. Tap the top of the left-hand packet against the left edge of the right hand’s cards to square them. Then, with your left fingertips, pull out the bottom card of the right half and outjog it. This is the force card. Place the right hand’s cards on top of the rest and continue with the undercover switch as described.

Thoughts and Commentary: While this handling does allow the cards to be selected by four people other than yourself, I am not entirely sure that this strengthens the impact. While many magicians would consider the selection procedure of “Don’t Fear the Reaper” to entail “four spectators each touching a card”, it might instead be thought of as “four people each touching a card”. This way, not only is a sleight eliminated, but touching the first card yourself also gives an added bonus. By providing the spectators an example to follow, you prevent them from trying to remove their selections from the pack. This is how Alex Elmsley performed the effect.

I have found the effect to be identical for audiences, no matter which handling is employed. Experiment and determine for yourself if this is the case.

The following two items are included to illustrate the diversity of the undercover switch. The first routine will help you to form an understanding of the switch mechanics before attempting more advanced applications.
**SIMPATICO**

“Let’s do an experiment to see if we’re compatible. If this proves that we are, we can hang out and I’ll do magic all night. Or, if you prefer...not. If this experiment doesn’t work, I’m sorry. It’s unfortunate, but you will have to leave.” The performer outjogs a random card from a facedown deck. The cards are spread and a spectator touches one, which is also outjogged. Both cards are stripped from the deck. The first card is turned over. “A Six. Well, now we’ll see if you can stay. If your card is similar—a Five or a Seven, for example, we’re compatible. If it’s a Two or a Queen or something, I’m afraid it’ll be ‘goodbye.’” The other card is turned over. It’s also a Six. “Imagine that. The cards never lie.”

The method is simple. You have a card on the bottom of the deck and its mate in the middle, with a little-finger break held beneath it. Simply outjog the card above the break. Continue spreading through the pack and have a spectator touch another card. Execute the undercover switch, and the rest is presentation.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** When I visited Las Vegas the first time, I made it a point to eat dinner at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino to witness the legendary Michael Skinner. The show was intense. It took several days to even begin digesting what I had seen—better put, what I had experienced.

I’d had the good fortune of watching many great card men, but never anyone like Skinner. He was so solid. He was solid, and he was slow. Michael was slow because he cared enough about the audience not to rush an effect. He never “wrapped it up quickly” only to glance anxiously at the audience for a reaction. Michael was one of the few genuinely secure magicians I have ever met. He wanted you to like his magic, but he didn’t need you to.

If you wish to perform “Simpatico”, it is important that you play it for all it’s worth. Your confidence in an effect is central to the quality of the audience’s experience. It is difficult to be mystified by a magician who doesn’t know his effect is wonderful unless the audience tells him it is. When performed slowly, this effect can be quite mystifying. However, it begs repetition, so be prepared to repeat it, but make sure you use a different method. You might consider using it in combination with another routine, such as “Synchronicity” from The Classic Magic of Larry Jennings by Mike Maxwell.
**FOUR BY FOUR**

Four cards of contrasting values are outjogged from different parts of a faceup spread. A spectator has a completely free choice of any of the outjogged cards; let's assume she chooses a Six.

The Six is cut to the face of the deck. The outjogged cards are stripped out and the packet is spread to reveal all four Sixes!

Get four sets of four mates distributed throughout your deck. For example, the four Nines together near the top of the deck, the four Threes about halfway down, the four Kings a little lower, and the four Sixes near the bottom.

With the face of the pack toward you, spread the deck and upjog the card at the rear of each set of mates. Once you've done this, bring your hands down so that the spectators can see the faces of the cards. Since all attention will be on the jogged cards, no one will notice the mates above them. If you feel it necessary, keeping a fairly tight spread will further serve to hide the mates.

Have someone point to one of the outjogged cards. Emphasize the freedom of her selection and offer her a chance to change her mind. Once her choice is made, use both hands to split the spread above the selection and, with your left thumb, hold the chosen outjogged card in place as you cut this card to the face, bringing the three mates to the rear.

As the deck is reassembled, push the chosen card forward slightly, outjogging it more than the other three jogged cards. Use the imperceptible get-ready, described on page 59, to obtain a left little-finger break above the three mates.

Execute the undercover switch, place the deck aside, and perform your most effective magical gesture. Spread the packet to reveal four of a kind. Alternatively, you can turn the cards facedown and deal them one at a time, stud-style, to the table.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** The most effective way to distribute four sets of mates throughout the deck is to allow the groups to form during performance; a trick with the four Queens, followed by one with the four Aces, and so on until four sets have been used. This might happen in one “packet happy” show, or after a few different close-up sets, depending on the bent of the performer. Then, after a few false shuffles, the stage is set. As a matter of sheer practicality, this is the only way to prepare for the trick.
THE UNDER CONTROL SWITCH

Owing to the forward bevel of the deck, the outjogged cards need not be pushed completely flush with the pack in order to be covered. This allows greater utility in that the cards switched out of play can be kept under control, to be used again at the performer’s leisure.

When you want to keep control of the cards to be switched out, simply press down with the right thumb a little harder than you normally would during the strip-out action. This will cause the jogged cards to bind as the left forefinger pushes them into the pack, ensuring that the cards are not pushed flush. Just make sure you don’t press down so hard that the cards bind before they are covered by the bevel. Now, the cards are easily indexed (Photo 79, left thumb moved to expose configuration), and nearly any multiple shift can be used to control them. For most situations, the following procedure is direct and effective. With your left hand, set aside the stripped-out cards. Then turn your left hand palm up and take the deck, your thumb near the outer left corner and your fingers on the right side. Turn your right hand palm down to regrip the deck from above, your right thumb near the inner left corner and your fingers on the right in preparation for a Hindu shuffle.

Notice that your left thumb and first two fingers are perfectly positioned to strip out the jogged cards along with the top portion of the beveled deck (Photo 80). Do this, and let the stripped cards fall into your left palm. Then complete the Hindu shuffle. The three selections are now on the bottom of the deck. Of course, no attention should be focused on the control, as the audience should have no notion that cards are being “lost in the deck”. The deck is simply being shuffled. This control is essentially Dr. Jacob Daley’s bevel multiple shift from Karl Fulves’s Epilogue, No. 13.

Thoughts and Commentary: An obvious application for this switch is in setting up for an Ace Assembly. With the deck faceup, spread the cards and outjog the four Aces. As you do this, get a left little-finger break above the three cards at the rear of the spread. Next show the faceup spread with the outjogged Aces to the spectators. Close the spread and execute the undercover switch, leaving the three Aces slightly outjogged.
Turn the packet facedown in your left hand and deal the cards out on the table in the familiar T-formation. Then Hindu shuffle the remainder of the faceup deck, controlling the three Aces to the rear. Turn the deck facedown, bringing the three Aces uppermost. You are now set to perform any number of Ace Assemblies.

Some might find it worthwhile to explore alternatives to the Hindu shuffle for the control of the switched-out cards. The audience has just seen the four Aces removed from the pack and placed onto the table. There is no heat on the pack, and it is important that your control of the remaining three Aces not change that.

Should you find the Hindu shuffle lacking, one excellent method is the handling of Frank Thompson’s multiple shift in *The Complete Works of Derek Dingle*. The sleight can be performed indetectably as the pack is turned facedown, while attention is drawn to the cards on the table.
A USEFUL SWITCH

Frequently, when you need to switch cards, the cards to be switched out have already been removed from the pack. In these instances, when the undercover switch is inappropriate, the following sleight can be used with great utility. The flash change from “Flash Poker” (published in The Secrets of Brother John Hamman by Richard Kaufman) was the inspiration for this virtually angle-proof switch.

A downward bow in the pack helps facilitate the sleight. Assume, for learning purposes, that you want to switch three of the four Aces for indifferent cards. The Aces are on the table. The pack is in the left hand, a fourth-finger break held below the top three cards to be switched in. With your right hand, pick up the four Aces, spread in a faceup fan. Let’s say the Ace of Spades is at the face of the packet. The right fourth finger should be used to keep the back edges straight.

As the right hand squares the Aces against the left thumb, maintain the fourth-finger break and, with your left third finger, secure a break under the Ace of Spades (Photo 81). You will now seem to raise the Aces to the left fingertips, squaring them. In reality, the lower three Aces and the three cards above the break will be reversed under the Ace of Spades, which will serve as a cover card. This reverse will be described in several steps, but these must blend into one smooth motion.

With the right hand, grasp the seven-card packet from above at the left corners, the thumb at the back edge and the outer joint of the second finger at the front edge. Outjog the packet for about a third of its length, allowing the fourth-finger break to collapse and the seven-card packet to fall flat on top of the deck. Make sure the left edge of the packet remains against the left thumb and that you maintain the left third-finger break (Photo 82).

With the packet outjogged, rotate the left forearm rightward (Photo 83). The deck and the bottom six cards of the packet go to the right, while the cover card is held by the right hand and remains horizontal. It should appear to the audience as though the packet is lifted up from the deck. The reality is the opposite: The deck is lowered slightly away from the cover card.
This fact accounts for the angle-efficiency of this switch.

The actual reverse is performed by the left forefinger, which curls beneath the packet, now slanting down to the right. Push the finger lightly but surely to the right against the bottom of the six-card packet until it pivots over on the left fingertips, clearing the top card and reversing in the process (Photo 84). The cards stop when the outer right corner is caught securely in the fork at the base of the right third and fourth fingers. This is all very similar to the basic action of the gravity half pass.

Do not pause here. At this point, the left forefinger slips downward off the lower edge of the packet and immediately pulls the left side up (Photo 85). The cards begin to coalesce with the Ace of Spades. As this is happening, the right side of the packet hinges on the right palm as the left hand returns the pack parallel with the ground. These actions should leave the seven-card packet once again whole and outjogged from the pack.

You will now finish by unloading the three bottom cards of the outjogged packet, as follows: With the pad of the left thumb at the outer left corner of the packet, lift the top four cards as in the first action of a Charlier cut. This is facilitated by the natural break due to the bow in the cards. As the packet separates, use your left first finger to push the three cards below the break flush with the top of the pack. Although the cards could be unloaded during a deliberate squaring action,
unloading them using only the left hand is more disarming. It also frees the right hand to provide a covering gesture, such as taking the packet away from the left hand. The deceptive-ness of this approach to the cleanup is derived not so much from its invisibility, as from the misdirective leverage gained by having the right hand free.

Thoughts and Commentary: This switch is basically a packet half pass, executed with a cover card above and the pack below. It is a reasonably complex procedure, and to use it to its full advantage, some close proximity to the audience is desirable. Like many shifts and shift-type maneuvers, the farther away from the audience, the more likely the fingers will be seen to move. Most standard shifts, if well executed, are ideally suited for use in intimate settings. In other words, when performed close up, they don’t flash. Magicians who complain that their shift flashes when performed from several feet away misunderstand its nature; a sleight is misjudged when it is not viewed in its appropriate context.

Erdnase himself provides a perfect example of misunderstood sleights. The longitudinal shift and the S.W.E. shift are thought by almost all card men to be antiquities, with little or no practical value to today’s workers. It’s easy to understand why, since they are almost always demonstrated close up, at the same range where the classic pass is at its most effective. These “fingertip” shifts, originally performed without the benefit of electric light, were never meant to be performed at a table, or even at close quarters. To examine these sleights in their proper context, it must be remembered that close-up magic was not a true discipline at the time of Erdnase’s writing. Magic was performed on stages and in parlours and drawing rooms. The longitudinal and S.W.E. shifts were, then, never close-up sleights. As experiment will show, performed even at a distance of only five paces, these shifts work quite well. So, while the Erdnase fingertip shifts may be considered dinosaurs to some, there are situations where they become ideal. The key is context.
DECKING THE TOP

Many magicians exert inexhaustible effort in learning to palm a card, but next to none in learning how to replace one. This angle-efficient palm replacement, when executed properly, is invisible. It uses the same covering action as Vernon’s top palm from Select Secrets—the act of squaring the pack and raising it to the fingertips.

