Lady Houdini works wonders

Above, Lady Houdini is most famous for her version of Harry Houdini’s classic water torture cell escape. She has added her own twist to the escape by making it a full view escape, rather than covering the tank with a cloth as Harry Houdini did.

For those of us who have been holding our collective breath waiting to see how Kevin Ridgeway would come out on the other side of the nearly fatal car accident, the wait is over!

Given the severity of Kevin’s injuries, some might have said he came back too soon. Some might claim his recovery was nothing short of miraculous. However you want to see it, Living Illusions is back! At a state fair in Idaho Kevin and Kristen staged their return. They chose to broadcast the show live on Facebook so that everyone could see that they were ready to come back. The set seemed somewhat distracted as sounds of a goat can clearly be heard in the background throughout the show. Also people were getting up and sitting down all during the performance. I suppose that is par for the course at a county fair.

This month’s Chains...

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This is a short article about trying to write a factual book on the World Records that I have set.

On one level it is easy, you sit down, hit keys on the keyboard and then read what randomness has been generated, focusing on the items underlined in red before moving onto other things.

The reality on the other hand is somewhat different. First of all, like setting a record, why would you?

At the start of 2017 I had no desire to write a book at all but then fate decided to change my mind.

It was at the UKEA meeting in March when Andrew Robertson suggested that I present a short talk at the 2018 Meeting regarding Record Breaking.

I am under no illusion how divisive a topic Record Breaking can be in the Escape Community, for everyone that sets a record, there is another person that feels that the test conditions were ‘wrong’ or that they could have done easier.

We also have the ‘showman’ situation where every time we go out to perform there is the possibility of setting a ‘world record’ for a specific escape, even if one does not exist.

Those of us that have been blessed to have been involved in such attempts know the difference between the performance of escapology and the setting of a world record, the difference between the hard work to perfect an act and the equally but different work needed to pull together something robust enough for Guinness World Records, or detailed enough for Recordsetters.com

So, with that background, I began to reflect on what I had achieved over the last 16 years or so. I have been successful 12 times and whilst the actual process of finding a world record to break, getting all the things into place and then actually being able to verify that