Though the actions of the sleight will be described in steps, it is important that they all blend into one seamless motion. Begin with a card palmed in your right hand. The pack is held unsquared in the left hand, beveled and slanting down to the right at a forty-five-degree angle (Photo 86).

Bring your right hand over the pack and, with the fingers at the front and the thumb at the back, grasp only the bottom portion. The top of the pack should not be obscured by your right hand (Photo 87). Slightly extend your left fingers. This action should cause the top portion of the pack to begin to slide to the right, owing to the forty-five-degree angle at which the cards are held (Photo 88). The left fingers allow the cards to spread until the uppermost ones are directly beneath the right palm. At that moment, drop the palmed card squarely onto the pack, making sure you do not move the right hand or fingers in the slightest. It is also important that the cards do not extend beyond the right side of the right hand.

In a continuing action, the extended left fingers curl in, squaring the pack.
against the left thumb. As this happens, the right hand raises the pack to the left fingertips, applying pressure now to hold all the cards square. At the finish of the sleight, the cards are held at the left fingertips, thumb on the left side, fingers on the right, and first finger curled beneath. The cards squared, the right hand can move aside or, even better, lift the deck and carry it away.

Thoughts and Commentary: I first saw Howard Schwarzman demonstrate Vernon's top palm in the early nineties. He simply raised the pack to his left fingertips and the sleight was accomplished, without the slightest untoward movement or suspicious action. In his hands, it is one the most beautiful examples of sleight-of-hand one might ever witness.

The beautiful thing about the action of raising the pack to the fingertips is that it gives some logical reason for the hands to come together, without drawing undue attention to the action. Since Vernon described his top palm, many ingenious covering actions have been developed for the sleight, indeed for most sleights. Actions such as fans, dribbles, and riffles will, no doubt, render a classic pass invisible. You will not see the shift, because you will be too busy watching the cards flutter from hand to hand. And you certainly will not hear the shift, because of the thunderous riffling of the cards. These actions cover the sleights not with stealth, but with bombast.

The majority of riffle- and dribble-pass practitioners do not view covering actions as a last resort. Instead of adding cover to lend a shift the final touch in the way of invisibility, they add it when the move is at fifty percent or less—when the packets can be seen (and heard) to be transposing boldly. At this point, they prematurely determine the construction of the sleight is faulty and opt for the easy answer—an overt covering action.

Covering actions should not be used to mask faulty technique. Only when the basic technique can be executed as silently and invisibly as the design allows, should a covering action be added; and then, only when absolutely required. A performer, working completely surrounded, with children looking up and parents looking down, might well resort to a soft riffle to cover the rough spots in a shift. However, the constant adding of bold covering actions to secret techniques promotes a dangerous aesthetic in magic—that audiences are encouraged to stare at things that should not exist. Whether the technique is well executed or not, mystery suffers from this approach. Often, the display of these techniques borders on hubris. A humble and stealthy manner is far more conducive to mystery than brashness.

A play is primarily written not to be read, but produced. A playwright needs to entice artists to want to work on his play; it must have substance. Paradoxically, for artists to want to work on a play, it must also be incomplete. An artist must read the play and feel as though he could help complete it. To this end, a good playwright leaves
room for the artists, who will produce the play to make it whole. Poor is the dialogue that leaves no room for interpretation. Such writing has no mystery, no power.

Sleight-of-hand might be thought of in a similar way. While it can be studied academically, it is meant to be performed. In a well-constructed sleight, everything extraneous has been removed. That includes overt and bizarre covering actions. Elegant, simple sleights force the performer to find the cover in performance. The artist must complete the sleight himself, in his interpretation. This is why a riffle pass, for example, is thought to be so much easier than a classic pass. The riffle pass can be made whole in front of the mirror in the practice room. The riffle is the context. The classic pass, by comparison, seems not very deceptive at first blush. With no riffle or snap, it derives its context only in live performance, from an audience. There is really no effective way to practice the sleight without an audience, as the cover is provided by interaction with them.

In performance, focus your attention on the audience, as opposed to the cards and the interesting sounds they can make and the dances they can perform. When you need to perform a secret action, do not draw attention to it out of insecurity and fear. Instead, draw attention to the effect and, as you do, simply raise the pack to your fingertips.
A DIMINISHING LIFT

The problem with diminishing lift sequences is the last card. After using the same turnover action to show the first “three” cards, the last card nearly always demands a maneuver different from those before. The challenge is to make all the turnovers look the same. This sequence does not use the often visible Mexican turnover methods frequently seen. The angles are clear and there is very little tension exhibited. This handling will be used in “The Omen” (page 81).

Hold four facedown cards in left-hand dealing grip. The card you will be showing repeatedly, say the Six of Clubs, is third from the top. With your left thumb at the outer left corner of the packet, do a block push-off of the top three cards and use your right hand to turn the triple card over on the packet. You should turn the triple faceup as if you are turning a page (Photo 89). This is the standard turnover action to be used for every turnover in this sequence. The Six of Clubs is displayed. Do another triple turnover. Then use your left thumb to push the top card of the packet (apparently the Six) to the right, and take it between your right thumb, above, and index finger, below.

With your left thumb, do another block push-off (of two cards this time). Although you hold a card in your right hand, you have three fingers free to do a double turnover, again displaying the Six of Clubs. Turn the double card facedown and take the top card of the left hand’s packet underneath the card in your right hand. Use your right fingers to pull this second card so that it is jogged inward and to the right (Photo 90). This position of the right hand’s cards will provide cover for the secret action to follow.

With your right fingers, turn the top card in your left hand faceup, again displaying the Six of Clubs. Make sure this turnover duplicates the ones preceding it. With your left fourth finger, pull down slightly on the bottom card, allowing the right fingertips to grip the right edge of the Six of Clubs. At this point, no more than half of the face of the card should be visible. As your right fingers take the card to turn it facedown, begin the actions of a half pass with the bottom card in your left hand. That is, tilt your left hand to
bring the card to a forty-five-degree angle and curl your left fingers in, pressing down on the right side of the card, levering it up (Photo 91).

As the card tips up, a gap is created between it and your left palm. Resist the urge to move your left thumb in the slightest; keep it pressed against the left side of the faceup card. At this point, do not continue with the half pass; instead, allow the left side of the faceup card to fall into the aforementioned gap (Photo 92). As the faceup card is turned facedown between the bottom card and the left palm, return your left hand to its starting position, causing the two cards to coalesce (Photo 93). The two jogged cards in your right hand cover the deceit from nearly every angle.

Thumb over the left hand’s top card and take it into your right hand, below the other two cards. Use these three cards to turn over the last card, cleanly displaying the “fourth” Six of Clubs.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** Always keep in mind the importance of rhythm. When all four cards are turned over at the same pace, not only is the eye of the spectator lulled, but so are his mind and body. It was Larry Jennings who really impressed upon me how many of magic’s secret techniques, especially counts and displays, rely for their deceptiveness as much on rhythm as on visual allure.

This diminishing lift sequence was inspired by a handling Larry showed me (from his 1992 lecture notes). He started with four cards, did a triple turnover, turned the triple facedown, then dealt the first card to the table. He then did a double turnover, performing an all-around square-up before turning the double card facedown and dealing the top card to the table. Left with only two cards, he turned over the top one to display the card a third time. He then
performed a Christ twist, reversing the lower card of the two, then immediately turned the two cards, as one, facedown and cleanly dealt the upper one onto the table. He showed the last card and dealt it onto the others.

You have probably noticed there is a discrepancy in this procedure—namely, the third card is turned facedown onto your empty left palm, where there should be a fourth card. Despite this discrepancy, which seems like it ought to be glaring, there was quite a good illusion when Larry demonstrated it. The repetition and the slow rhythm he achieved made me not quite sure I hadn’t seen a card there.

Larry considered his handling only the germ of an idea, and one night we discussed the problem at length. The diminishing lift sequence offered here attempts to solve two weaknesses of Larry’s work-in-progress. First, using cover cards obscures a good deal of the discrepancy, making the illusion stronger. Also, Larry’s all-around squaring action on both the second and third cards (one to prepare the audience and one for the secret reverse) broke up the sequence, thus wounding perhaps the greatest aid to any false count or display—a clear, consistent rhythm.

Central to Larry’s handling of the display was the notion that the cards should be dealt to the table, one at a time. The in-the-hands handling taught here is quite effective, and is ideal when there is no table. However, Larry’s notion is valid. A degree of clarity is added when the cards are displayed, then dealt to the table. Method affects effect.
The All Together Now Shift

The majority of multiple shifts require the deck to be cut, shuffled, or overtly manipulated in some fashion. This one eliminates all apparent cutting or shuffling. Several cards are inserted into various parts of the deck and are then immediately (and secretly) controlled to the top.

Let’s assume that you want to control the four Aces. Begin with the deck faceup in your left hand and the Aces faceup in your right. With your left thumb, riffl e down the outer left corner of the deck and insert each Ace at a different location in the deck, leaving them outjogged.

With your right hand, reach for the deck, in preparation for fanning the cards. As you grab the deck, your right middle fi nger hits the right side of the outjogged cards and angles them diagonally to the left (Photo 94). Simultaneously, shift the deck to the left, into the fork of your left thumb. In a continuing action, use your right index fi nger to fan the deck (Photo 95). Display the fan, then use your right hand to close the deck, but be careful not to change the angle of the outjogged Aces.

After the fan is closed, use your right hand to raise the deck to your left fi nger tips, and hold it in your left hand in a modified straddle grip. Your left thumb and forefi nger are on opposite sides of the outjogged cards at the junctures where the cards meet the deck. Your second and third fi ngers lie along the right side of the deck and your little fi nger is at the back (Photo 96). Your right hand is over the deck and holds the cards above the uppermost outjogged Ace, using the middle fi nger at the front and the thumb at the rear.

You will now appear to straighten the outjogged Aces and push them flush. Two things happen at once here: Move your left thumb outward and the out-
jogged cards will pivot on the left forefinger until they are parallel with the deck but are jogged to the left (Photo 97, right hand omitted to expose the configuration). At the same time, move the top block of cards held by your right hand to the left until they are in line with the outjogged cards (Photo 98, exposed view). Your right hand covers the rest of the deck from the spectators’ view. Use your right fingers to push the outjogged cards flush with the top packet (Photos 99 and 100). To the audience it appears as if they are pushed squarely into the deck.

Position check: Look at Photo 101. Each hand holds a packet. These packets are connected by the Aces. Your right hand holds the top packet and the Aces from above, your thumb at the back, your first finger curled on top, and your remaining fingers at the front. To the spectators, this top packet appears to be the entire deck. Hidden from view by your right hand is the bottom packet, which is held in a left-hand straddle grip, with your forefinger at the front end, the little finger at the back, and your other fingers along the right side. Your left thumb is along the side of the top packet and enhances the illusion that your right hand holds the entire deck.

As soon as the Aces are flush with the top packet, you appear to turn the deck over and square it. Actually you perform a turnover pass as follows. Rotate your left forearm to the right. The left hand’s packet begins to turn over. The Aces in this packet are stripped out and unite with the top packet. Your right hand (with its cards) does not move...
until the Aces have been disengaged. Then, your left thumb, which is against the left side of the top packet, pushes on the left edge of the cards, causing the packet to swivel facedown (Photo 102). The axis of rotation for this swivel is along the left side, between your right thumb and middle finger (Photo 103). Once the packets are facedown, they coalesce as you square the deck. The four Aces are now on top.

Thoughts and Commentary: John Lovick felt this variation of the straddle multiple shifts by Frank Thompson and Edward Marlo would be of interest to many of you. It does have features to recommend it. For example, the Aces maintain their separated status as they are (supposedly) pushed flush with the pack. Also, there is the fine illusion of the sidejogged Aces being squared lengthwise with the deck, when they are in reality squared only with the upper packet.

That said, I should mention that I don’t use this sleight, and must explain why. An old tenet of the actor, with regard to how one uses energy on stage, is that the human mind is only capable of one thought at a time. While the mind may constantly jump back and forth between thoughts, it cannot think two thoughts at once.

This is the reason an actor learns his lines to the point where they become habitual. He hears his cue and out comes the line. Any time spent thinking about a line, even if only for a moment, is time during which he is not acting. Any secret technique employed by the magician is equivalent.
Just as audiences know that actors memorize their lines, they know that magicians use secret methods to entertain. To a great degree, the fundamental success or failure of a close-up magic performance depends on the magician’s ability to, when executing a secret technique, focus his attention on the audience, rather than on his technique. (Remember, we can only think one thought at a time.)

The methods used must, like good dialogue, be capable of being learned to the point where they are inveterate. They must become ingrained in the performer’s body. During the three years I worked with the shift described above, I was never able, even once, to perform it without thinking about it.

The study of card technique is intellectual, academic. The performance of magic is physical.
MAGIC
THE OMEN

“People often ask if I perform sleight-of-hand or if I do real magic. There is a very real difference between the two. Sleight-of-hand is fast fingers, consummate skill. Real magic is the work of the devil. Allow me to demonstrate—or should I say demonstrate?”

The performer removes four cards from the deck and displays them one at a time. “This Jack of Spades is our hero—a young boy known as Damien, Prince of Hell, the devil’s spawn. Damien’s father, the King of Spades, is the Ruler of Hell, and known to you as [a topical political figure].” The Queen of Spades is now shown. “This is Damien’s mother, the Queen of Hell, better known as [some infamous celebrity].” The packet is turned facedown.

“And finally, the Ace of Spades, a Catholic priest who, in order to save us all, is trying to murder Damien—which is odd, because priests are normally fond of little boys.”

“The inspiration for this routine was “Jumping Gemini” from Darwin Ortiz at the Card Table. To perform it, turn the deck faceup, remove the Jack, King, Queen, and Ace of Spades and place them onto the table. As you do this, cull any three Sixes to the rear of the deck and secure a left little-finger break above them. Immediately execute a half pass of the three Sixes, then double undercut the card at the face of the pack to the rear. Turn the deck facedown and perform a half pass beneath the top card. The double undercut is an open action. It shouldn’t be covered by misdirection. It is interesting to watch, so let it break up the two secret actions, the half passes that come before and after it.

There is now one facedown card on top of the faceup deck, and three facedown Sixes on the bottom. All this preparation is done during the preliminary presentation and should be finished by the time you say, “Allow me to demonstrate.” This may seem like a lot to accomplish in front of an audience, but if done casually while speaking, the spectators won’t focus on your actions—the trick has not yet started.

While holding the “facedown” deck in your left hand, use your right hand to pick up the four Spade cards and “introduce” them to the audience. As you finish the introductions, make number, don’t you? That’s right. Six, Six, Six.” As this is said, the King, Queen, and Ace are turned over—they have changed into three Sixes, the sign of the beast.

The packet is turned facedown.

“Damien can escape the priest’s murder-ous traps, because he has magical powers. Watch. Even when placed down in the fourth level of Hell, he is able to jump to the top.” The Jack of Spades is twice placed on the bottom of the packet and both times magically appears on top.

“Damien can also make it appear he is anywhere and everywhere.” All four cards are shown to be the Jack of Spades. “That’s the end of Damien’s magic demonstration, and we’d both like to thank you for watching. He is available for birthday parties and bar mitzvabs. If you’d like to call him, you have his
sure the Jack of Spades is on the face of the packet and square the four cards onto the deck. You will now use the half pass to accomplish a packet switch. If performed well, this method leaves no room for suspicion, let alone detection. After delivering the joke about priests, immediately perform a half pass below the Jack and, in a continuing action, with your right hand, lift the four cards above the natural break (a Jack and three Sixes). You are left with a reversed card fourth from the bottom, but you won’t need the deck again; you can place it aside.

Turn the packet facedown and execute a Jordan count. Briefly: Hold the packet in right-hand pinch grip. With your left thumb, peel the top card into your left hand. Peel the second card into the left hand, on top of the first. As your left hand returns to take the third card, the cards in the left hand go underneath (and join) the two in the right hand. With your right thumb, do a block push-off and take the top three cards into your left hand. Take the fourth card on top of the others to conclude. This apparently brings the Jack to the top of the packet; it is actually third from the top. Hold the packet in left-hand dealing grip and perform a triple turnover, displaying the Jack. Turn the triple card facedown. Transfer the top card to the bottom of the packet and do a double turnover to show the Jack has returned to the top. Turn the double card facedown and again transfer the top card to the bottom. Turn the top card faceup to display the Jack a third time.

Turn the Jack facedown and casually cut the top two cards to the bottom. This places the Jack third from the top, the correct position for the diminishing lift sequence described on page 72. Use this sequence to show all four cards as the Jack of Spades.

After you finish the diminishing lift sequence, keep the Jack at the face of the packet and perform a Flushtration count. Briefly: Hold the packet facedown in right-hand end grip. Rotate your right hand palm up to show the Jack at the face of the packet. Rotate your hand down and, with your left thumb, peel the top card of the packet into your left hand. Again rotate the right hand, display the Jack, turn the hand down, and peel the top card onto the one already in your left hand. Repeat this procedure one more time. At the end of the count, place the Jack faceup onto the table. Deal the other three cards facedown in front of the Jack in a T-formation. Pass your hand over the three facedown cards and turn them over (Photo 104), saying, “You have his number, don’t you? That’s right. Six, Six, Six.”

Thoughts and Commentary: Often, a casual audience is unwilling to focus
wholeheartedly on magic. While this is not an optimum situation, or even a pleasing one, it is a reality. It becomes a losing battle trying to obtain a level of focus from spectators they do not wish to give, whether due to inebriation or personal agendas. These unfortunate situations demand a special approach to technique.

For example, consider the options open to one who wishes to display a packet as consisting of four duplicate cards. Two rival methods for this task are diminishing lift sequences and the Flushtration count. Card workers seem divided into three camps with regard to this issue. One group prefers the diminishing lift exclusively, feeling the discrepant nature of the Flushtration count ill-conceived. Others only perform the Flushtration count, preferring its ease of execution over any alternative. The third group would have both their cake and the eating, choosing to follow the diminishing lift with a Flushtration count, thinking the Flushtration count serves well as a convincer, but it cannot stand alone.

Unfortunately, these decisions are often based on the needs of the performer (for example, the need to be loved, the need to be thought of as skillful, or the need to put forth minimal effort). Better results come from addressing the needs of the audience.

Different audiences have different needs. An attentive, quiet audience may feel startled and rushed by a smooth Flushtration count and find themselves saying, “Oh my god, were those four all the same? Hey, show me those cards again!” It is always advisable for an audience to understand the effect without the performer having to repeat it. Such an audience would appreciate not being rushed and can focus on a good diminishing lift sequence.

For a less attentive audience, the Flushtration count would be appropriate. Take a cocktail party where the performer’s job description is “to divert”, rather than “to captivate”. Here, the deliberate nature of the diminishing lift sequence is uncalled for. Even more, it may detract, as the rhythm of the sequence is literally out of step with the crowd. They would not appreciate being slowed down to watch even the loveliest sequence. The Flushtration count not only must be performed casually to be deceptive, it must be watched casually as well, as its discrepant nature renders it vulnerable. So, for this type of crowd, a technique’s apparent weakness becomes its strength. Not only will the Flushtration count do, it becomes ideal.

This is a primary reason for having multiple methods in readiness. If one wishes to be attentive to the audience’s needs, different methods should be used at different times. A cobbler makes many different kinds of shoes; for, while he could serve many feet with one style, he wants his shoes to find favor with as many feet as possible. He knows that some shoes require more time and expense to produce than others, and consumers must make a greater investment to enjoy them. But his very best shoes would not be
appreciated by everybody; therefore, less refined styles are also offered. When choosing to address this issue in one’s performances, it is important not to view the decision in terms of "casting pearls before swine" or in any other egotistical vein. Rather than judge the audience, or blame them, or try to change them, choose instead to serve their needs.
GOLDEN NUGGET

The performer displays the four Queens on top of the deck. He offers to tell a story about going to his favorite hotel and casino. He indicates the Queens, saying, “And my favorite hotel is…?” prompting a spectator to offer The Four Queens as a guess. “Of course not. I went to The Golden Nugget. To try the slot machines. The Qs stand for quarters.”

The performer tells how he bet his first quarter and lost, leaving him with seventy-five cents. He spreads the Queens on top of the deck to show one has vanished. The spread is closed as the performer says he took a chance with a second quarter. He spreads the cards to reveal another Queen has vanished and says, “That left fifty cents.”

He tells how he gave it another try, as he spreads the cards and only one Queen remains. “That left twenty-five cents.”

The performer even risked his last quarter. The cards are spread to show all four Queens have returned! “That’s one thing about The Golden Nugget. They always leave you with just enough to keep you coming back.”

There are two versions of this routine. The second is simpler in construction, but more difficult to perform. If you’ve learned the gravity half pass, you can perform the first version almost immediately.

Take the Queens from the deck and place them faceup on the table or in a spectator’s hands. While the Queens are being examined, use a half pass to reverse the bottom half of the facedown deck. Take the Queens and arrange them faceup, with the Queen of Spades on top, followed by a red Queen, the Queen of Clubs, and finally the other red Queen. Put them faceup on top of the deck. Spread the Queens and talk about the Golden Nugget and your four quarters.

As you close the spread, get a left little-finger break above the lowermost red Queen. Perform a half pass; then, with your right thumb, give the cards a riffl e up the back. This riffl e represents the spinning of a slot machine, but can also help cover a weak half pass. Spread the top twenty or so cards. Only three Queens show—one of your “quarters” has been lost.

Close the spread, this time catching a left little-finger break under the top card (the Queen of Spades). Perform a half pass to reverse all but the top card, followed by a riffl e. To show only two “quarters” left, take the Queen of Spades into your right hand, the other Queen on top of it, then spread the top twenty or so cards underneath them. Transposing the two Queens prevents a glaring color discrepancy later in the routine.

Close the spread and get a left little-finger break under the two Queens. Perform a half pass at the break, bringing all four Queens back to the top. Mention that you were thinking about leaving the Nugget with your fifty cents, but changed your mind. As you say this, use your right fingers to injog
the red Queen, showing the Queen of Spades beneath it (Photo 105). As you push the red Queen flush, get a left little-finger break under it and perform a half pass. State that you decided to take a chance and risk another quarter. Say, “I'd been gambling for some time now. I'd even lost my enthusiasm to pull the big handle. So I just pressed the button.” Push an imaginary button in the center of the red Queen, then thumb the Queen into your right hand to show only one “quarter” left. You are able, if you wish, to spread more cards, but it should be treated as an afterthought. If you are truly conveying the notion that the money is gone, you shouldn’t need to prove anything at this point.

Place the faceup red Queen back on top of the deck and immediately do another half pass under it, again bringing all four Queens to the top. From above, use your right hand to lift the four Queens as one. You should have little difficulty in picking up the Queens because of the natural break beneath them. Say, “Well, I only had one quarter left. I would have cut my losses, but my mom didn’t raise a quitter.”

Hold your right hand about a foot above the deck (Photo 106) and drop the Queens onto it, reinforcing the idea you only have one. Give the cards a final riffle—then spread to reveal your “quarters” have returned. As you square the cards, immediately do another half pass at the natural break between the two halves of the deck. The effect is over and the pack is clean.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** The inspiration for “Golden Nugget” came from an unpublished routine by Steve Freeman, based on a Larry Jennings handling of a similar plot. It is the only effect in this book where more than one method is offered. All of the pieces in this collection have been through many stages and handlings; in every case, except this one, there has been one version that stands out.
as being worthy of publication. In the case of the “Golden Nugget”, however, the choice of the best method is left up to the reader.

The second handling was designed simply to cut down the number of sleights. In the first version there are (including set-up and clean-up) seven sleights total, all half passes. Though the advanced handling requires fewer sleights, it is more difficult—that is, more difficult to perform naturally and without tension.

Including the clean-up, the advanced handling only requires five sleights, though two of them are a cover pass-half pass hybrid—not a simple sleight to comprehend or execute, by any means. I most often perform the first method, simply because the half pass can be done surrounded—and I find the sleight reliable enough to withstand repetition.

The pass hybrid used in the advanced handling was first attributed in print to W. G. Craigen in the June 1929 issue of *The Magic Wand*. In a routine similar to “Golden Nugget”, called “The Creeping Aces”, Larry Jennings used the move to make cards disappear from the middle of the deck (see *Jennings ’67* by Richard Kaufman). Victor Farelli in *Farelli’s Card Magic, Part Two*, under the title “A Link with the Past”, describes a similar maneuver, wherein the card is not reversed, and credits the sleight (indirectly) to John Henry Anderson, the Wizard of the North. It seems likely Anderson also used the variation with the reverse.

**ADVANCED HANDLING**

As before, remove the four Queens and arrange them in black-red-black-red order, with the Queen of Spades at the face of the packet. Pick up the facedown deck and get a left little-finger break under the top ten or so cards as you place the packet of Queens on top. Spread the top four cards to once again show the Queens.

You will vanish the first Queen using the aforementioned cover pass-half pass combination. As you close the spread, use your left third finger to get a break above the bottom Queen. You now hold two breaks with your left fingers (Photo 107). Tilt the right side of the deck down at a forty-five-degree angle and, with your right hand, hold the deck from above, giving cover to the following action. Straighten your left fingers and let gravity pull the packet between the two left finger breaks down and away from the rest of
Spread the cards to show one of the Queens has vanished.

The second vanish is identical to that in the first handling. Square the Queens, getting a left little-finger break under the top Queen, and perform a half pass. Riffle up the back of the pack. Then take the first Queen into your right hand, take the second Queen on top of it, return both to the top of the deck, and spread the cards to show only two Queens. Be careful, as there are only about ten cards you can spread before you hazard exposing reversed cards.

Square the two Queens and get the tip of your left little finger below the upper one. Now, using only the left little finger, pull the second Queen out and under the deck, using the same action employed in the vanish of the first Queen—but with only one card this time (Photo 110). A light touch helps to prevent noise. Riffle up the back of the deck and then spread the top few cards to show another Queen has vanished.

End the routine in the same way given for the first version of “Golden Nugget”. That is, perform a half pass under the top Queen. Lift the four Queens as one and drop them back onto the deck, after which you show that all four Queens have returned. Clean up at your leisure.

Thoughts and Commentary: Years ago, when first working my way through Stars of Magic, I was quite distressed with my lack of progress in mastering the advanced handling of “Slow-Motion Four Aces”. With much
practice, I could do the basic handling quite well. This did not console me in the slightest, because the description implied that if I were actually an expert, I would only do the second method. The term “expert” can be misleading. An expert isn’t necessarily an artist who can execute the most technically demanding methods. Rather, an expert is one who knows how to make the right choice of which method to do—based on the needs of the effect and, of course, the audience.

There are a few trade-offs that must be considered when looking at the advanced handling of “Golden Nugget”. First, after the second and third vanishes, you will only be able to spread ten to fifteen cards before disconcerting reversed cards will be seen. In the first handling, you can safely spread half the pack. This affords a more open, less cozy appearance. Also, the hybrid sleight used in the advanced handling is not quite as angle-efficient as the gravity half pass. Unless your performing environment is suitably intimate, this sleight is more likely to flash than the half pass. If you wish to perform the effect for an audience several feet away from you, it is best to perform the first handling. If you choose the advanced handling, closer proximity is warranted, but take care that you don’t advance into the spectators’ laps—thought by many to be the appropriate distance for shift performances. Leave personal-space invasions for the sake of technique to shift demonstrators, and perform your magic at a distance that is comfortable for both you and the audience.
2001, AN ACE ODYSSEY

This assembly works well as a prelude to a longer Slow-Motion Assembly. It was developed while working with Alex Elmsley’s “1002nd Aces” (Volume One of *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley*), but is more closely related to Erdnase’s “The Exclusive Coterie”.

To perform, spread the deck faceup between your hands, pull out the four Aces and set them aside. As you do this, get a left little-finger break above the three cards at the rear of the deck. Maintain the break as you square the deck and hold it faceup in left-hand dealing position.

With your right hand, take the deck from above in preparation for an overhand shuffle. Grab all the cards above the break, right fingers at the front end, thumb at the back, forefinger on the left side. Leave the cards below the break in your left hand as you turn your right hand palm up, rotating the left side of the deck up, and begin an overhand shuffle (Photo 111). With your left thumb, draw cards off the right hand’s packet onto the faceup cards in your left hand, holding a left little-finger break above the three faceup cards as you shuffle onto them. When you have finished, square the cards and use your left little finger to push the face-down card above the break to the right, then get a little-finger break above it. In preparation for another overhand shuffle, with your right hand, grab the entire deck from below and transfer the break to your right thumb. Do another overhand shuffle and finish by throwing the bottom four-card packet on top. The three faceup cards are now below the top facedown card. This is a variation of a reverse titled “Facing the Bottom Card” in Hugard and Braue’s *Expert Card Technique*. As you square the deck, perform a half pass to reverse the bottom fifty-one cards. It should appear that the deck has merely been shuffled and squared. Actually, the deck now consists of one facedown card, followed by a majority of faceup cards, and three facedown cards on the bottom.

Gather the Aces from the table and hold them faceup between both hands (your left hand still holding the deck). Once the audience has registered the presence of the four Aces, square them faceup onto the deck and catch a left little-finger break below the top Ace. As soon as the Aces are squared, immediately do a half pass under the top Ace. There are now three faceup indifferent cards under the Ace on top of the deck. This is the half pass used as a packet switch described in “The Omen”.

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With your right hand, raise these four “Aces” (using the natural break beneath them) to the left fingertips, turn them facedown, and deal them to the table in a diamond formation. There must be no hesitation as they are squared, raised to the fingertips, turned over, and dealt. The last card dealt is an Ace—remember which position it occupies.

You will now appear to place three indifferent cards onto each “Ace”. With your left thumb, push three cards into your right hand and turn them faceup on the deck. Spread them to show random cards. Square them on the deck and raise them, still faceup, to your left fingertips, as you did with the Ace packet. With your right hand, grasp the packet at the outer end and turn it end over end, outjogging it facedown on the deck for half its length. The packet is next held momentarily at the sides between the left thumb and second finger, elevated above the deck, as your right hand regrips the packet from above (Photo 112) and places it onto one of the tabled indifferent cards. Using the same actions, repeat this for the second and third “Aces”.

For the fourth packet, the handling must duplicate that used for the first three packets; however, you will execute a few covert actions. Thumb off three cards from the deck, as before. Turn them faceup and spread them. As you square the cards, get a left little-finger break below the top card and immediately perform a half pass to reverse the rest of the pack. Follow this by bringing the four cards above the natural break to your left fingertips and hold the packet above the deck. This must all be one smooth action.

Of the three indifferent cards just displayed, two have been switched out for three Aces. Now, to ditch the card currently on the face of the packet, you will use a unique unloading move. With your right hand at the front end, thumb above, fingers beneath, take the packet and, with your right thumb, pull the card at the face very slightly forward, less than the width of the white border (Photo 113, right hand omitted and jog exaggerated for clarity). Simultaneously, turn the packet facedown, end over end.
As you turn the packet over, maintain the position of the slightly jogged card while you place the packet outjogged onto the pack.

With the right hand, take the packet from above in end grip, lightly pressing down on the inner end of the injogged card and gripping only the three cards above it (Photo 114). Do not yet lift the packet away from the deck. Rather, tilt the left hand slightly inward and to the right at a forty-five-degree angle (Photo 115). This lowers the indifferent card and deck away from the Ace packet and will completely cover the next action. With the left first finger, simply push the indifferent card square with the top of the deck. Simultaneously, or a moment later, move the right hand forward with its packet, which consists of three Aces. Now place the packet onto the tabled Ace. The work is done; the rest is magic.

Put the deck into your pocket. It is no longer needed and, as it contains reversed cards, will need to be cleaned up later. Ask a spectator to point to a pile. Use equivoque to force the Ace pile. In whatever manner suits your style, reveal that the Aces have gathered in the chosen pile and have disappeared from the other three.

Thoughts and Commentary: Magicians rarely handle equivoque well and it often looks suspicious, if not patently obvious, to the laity. One of the most elegant equivoque procedures I have ever seen was devised by Dean Dill, and it perfectly fits this routine. It was originally published in the instructions to Bob Kohler’s marketed item, “Aces in Their Faces”.

There are four ways in which this procedure can advance, and they all seem logical and straightforward. There isn’t a suspicious moment in any of them. The key is to understand each sequence thoroughly, so that there is no hesitation as you guide the spectator. Begin by having the spectator point to a pile. If
she points to the Ace pile and you don’t know how to conclude, you might want to consider getting out of magic.

If she doesn’t point to the Ace pile, say, “Imagine I’ve made all the Aces invisible. Pick up the invisible Ace in that pile.” Most often, the spectator will mime picking up a card. If she actually starts to pick up a card, say, “No, not that card, the invisible card.” At this point, she will catch on. Instruct her to place the invisible Ace onto any other pile. If she puts it onto the Ace pile, say, “Now, how many Aces are in this pile? That’s right, two. Pick up the other two invisible Aces and put them with these.” When she has done so, conclude the trick.

If she mimes putting the Ace somewhere other than the Ace pile, say, “Now, how many Aces are in this pile? That’s right, two. Pick up those two invisible Aces and put them on top of another pile.” If she puts them onto the Ace pile, say, “Now there are three Aces here. Do you see how they are starting to gather in one place? Pick up the last Ace and put it with these.” When she does, conclude the trick.

If the pile she pretends to put the two Aces on is not the Ace pile, say, “Now there are three Aces here. Pick them all up and put them on the last Ace.” Conclude the trick. You will find that spectators (since they are doing the actions) almost always keep track of which piles they’ve “taken” cards from and which they haven’t. However, if the spectator makes a mistake, gently correct her.
THREE KINGS

The performer takes four facedown cards from the deck and places them aside. He then has a card selected; for example, the King of Clubs. It is shuffled into the deck.

Taking up the four facedown cards, the performer tells the spectator that these are treasure maps that can help locate buried treasure—in this case, the selection. But like many treasure maps, there are also red herrings. Of the four, only one card will lead to the treasure. The spectator takes one; let’s assume it’s a Four.

The performer counts down from the top of the deck and the fourth card is the selection, the King of Clubs. But the spectator is suspicious. He says all the treasure-map cards must have been Fours. The performer smiles and says the spectator is almost right. They are all the same—they’re all Kings!

Start with the Kings on the bottom of the deck. Spread the cards, faces toward you. Pull out the Fours and place them facedown on the table, being careful not to let the spectators see them.

Cut the deck, hold a left little-finger break between the halves, and perform a classic force of any of the Kings just above the break. You have a four-card block, so the classic force is much easier than when forcing a single card.

Note which King the spectator takes and separate the deck above and below the selection, taking half in each hand.

Put the half in your left hand on top of the half in your right and square the deck. You must now bring the other three Kings to the bottom of the deck. Since you know how many Kings (if any) are on top of the deck, it is a simple matter to cut them to the bottom.

Have the selected card returned and control it to the top without disturbing the Kings on the bottom. The side steal is an excellent method to accomplish this. Another way is to swing cut half the deck into your left hand. Extend your left hand and have the selection replaced on top. Place the right hand’s packet on top of the left’s and catch a left little-finger break between them. Double undercut the bottom half to the top. The selected King is now on top, the other three Kings on bottom.

Using the imperceptible get-ready (page 59), get a left little-finger break above the bottom three Kings. Meanwhile, call attention to the four cards on the table and explain that these are treasure maps; but only one of them is accurate and will lead to the buried treasure. The others are red herrings. Have someone point to one card. Stress the completely free choice he has here. When he chooses, have him show the card to the rest of the audience.

As the card is being shown around, you will appear to casually place the remaining three cards off to one side. Actually, you will execute Annemann’s Jinx switch. With your right hand, gather and place the three Fours from the table onto the deck in your left hand.
hand (Photo 116). In a continuing action, with your right hand, take all the cards above the left little finger’s break and place them off to your right (Photo 117). Simultaneously, with your left hand, casually place the three Kings onto the table near the spectator. The misdirection here is strong, because you do the switch as the spectator is showing the card to the rest of the audience. Furthermore, with this switch you have not only exchanged the Fours for the Kings, but have also placed the spectator’s selection fourth from the top of the deck. Placing the card in the fourth position is Dan Harlan’s elegant idea.

Ask the spectator the value of the card. He will say Four. Cleanly count three cards from the top of the deck, then place the entire deck on top of the counted pile. This destroys the evidence and gives the trick a tidier look. Have the spectator turn over the top card of the deck. It is the selected King. Most attentive audience members will jump to the conclusion that all four treasure-map cards are Fours. Wait a few moments to allow bolder spectators to suggest as much. If they do, let them turn over the three Kings for a highly satisfactory conclusion. Often, you will find audiences are polite. They think they know the method, but they don’t want to hurt the magician’s feelings. In these cases, turn over the cards yourself, saying, “Often, people think these cards are all the same. Well, they are the same. They’re all Kings!”

Thoughts and Commentary: A magic performance is not a monologue, but a dialogue, with the audience spontaneously supplying half the exchange. Every audience is unique. Just as individuals have personalities, so do crowds. Because of this, they are unpredictable. “Three Kings” provokes spontaneous reactions from the spectators, requiring genuine improvisation by the performer.

Imagine a selfish or immature actor, who stands on stage waiting for his turn to speak. His lines are not spoken in reaction to those around him, since he does not hear them. Unconscious of anything but his own thoughts (not even those of his character), he simply waits for silence; then he knows it’s his turn to speak. Not surprisingly, the scene is dead. Only when an actor listens and reacts does the scene come alive.
Magic is a theatrical art—it exists only as a live experience. Unlike a movie, a magic performance must be created anew every time. This news can be frightful to the uninitiated, for magic is a beast; the immature try to tame it, to create the same experience every time. Not only is this goal impossible, it is suspect. For if the performance is the same every time, it is not being created for the audience, but played back, as if pre-recorded. It will feel, if only vaguely, false. The performer also robs himself of his greatest tool, the ability to interact. The proper task is not to tame the beast and be its master, but to ride it as a friend. Ultimately, the unpredictable side of performance is what makes it exhilarating.
REVOLUTION NO. 9

A spectator takes a card from a faceup spread. The performer places the card facedown into the squared deck, leaving it protruding from the front. With a wave of his hand, the card is now faceup. With another wave of his hand, the entire deck turns facedown!

Casually get two mates to the face of the deck; for example, the two red Kings. Spread the faceup deck between your hands, have a card selected, then close the spread. While the spectator is looking at her selection, square the cards and, as you do, perform a half pass under the two mates. As you complete the half pass, allow the lowermost King to escape your right thumb, and obtain a break between the two Kings. Hold the deck in a relaxed left-hand dealing grip, with the tips of your fingers protruding slightly above the top edge of the deck.

Take the selected card, and place it facedown on the “faceup” deck. You now have a break under two cards. The mates on top of the deck will help obscure a discrepancy in a moment; but you want the memory of the precise card on the face to fade, so talk for a bit. “This is no ordinary card trick—one where I find the selected card. Since I saw the card, that wouldn’t be impressive.”

With your right thumb at the inner right corner and your right middle finger at the outer left corner, take the two cards above the break as one, curling your right forefinger on top. Use an easy, casual touch here; don’t let the cards bend or swivel. Show the card(s) to the spectator as you continue, “So, rather than tell you the name of a card you already know I know, I will do something better.”

Lower your right hand as you raise your left, calling attention to the deck. Explain that you’ll trap the selection in the deck. You’re going to swivel the two cards in your right hand over as you raise that hand to put the card(s) onto the deck. The cards begin relatively parallel to the floor. With your right forefinger, reach to the left side of the cards, and pull up and over, rotating the cards on the axis between your middle finger and thumb (Photos 118 and 119).
variation of the faced deck turnover from *Expert Card Technique*.

You need to make a minor adjustment in grip here. Briefly place the double card sidejogged on the deck and hold it in place with your left thumb. With your right thumb above and the first two fingers below, grab the outer end of the double card and lift it from the pack.

Tilt the pack downward to avoid exposing the facedown cards, and use your left thumb to riffle down the outer corner of the deck to about center. With your left thumb, hold the pack open and place the double card into the break, outjogged for two-thirds of its length. At the outer corners of the pack, where the jogged double card meets the deck, your left thumb tip holds the double on the left side and your left second finger holds it on the right. Your left forefinger supports the outjogged cards from below (Photo 122, an underview).

You are now in position to perform the revolution change, a variation of Jerry Andrus’s startling color change from *Andrus Card Control*. Hold your right hand palm down and flat, and place it on the protruding double, with fingers spread (Photo 123). With the base of your right fingers, lightly touch the outer edge of the top jogged card and slide it forward. Don’t attempt to palm the card. Once the card is free of the deck, move your right hand to the right and back in an arc, keeping the hand flat. Your left fingertips do not move at all, but support the card from below, allowing your right hand to move freely (Photo 124).
Pause for a moment, allowing the first half of the effect to register—the out-jogged selection has turned faceup. Then, pass your right hand to the left over the top of the pack and deposit the hidden facedown card flush on top (Photo 125). The deck appears to have instantly inverted.

Spread the cards between your hands, allowing the selection to remain out-jogged during the display, but be careful not to expose the faceup card second from the top (Photo 126).

**Thoughts and Commentary:** There is a potential problem in the performance of this effect that needs to be addressed, lest the effect become confusing. It must be remembered that there are two separate effects, one taking place directly after the other. Pause the moment the outjogged card is seen to have turned faceup.

Only after the audience has fully registered the reversal should you effect the inversion of the entire pack. Without care in this regard, the trick will look great, but no one will have the vaguest idea what happened.

Also, consider placing “Revolution No. 9” into a topsy-turvy deck sequence, such as the “Reverse Card Routine” in *The Card Magic of LePaul*. I nearly always perform “Revolver” (page 26) first. This accustoms the audience to both effects they will see in “Revolution No. 9” (a card reversing and the entire pack inverting). This way, the audience is given a point of reference, so that their minds can absorb the peculiar effect of the latter routine.
While there are many handlings of the Inversion plot in print, it was Chris Kenner’s “Perversion” from *Totally Out of Control* that inspired the Inversion handlings in this book. I later discovered that Kenner’s routine was a variant handling of Bill Kalush’s then unpublished “Fidgeting Card”, which appeared in the July 1994 issue of *The New Tops*, shortly after the release of *Totally Out of Control*. It was the Kenner routine, however, that seeded in me the notion of performing the half pass under just one or two cards. Looking back, it occurs to me that this one idea inspired much of the technique in these pages. While Chris Kenner was not the first to execute a half pass under only a few cards, his use of the idea in “Perversion” was my first encounter with it. For me, it turned out to be the right idea at the right time.
HELMER SKELTER

The spectators are asked to relax—the performer will select a card for them. The performer spreads a blue-backed deck between his hands, chooses a card and removes it. He places the card into the center of the pack, leaving it out-jogged. With a wave of his hand, the back of the outjogged card turns red. With another wave of his hand, the card reverts to blue, and this time the entire pack changes color as well, turning red!

Although the effect is different, this routine bears an obvious similarity in structure and method to “Revolution No. 9”. It is perhaps the most visually stunning trick in the book. You will need a red-backed deck and two blue-backed cards. For purposes of explanation, assume the blue cards are the Jack of Spades and the Nine of Hearts. Put the blue Jack facedown on top of the deck, and the blue Nine face-down in the middle. Put the red-backed Nine of Hearts fifth from the bottom.

To perform, make sure the spectators see the blue-backed card on top, establishing the apparent color of the deck. Turn the deck faceup. As you spread through the cards, use the Hofzinser spread cull (described on page 61) to pull the red-backed Nine of Hearts (fifth card from the face) underneath the spread. Since you know the position of the Nine before you start spreading the cards, you need not look at the pack as you cull.

Continue to spread through the cards. Find the (blue-backed) Nine of Hearts in the middle of the spread and outjog it. Close the spread, making sure the culled Nine rides beneath it and, as the deck is squared, feed the card to the bottom (Photo 127, from below) and catch a left little-finger break above it. With the right hand, cock the outjogged card to the left as you grab the deck in end grip, in preparation for a half pass of one card (Photo 128). The outjogged Nine will not interfere with the half pass. Execute the half pass, reversing the red-backed Nine, and immediately obtain a left little-finger break above it. Although they were described separately, the closing of the spread, the squaring of the cards, and the half pass all occur in one motion.
Hold the deck in your left hand and, with your right hand, remove the outjogged Nine and turn it over. As your audience has been led to expect, it has a blue back. Slip the Nine facedown into the gap created by the break, apparently placing it on the bottom of the pack (Photo 129). Push it flush and (in the same action) immediately turn the deck facedown.

A Nine is seen on top of the deck. Do a double turnover, leaving the double card outjogged on the deck. A blue back is seen. With your right hand, thumb on top and fingers below, grasp the double at the outer end. Tilt the deck downward to avoid flashing any red backs and, with your left thumb, gently riffle down the side of the deck. Stop near the middle and insert the double card into the gap, leaving it outjogged for approximately three-quarters of its length.

With a wave of your right hand, you’re going to change the color of the outjogged card. Perform the revolution change, described on page 98, leaving the blue-backed card on top of the deck. The outjogged card is now red-backed.

With your right hand, pull the card from the deck and display its face. While doing this, obtain a little-finger break by using your left thumb to push the top card over the tips of your fingers, then pulling the card back square with the deck. Place the red-backed Nine facedown on the deck, adding it to the card above the break. In a continuing action, move the double card forward and leave it outjogged.

As before, with your right hand, lift the double card off the pack and insert it, outjogged, into the center of the deck, in preparation for another revolution change. Before performing the change, you may turn the left hand palm down to display the face of the double.

Perform the revolution change again, transforming the Nine back into a blue-backed card. Wait a beat; then drop the hidden card onto the deck. When you’ve deposited the card on top, draw your right hand away to effect a third and final transformation—the entire deck turning red.

Spread the cards, being careful not to expose the blue-backed card second from the top (Photo 130).
Thoughts and Commentary: In most color-changing deck effects, the backs of several cards are displayed before the deck finally changes color. The idea behind these constructions seems to be that by showing several backs of one color while, say, the four Aces are produced, the effect of the color change will be magnified. More often however, the final effect is that four blue-backed cards were produced from a red-backed deck.

These constructions lend credence to the tenet that it is generally a poor notion to mix effects. Instead of two strong effects, one often ends up with no effect at all.

“Helter Skelter” offers little opportunity to display the blue-backed cards, except when they are involved directly in the effect. That is why this routine is not an opener. To be effective, it requires a deck switch. Once the prepared pack is in your hand, it is not really meant to be shuffled or fiddled with. After a subtle switch, the effect must be performed directly, with little dawdling. If, before the switch, audience members have shuffled the pack, selected cards, returned cards to the pack, and have otherwise been involved in the show, they will know what color the cards are. At that point, there should be no need to prove it again.
SEARCH AND DESTROY

This effect is based on Larry Jennings’s “The Searchers” from the January-February 1984 issue Richard’s Almanac. It takes the slow-motion sandwich plot out of the performer’s hands and puts it into a spectator’s. After locating a selection with a pair of Queens, as in “A Simple Sandwich” (page 21), the performer nominates a spectator to become the magician and offers to show how she, with no practice at all, can perform the same miracle.

A second spectator picks a card, making sure not to show it to the “magician-in-training”, and then returns it to the center of the pack. The performer explains that finding the right card is actually a matter of eliminating all the wrong ones. He helps the apprentice eliminate some cards by placing one Queen faceup near the top of the deck and the other Queen faceup near the bottom, with roughly forty cards between them.

The spectator is asked to cut the deck. The deck is spread and the two Queens have moved closer to the center, with only ten cards between them. The performer removes the eliminated cards—those above the top Queen and those below the bottom Queen. The spectator cuts the remaining cards and then spreads the packet to find one facedown card between the two Queens—the selection.

Take out the red Queens and place them faceup on the table. Use the advanced nowhere pass (page 46) to have a card selected and controlled to seventh from the top. Alternatively, you can do a cover pass under six cards to control the selection to the seventh position. The control you use is a matter of personal preference, but bear in mind that the audience must clearly see the selection placed near the center of the pack, and they must think it stays there; they must not see nor suspect any control or manipulation; not even a fair shuffle.

Ribbon spread the facedown deck, explaining to the would-be magician, “The hard part is not finding the right card, but eliminating all the wrong ones. Since it is so difficult, I will help you by first eliminating a few cards at the top and bottom of the pack.” Place one Queen, faceup, seventh from the top (immediately above the selection). Put the other Queen, faceup, fifth from the bottom (Photo 131). As you do this, point out that there are approximately forty cards between the Queens, so she still has many cards to eliminate. Close the spread, square the deck, and hand it to the spectator, asking her to choose a magic word—one with some real power behind it. Instruct her to give the cards a complete cut as she says her magic word, explaining that even the best magic word is only as good as its delivery. She must be sincere.
Spread the cards facedown on the table. Over thirty cards have been eliminated, leaving ten cards separating the two Queens. Congratulate your apprentice on a first-time job well-done. Assure her that with just a little more sincerity, she will be able to bring the trick to a successful conclusion.

Close the spread, pick up the deck, and spread the cards again between your hands, showing both Queens and the cards between them. The selection is below the lower Queen.

Close the spread slightly, so that you are able to hold the whole spread in your left hand. As you are closing the spread, your left thumb executes a small, hidden action. The thumb pulls the lower Queen slightly leftward, until its left edge completely covers the selected card beneath it. Your left thumb then reaches across and clamps down on all the cards up to and including the upper Queen.

With the cards held securely by the left hand, your right hand takes all the cards above this Queen and places them aside, thus removing half of the eliminated cards.

The cards above the upper Queen having been removed, the right hand returns to take both Queens and the cards between them. As the right hand takes this spread near the back edges, thumb on top, fingers underneath, the selection is taken as well, held in place by the right fingers (Photo 132, selection exposed for clarity). The cards beneath the lower Queen remain in the left hand and are set aside.

Hand the slightly spread packet to the spectator, asking her to again cut the cards as she says her magic word with as much sincerity as she is able. Ask her to spread the cards between her hands. She will find her selection, facedown between the two Queens. Be sure to give her all the credit—after all, she did the magic.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** An earlier version of this trick required a series of cover passes. When I showed the version described above to Larry Jennings, he just smiled and said, “But those shifts sure were fun, weren’t they?” They were fun, but simplifying the handling amplified the effect.

This trick is perhaps the strongest in this book. Reputable magicians have seen it and thought it foolish, the method seeming so transparent. For most card men, the basics of cut mechanics have been digested so thoroughly, they are regarded as common knowledge, like multiplication tables. If a magician sees a Queen placed fourth from the top of the pack, and another fourth from the bottom, he will not be very surprised to find six cards between them when the pack is cut.
I have never performed for a layperson who has read Charles T. Jordan’s *Thirty Card Mysteries*. Most non-magicians do not know the concept of endless chains. To any sensible human, cutting a pack of cards is the second part of a shuffle. To many people, a cut is *synonymous* with a shuffle. After cutting the deck, a spectator feels as though she herself has mixed the cards.

In this routine, the cutting of the cards is further shielded by the presentation. As the spectator cuts the pack, she is asked to say a magic word. Traditionally, the utterance of magic words has always been accompanied by some action, such as the waving of a wand or the snapping of the fingers. It is this action, accompanying the magic word, that makes the proverbial bunny appear. Most people sense this and cut the pack with a magical air. The cut then, in the spectator’s mind, might be thought of as a magic action, like the waving of a wand.

When I perform the effect, I leave the purpose of the cut ambiguous, so that the audience might think of it as a mixing or a magical action, or both. In any event, their imaginations make the cut a thing it ceased to be for us long ago. In this manner, your helper will perform the shift, while everyone is burning the pack, far more indetectably than you ever could.
A STAR IS BORN

Gordon Bean combined several techniques in this book and came up with a tailor-made showpiece. It deserves a prize for featuring the subtlest use of the undercover switch yet devised. It is based on Luis Zingone’s “Reverse Supreme” from Expert Card Technique.

Five random cards are removed from a shuffled deck. A spectator selects one of them, then shuffles the five cards together. The performer tells a story about the five cards competing with each other to succeed in show business. The cards are outjogged facedown in separate parts of the faceup deck and are pushed flush. “But the lights come up and only one remains.” A facedown card appears from the middle of the deck. The performer fans the deck to reveal that the other facedown cards have vanished. And he raises the fan to show the outjogged card is the selection. “A star is born.”

To perform, get any four cards to the bottom of the deck in a known order. For example, arrange the Aces in CHaSeD order. Shuffle the cards, being careful to retain the Aces on the bottom. Hold the deck in left-hand dealing grip and obtain a break above the four Aces.

Spread through the deck, outjogging five random cards in preparation for the undercover switch (page 57). Perform the switch, leaving you with a supposedly random packet; it actually consists of the four Aces (in a known order) with an unknown card on top.

Table the deck and spread the five cards in a row on the table, maintaining their order. Ask a spectator to touch any of the five she desires. The moment she touches a card, turn your back on the proceedings as you ask the spectator to look at her card. You already know its identity. If an Ace, you know which one; otherwise, it is the only card that’s not an Ace.

After she has noted the card, have her mix it in with the other four. As she does this, turn back around and take the deck faceup into your left hand. As you spread through the faceup pack, comment, “Of all the would-be actresses in the city, only a select few will ever be lucky enough to get an audition.” Catch a break under the top card and do a half pass, reversing the rest of the deck.

When the spectator has finished the mixing, take the packet into your right hand. Fan it with the faces toward you and spot the selected card as you remark, “I haven’t even the slightest clue which one you are rooting for.” To ensure that this rather blatant tactic seems innocent, you must be sincere and nonchalant as you make this remark. If the selection is not at the face of the packet, casually cut it there. Turn the packet facedown and keep it in your right hand.

“Your card wants to be a star, but it has some competition. This one is the producer’s daughter.” As you say this, thumb the top card of the packet facedown onto the table. “This card is a SAG card. From the Screen Actors’ Guild,” you say as you thumb the second card onto the
first. “This one said she’d sleep with me,” as you thumb off the third card. As the fourth card hits the table you say, “This one even has talent. Go figure.” As you use the last card (the selection) to scoop up the tabled pile, say, “But only one can be a star.”

Tilt the deck down to obscure its predominantly facedown condition. Place each facedown card into a separate part of the “faceup” deck as follows: Take the top card of the packet and place it outjogged into the deck near the bottom. Outjog the second card several cards above the first. Continue with each card until you come to the last one. This card (the selection) goes just under the top card of the deck. As you insert the cards, say, “Each will stay in a separate part of the waiting room.” It should appear that there are five facedown cards in a faceup deck. Push each card flush and then immediately do a half pass under the top card of the deck. All of the cards are now faceup, with the selection on the bottom.

Look at the deck as you say, “But the lights come up and only one remains.” With your right hand, do the one-handed popover (page 29). Return the deck to your left hand and immediately fan the cards. The spectators see one reversed card outjogged in the middle of the faceup fan. “The other four wannabes have returned to the anonymity of the faceup crowd.” Slowly raise the fan, just to the right of your face, revealing the selection (Photo 133). “A star is born.”

Thoughts and Commentary: In Ed Marlo’s versions of “Reverse Supreme” (which he renamed “Mental Reverse”), the pack is shuffled and five cards are dealt onto the table. These five cards are a stock, which the performer has previously memorized. As the spectator touches one, the performer turns his back while the selection is viewed, returned, and the five cards mixed. In performance, this method is surprisingly powerful. When done right, it seems as though the performer’s back has been turned the entire time. Marlo’s handling derives much of its power and mystery from this selection process. Considering the simplicity of the effect—that of one card becoming reversed—it is only the impossibility of the performer knowing which card was selected that makes the trick effective.

Gordon’s application of the undercover switch to this basic idea magnifies its power. The cards don’t need to be
dealt from the top of the deck, but can be picked randomly. Especially subtle and elegant is the use of a four-card stock (instead of five). Since the uppermost card is not switched in, it will be the only card not already known to the performer. If the spectator touches the top card, the performer need only look for the card he doesn’t recognize from his stack.
THE TAX MAN

Roy Walton’s “The Collectors” is a favorite among magicians, and it has inspired many variations. Most handlings play as follows. Four mates, usually Aces or court cards, are set aside. Three cards are chosen and lost in the deck. The four mates are placed onto the deck and spread to reveal the three selections sandwiched between them.

In this handling, four red spot cards are used to find the three selections. Purists may dislike this handling on that basis alone, but those without such biases will find this approach extremely direct and magical.

Assume the three mates you cull are (in order from the rear) the Six of Diamonds, Nine of Hearts, and Seven of Diamonds. As you take the four outjogged cards from the spread, reorder them, with the mates of the three culled cards, in matching order, at the rear of the packet. In our example, the packet would be: (from the face) Eight of Diamonds, Seven of Hearts, Nine of Diamonds, and Six of Hearts.

Place these four cards aside. Draw no special attention to their specific identities. Simply state, “These four red spot cards will find not one selected card, but three.” The cards can be slightly spread as they are placed aside, but it is best if the indexes of the three lowermost cards are not completely visible (Photo 134).

Employ the imperceptible get ready (page 59) to get a break above the three mates beneath the faceup deck and execute a half pass to reverse them. Double undercut the top card of the deck to the bottom and turn the deck facedown. You now have a facedown card on top of three faceup cards and the rest of the deck facedown.

Spread the deck, taking care that you don’t flash the reversed cards. Explain, “It doesn’t matter if I see the selections, since I won’t be the one finding them.” Have three cards removed at random.

Turn the deck faceup, then take the selected cards one at a time and outjog them faceup, widely separated throughout the deck. Execute the Vernon multiple shift, as taught in “The Travelers” from Stars of Magic.
Briefly: With your right hand, hold the deck from above, with thumb and middle finger on the inner corners and your index finger curled on top. From below, with your left thumb and middle finger, hold the pack at the sides, near the outer corners. With your left index finger on the outer ends, begin to push in the outjogged selections (Photo 135). When the selections are almost flush, the left thumb and second finger apply pressure to the cards above the uppermost selection. Gently squeeze the sides of these cards and pull them outward until they hit your left index finger and are flush with the selections (Photo 136, jogs exaggerated for clarity). With your right hand, undercut the rest of the deck, initiating a Hindu shuffle while leaving the selections and the small packet above them in your left hand. Hindu shuffle the cards until about half the pack remains in your right hand, then throw this packet on top, getting a left little-finger break between the halves. The three selections are together on the bottom of the faceup deck.

Turn the deck facedown using Tenkai’s pivot break to maintain the separation between packets, as follows. With your right thumb at the inner left corner and your right middle finger at the outer left corner, grab the deck from above. Lift the left side of the deck and swivel it facedown. The flesh of your left little finger between the halves automatically causes the deck to become stepped (Photo 137). When the deck is facedown you can easily re-establish the little finger’s break at the step.

The half with the three red mates is below the break, while the half with the three selections is above the break. Take the packet above the break into your right hand, cutting the deck in preparation for a faro shuffle. Do an in-faro: The top card of the bottom packet remains on top. Square the deck and immediately do a half pass
under the top card (Photo 138). The half pass can be done while the cards are still partially telescoped. Squaring the deck acts as a cover for the pass, and is completed after the reverse (Photo 139). With practice, the entire sequence, from multiple shift to half pass, should take less than thirty seconds and seem as if all you do is lose the selections and shuffle the deck.

Hold the pack in your left hand and, with your right forefinger, spread the tabled packet of spot cards. With the right hand, pick up each card in end grip, starting with the lowermost one, and drop them individually onto the pack. As you place the last card on top, execute a half pass of all the cards under it. As you complete the sleight, spread the top cards of the pack to show three facedown cards between the four faceup spot cards. Take these seven cards into your right hand as you place the pack aside. You are now free to reveal the selections in the most dramatic manner you can devise. There is one reversed card fourth from the bottom of the pack. It can be cleaned up at your leisure.

**Thoughts and Commentary:** Rather than expand the scope of this volume to include a lengthy and redundant discussion of the faro shuffle, I will refer you to what I have found to be the most useful resources. To get started, *The Faro Shuffle* and *Faro Notes*, both part of Ed Marlo’s Revolutionary Card Technique series, will offer more than enough to the student in the way of techniques and applications. If you still need more, visit Volume Two of *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley*. If you begin down this path, be forewarned. More than a few card men have journeyed into the labyrinth of heavy shuffle work, never to be heard from by audiences again.

The imperceptible get-ready is used in this effect to obtain a break above three cards. I first became familiar with the get-ready not from *Professional Card Magic*, but through Jennings’s “The Searchers”, as described in *Richard’s Almanac*, wherein Larry used the move to get a break above four cards. I worked with the move for at least two years and still had no idea how he was able to do it. I gave it my best effort. I tried to figure out, from every conceivable angle,
how to get my little finger above those four cards with surety. I tried pressing the little finger in and feeling as the cards flew off, one by one. Not effective. I even tried to run the edge of my finger up the inner right corner of the pack to feel the four edges and then insert the finger. Even less effective.

Finally I asked Mr. Jennings himself. He smiled and asked me how I was doing it. “Badly,” I said and showed him. Larry held out his expansive paw and I placed the deck into it. He laughed and, somehow, already had the break. Astounded, I asked him how his fingers could ever be sensitive enough to feel the slightly fluttered edges of four cards.

Larry laughed again. Then he told me how he did it—how he’d always done it. He splayed the bottom portion of the pack as he held out his arm in some seemingly inconsequential gesture. Then he looked down, spotted the fourth card from the bottom of the pack and put his little finger above it. In over two years of practice and thought, I had never imagined anything so simple or effective.

I’d like to believe that if Larry and I had never had that conversation, I would have figured it out eventually, but those are just conceited imaginings. There is a high probability that I still would be trying to let my little finger sort it out for me. At the same time, if Richard’s Almanac had put me onto the actual method of obtaining the break (that is, looking at the cards), I surely would have passed the method by, convinced of its banality. Only after great struggle did the solution hold meaning. Since then, not a week has gone by in which I have not used the sleight.

Sometimes you can find that it is no fun having information, for “to have” is a passive verb and not very interesting. The fun is in the active verbs: finding, pursuing, and, of course, learning.
THE STANDING CHALLENGE

This is another of Gordon Bean’s creations. It was inspired by “The Challenge” from The Dai Vernon Book of Magic by Lewis Ganson, although the effect is quite different. The only sleight used is the gravity half pass, and that only once. To say the effect is disproportionate to the method is to understatement the matter.

The performer suggests that the spectator might be tired of picking cards, so one will be picked for him. The performer names a card and shows that it is not on the top or bottom of the deck. The spectator is asked to decide whether the card should magically appear on top of the deck or on the bottom, but to keep this choice to himself. The performer will mentally discern the choice and make the card appear there. Twice, he is able to determine which position the spectator chooses, and causes the card to appear in the correct location.

The third time, the pack is turned over to reveal the selection on the bottom. But the spectator cries he wanted it on top! The deck is spread. All the cards under the faceup selection are now facedown, proving the performer’s contention—the card is on top!

Have a known card reversed second from the top in a facedown deck. Say, “You have picked a few cards in your day, seen a few card tricks. Well, this trick is going to be different. I am going to pick your card for you. This is how it was done by my people, in the old country.” Turn the deck faceup and spread the cards, as if searching for one near the center. Pause and look at a particular card. Miscall this card, naming the known reversed card, adding, “And I hope you two will be very happy together.” Close the spread, turn the deck facedown, and hold it in right-hand end grip. Rest your right forefinger lightly on top of the deck.

Explain to the spectator that since you chose the card for him, it would be silly for you to find it. Instead, you will read his mind. He has a choice of where he wants the card to magically appear. Turn your right hand palm up to show an indifferent card at the face of the deck, explaining he can choose to have his selection appear on the bottom. Now turn your right hand palm down and point to the top of the deck, saying that you could also transport his selection there. Do not show the face of the top card. Repeat this action several times, always looking at the deck. These actions emphasize that the selection is definitely not on the bottom, but leave the possibility that it might be on top. Explain that he mustn’t say his preferred location out loud, because you will try to psychically determine his choice and make his card appear there.

As you place the deck into your left hand, gaze deeply into your spectator’s eyes as if reading his mind. The moment his gaze meets yours, perform a half pass to reverse the bottom fifty-one cards.

The half pass completed, the technical portion of the trick is over. All that remains is the hard part: conviction.
Declare that the card is in the chosen location. With your right hand, take the deck and slowly turn it over, revealing the selection on the bottom. Take care to keep the deck squared. Most often, the spectator will choose the bottom, because this is the only place he could be sure the card wasn’t. See the commentary below regarding what to do if he chooses the top.

Turn the deck facedown and hold it in both hands, offering to try the experiment again. You want the spectator to look at the deck, so allow increased tension to show in your hands to gather his focus. If he does not look down, a nervous glance toward the pack should draw his attention. Feign a clumsy side steal of the bottom card followed by a fake replacement to the top. Use your judgment here and tailor the feint to the audience. For laymen, make the action look fairly obvious. For more savvy spectators, don’t overdo it. For them, the feint should be subtle.

Look into your spectator’s eyes again. Pause. Turn the pack faceup as before, to show the bottom card. The spectator most likely wanted the card to appear on the bottom, because he thought you moved it from that position. Turn the deck facedown, but do nothing suspicious with the cards as you offer to repeat the miracle. Look into his eyes again. Pause, then show the bottom card. Chances are, this time he wanted it to appear on top. When he says as much, wait a beat, then spread the cards between your hands, showing the deck is face-down, except for the selection. Just as requested, the card is on top. Be careful not to expose the reversed card on the bottom of the deck.

Thoughts and Commentary: At the risk of stating the obvious, the trick concludes whenever the spectator picks the top. If he chooses the top immediately, the trick becomes a quickie—a strong quickie. But, if he keeps choosing the bottom, continue playing it that way. If he just has to have it, keep giving it to him. However, because of the psychology at work in the routine, when performed for attentive, smart folks, it almost always plays as described, with three phases.

Gordon wishes to acknowledge Jerry Sadowitz’s witty framing of the Inversion plot to switch the top and bottom polarities of the deck, as well as Larry Jennings for suggesting its use here. This effect is one of my favorites, and my thanks to Gordon for allowing its inclusion.
THE LONG AND WINDING TRICK

The performer inserts four Aces into random parts of the deck, hopelessly losing them. In an attempt to find the Aces, he produces four cards in a suave and pretty manner. Unfortunately, none of them is an Ace. The values of these four cards are used to form four piles. The top card of each pile is turned over. They are the four Kings! So where are the Aces? The four piles are turned faceup to reveal, at last, the four Aces!

This routine, developed in collaboration with Jack Birnman, is almost sleight free. It does, however, require a small amount of preparation, which can be done either beforehand or under the guise of casually toying with the deck. The preparation will sound long and complicated, but you will eventually be able to do it in less than a minute.

First, remove the Aces from the deck and set them aside; if the Aces are in the pack while you set up, the stack will be thrown off when you remove them at the beginning of the performance. Next, get the Kings to the bottom of the deck in any order. Look at the four cards above the Kings. They must each be higher in value than three and they should not be face cards—replace any inappropriate cards. Assume, for teaching purposes, that the cards above the Kings are (from the face) a Six, a Nine, a Ten, and a Seven.

Your next task is to mentally subtract one from each card value and remember them. So, in this example, you would remember five, eight, nine, and six. Turn the deck facedown. You will now stack the deck using a variation of an overhand stock shuffle from The Expert at the Card Table. With your right hand, hold the deck at the ends in the standard grip for overhand shuffling, the first finger resting on the side. Pull the bottom King from the deck into your left hand (Photo 140). Mentally count “one”. Then, one at a time, pull cards from the top of the deck into your left hand onto the King, thinking “two–three” and so on, until you reach “five” (the first of your memorized numbers).

You now start over: Pull the second King from the bottom of the deck onto the cards in your left hand, thinking “one”, then pull cards from the top of the deck onto the King thinking, “two–three” and so forth, until you reach “eight” (the second memorized number). Repeat this process for the third and fourth Kings. Then place the cards in your left hand on top of those in your right and cut the four noted cards from the bottom to the top.

Position check—from the top down: A Seven, a Ten, a Nine, a Six, five indifferent cards, the first King, eight cards, the second King, seven cards,
the third King, four cards, and the last King. Put the Aces back into the deck, randomly distributed.

You are now ready to perform. Your impulse may be to remove the Aces from the pack and immediately begin the routine, but please don’t. It is suspicious and illogical to remove the Aces from the deck, only to immediately reinsert them. It is better that you first do one or two tricks with the Aces. Then tell the audience you’re going to put the Aces into four separate parts of the pack and, in a display of consummate skill, produce them in an awe-inspiring manner. With the deck in your left hand, fan the cards faceup, making sure that you have a good view of all the cards in the stack.

You now place the Aces into the fan, leaving them outjogged. Insert the first Ace fifth from the top, above the Seven, Ten, Nine, Six setup. Insert the second Ace after (to the right of) the first King. The third Ace is inserted after the second King. And the fourth Ace goes after the third King (Photo 141). This procedure is simple and easy, but must be done casually—you must not hesitate or appear to look too closely at the cards. Close the fan, turn the deck facedown in your left hand, and slowly push the Aces flush. Dribble the cards from hand to hand, then square them. The Aces really appear to be lost in the deck.

You can use any procedure to reveal the top four cards, but it should be as impressive as possible. An easy way is to use the two-card catch from “The Ladies Looking Glass”, as follows:

Double undercut the top two cards to the bottom. Take the deck facedown into your left hand and, as you toss it gently into your right hand, hold back the top and bottom cards of the pack. Make a similar toss with your right hand, gently throwing the deck to the table as you again hold back the top and bottom cards (Photo 142). You now have two facedown cards in each hand. When this procedure is done properly, spectators have no idea where the cards come from. You might also use, to splendid effect, the Birnman revelation, published in John Bannon’s *Impossibilia*.

Turn over the four cards and feign disappointment. It appears you have failed. Arrange the cards in their original, memorized order, laying them from left to right in a faceup row on
Thoughts and Commentary: Surprise is an important part of magic. If the performer is meant to be surprised, he must not “feign” surprise or “act” surprised, but actually be caught off guard. Otherwise, no matter how surprising the audience finds the event, they will know, just by looking at the performer, that it has been planned. It is crucial that the student identify and tackle this issue.

In the performance of magic, surprise might well be treated as an unwelcome interruption. Say the performer wishes to use the standard “magician in trouble” ruse. To play it properly, the surprise must be the farthest thing from his thoughts. He must not think about the coming shock. Rather, he must tell himself to turn over the selected card and take a deserved bow. For the inventive, an effective thing to think about as the incorrect card is displayed might be the introduction to the next effect. Focusing energy on the intended effect, rather than the upcoming surprise, will make the difference between a magician who turns over the wrong card, only to be shocked and embarrassed, and some guy just waiting around for his big moment to act surprised.
HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

If you are proficient with the nowhere pass (page 36), you can do this handling of Cards to Pocket, which was inspired by Vernon’s “The Travelers” from Stars of Magic, and by David Williamson’s “Fifty-one Cards to Pocket” from Williamson’s Wonders by Richard Kaufman. This effect requires little palming, and the presentation provides a reason for the cards to jump to your pockets. Technicians beware, this routine will test your sincerity more than your dexterity.

A spectator signs four Kings. The performer states that he will take a break and the Kings will do the next trick. The Kings are lost in the deck and then a card is selected, which is also lost in the deck. The Kings are called upon to find the selected card. They don’t. They refuse to work and instead jump to the performer’s pockets, one at a time. The performer explains that this happens occasionally with court cards, which are temperamental. The Kings are put back into the deck, which the performer holds tightly to prevent the Kings from escaping. This almost works—the Kings don’t escape, but the rest of the deck does, completely vanishing from between the performer’s hands. However, there is one facedown card among the Kings—the spectator’s selection.

You’ll require a jacket, as well as a card case and a pen. Begin with the pen and the cased deck in your right-side jacket pocket. To perform, take the deck and pen from your pocket. Remove the cards from the case. Place the pen and the open case onto the table, with the flap down and turned away from you (Photo 144). Remove the four Kings from the deck and have their faces signed by a spectator. Hold the face-down deck in your left hand and, after each King has been signed, take it back and place it faceup on top of the deck, eventually arranging them in red-black-red-black order. As you square them, obtain a left little-finger break under the upper two Kings.

Talk about having the Kings do a trick for you and, with your right hand, retrieve the card case. Place it briefly onto the deck, so that you can change your grip. With your right hand from above, grab the case and the two cards above the break at the back corners, thumb on the left, second and third
fingers on the right (Photo 145). Immediately turn the case (and the two stolen cards) slightly to the left and, with your left fingers, casually close the flap (Photos 146 and 147). Then place the case, along with the two hidden Kings, into your right-side pocket.

Thanks to the alternating colors of the Kings, spectators will not notice the top King has changed. While your hand is in your pocket, let the case and the King closest to it fall away and take the remaining King into classic palm. Simultaneously, use your left hand to pick up the pen. As you remove your right hand from your pocket, transfer the pen to this hand, which enters your jacket to deposit it (and the palmed King) in your inside left breast pocket. Stay relaxed during these actions and convince yourself you are doing nothing tricky. Your relaxed posture will lull the spectators’ attention. Remember, the effect has yet to begin.

Your audience thinks there are four faceup Kings on the deck. There are actually two. Casually turn over the two-card packet as four on the deck. Thumb over the top card and take it into your right hand. With your left thumb, riffle down the outer left corner of the deck, stopping about four-fifths of the way down. Insert the King into the break and leave it outjogged for about half its length. You can flash its face if you wish. Repeat the procedure with the next three cards, separating them equally in the pack. You are left with four outjogged cards—the lower two are Kings.

Bring your right hand over the deck, with your fingers at the front of the outjogged cards and your thumb at the rear of the deck. Push the top “King” flush into the deck. Do the same with the next card. As you push the third card flush, angle its front edge to the left a bit. This will cause the inner right corner of the card to protrude from the right inner side of the deck.
(Photo 148). Push up on this inner corner with your left little finger and get a break under it as the card is squared. As you push the fourth card flush, also angle it to the left. As you do this, take over the left little finger’s break with your right thumb. Pull down with your left little finger on the protruding corner of the fourth card and get a break above it as the card is squared.

You now have a right thumb break below the upper King and a left little-finger break above the lower King (Photo 149). Cut all the cards above the thumb break to the table. Then cut all the cards above the little-finger break onto the tabled cards and, finally, take the remaining cards from your left hand and place them on top of all. The audience believes all four Kings are lost in the deck. One King is now on top while another is on the bottom; and the other two are in separate pockets.

Take the deck into your left hand, square it up, and get a left little-finger break above the bottom card. Then have a card selected by riffling down the outer left corner of the deck until a spectator tells you to stop. Next do the variation of the nowhere pass where the selection is controlled to second from the bottom, as described on page 41. While the card is being selected (and controlled) say, “Don’t worry, I’m allowed to see your card, since I’m not going to find it. Just make sure the Kings don’t see it.”

Once the card is controlled, pretend you feel something jump into your left inside breast pocket. Immediately take the pack with your right hand, leaving your left hand free to pat the pocket. As you look up and tell the audience that you think a card invisibly jumped into your pocket, you place the deck back into your left hand, palming the bottom card. Do this as follows.

The deck is in right-hand end grip, with the second finger at the outer left corner and the first finger curled on top. The third and fourth fingers lie alongside the second finger and
appear to be gripping the pack, but do not actually contact the cards. Begin to place the deck into your left hand. As your hands come together, your left middle finger contacts the face of the bottom card at its outer right corner. As you continue to move the deck into your left hand, the bottom card swivels to the right (Photo 150, from below). The outer right corner of the card protrudes from the deck, but is hidden under the right fingers.

Your left third fingertip contacts the protruding card, just to the left of the corner, and swings the card into your left hand in palm position (Photo 151). Because your third finger is positioned to the left of the corner, there is room at the corner for your left little finger. Curl your left index finger up around the end of the pack near the outer right corner (Photo 152). (This placement of the left index finger while holding a card in bottom palm is a Vernon tip from *Revelations*.)

With an obviously empty right hand, reach into your left inner breast pocket and pull out the King you placed there earlier. Set the King faceup onto the table and explain that sometimes the Kings don’t do what you want them to.

As you state you’ll try again, react as if the second King has just landed in your left pants pocket. With your right hand, take the deck into end grip and put your left hand into your pants pocket, being careful not to flash the palmed card. Pull the card out of your pocket and toss it faceup beside the first King.
Jump as if you have felt the last two Kings land in your side pockets, and say, “The last two seem to have gone at the same time.” Transfer the deck to your left hand.

You’re now going to reach into both side pockets and pull a King from each. Move your right hand first, and reach into the right pocket. Half a beat later, your left hand, which holds the deck, reaches into the left pocket. When your left hand is in the pocket, you will execute a modified two-card catch, as follows. Let the deck slide out of your left hand as you use your fingers and thumb to hold back the top and bottom cards (Photo 153). You are left holding two cards in your pocket.

Thumb the top card forward and to the right as far as it can comfortably go, holding it between your thumb and first finger. The other card will masquerade as the entire deck when it emerges from your pocket, so it is held in the following specialized bluff grip:

The card is held in place at the inner corners, between the heel of the thumb and the outer phalanx of the fourth finger. It is held near the fingertips, with the fingers resting at the right side of the card and the index finger curled around the front, as in standard mechanics’ grip (Photo 154, performer’s view, and Photo 155, spectators’ view). With the card held perfectly flat in this fashion, it nicely approximates the appearance of an entire pack held in dealing grip, without the cozy, unnatural appearance often seen in bluff dealing grips.
With regard to the card in your left hand posing as the whole pack, relax. The two signed cards emerging from the pockets command all attention. Spectators will not focus on the “pack” unless they are given reason to. Whenever the left thumb is not engaged in holding a King on top of the “pack”, it should naturally and immediately move to the left side of the card, effectively obscuring this problematic angle. Your right hand takes both Kings and places them faceup, fanned and out-jogged, onto the simulated deck in your left hand. Your right hand then takes the two Kings from the table and places them fanned onto the others (Photo 157).

Square the five cards as if you hold the whole pack in your left hand. As you tell the audience you are going to take one more crack at this trick, you will appear to cut the faceup Kings into the deck. With your right hand, grasp the packet from above in a deep end-grip. With the outer joint of your right forefinger, lift the Kings and swing them to the left. The natural bow of the cards will enable you to separate the Kings from the card below.

With your left thumb, clamp down on the outer left corner of the Kings and drag them into a left-hand dealing grip (Photo 158). Your right hand is left with one card, which is supposedly half the deck. Curl your right forefinger onto the back this card, making sure not to bow it, and place the card onto the Kings. Simultaneously use your right forefinger to give the packet a resounding “thump”, as if
half the deck were being slapped down onto the other half (Photo 159).

Simulate squaring an entire pack as you prepare to do a side steal. Keep your left thumb along the left side of the “deck”. This thumb placement during the side steal is a Nate Leipzig touch. Study of Leipzig’s technique in *Dai Vernon’s Tribute to Nate Leipzig* by Lewis Ganson is highly recommended. Your right hand holds the cards from above in end grip. Allow the bottom two Kings to slip off your right thumb and get a thumb break above them. Move your left little finger behind the cards until it rests on the back end. Use this finger to swivel the bottom two cards to the right, the pivot point being the right second finger at the front of the packet (Photo 160). Continue the swivel until the inner right corners of the maneuvered cards contact the right side of your right palm. In a continuing action, with the base of your right thumb at the inner left corner of the cards, and the tip of your right little finger at the outer right corner, grip the cards in palming position. As you do so, raise your left hand (with the “deck”) slightly up and to the left. Focus attention on this hand, so that your right hand, with the palmed cards, can drop casually and unnoticed to your side.

With your right hand, entirely cover the packet and hold it firmly between your palms. Leave enough space between your hands to effectively simulate holding a full deck. Suddenly push your palms together, effecting a vanish. Separate your hands to show only five cards spread on your left palm—the deck is gone. Point out the facedown card between the Kings—and slowly turn it over to display the selection.
Thoughts and Commentary: Early in my magic studies, when first trying to grasp the nebulous concept of misdirection, people repeatedly offered me Ramsay’s sage advice: “It’s very simple. If you want someone to look at something, look at it yourself. If you want someone to look at you, look at them.”

When I heard this, I took it literally, letter for the letter. I would move my eyes from place to place in the same deliberate fashion I moved my right index finger to the outer corner of the pack. While I moved my eyes with precision to their appointed location, I left my brain right where it was—on my hands, on myself.

For reasons I could not discover, I found Ramsay’s notion of misdirection lacking. I would gaze deeply into a spectator’s eyes, and the spectator would gaze deeply at the business side of my right palm. Tired of getting busted, I decided misdirection just wasn’t for me. I was sure the best way to cover my sleight-of-hand was to give it all my attention all the time, so that it might be perfect.

Around the same time, I was having serious trouble in Acting II. Every time I did a scene, the professor said that I simply would not progress without better listening skills. I hadn’t the vaguest notion what he meant. I was sure I could listen. I told myself repeatedly, “But I am listening.” Even while rehearsing and performing, I kept telling myself, “I’m hearing every word the other actors are saying.” Never once while they spoke did I stop the voice in my head and just listen.

I have a suspicion that Ramsay was a sincere man. I picture the kind of fellow who looked at you when he spoke and didn’t spend that time thinking about who else had just entered the room. He was probably taught to give people his complete attention during conversation. This attention is focus. This, surely, is what he meant when he talked about looking at something—he meant you should look with focus.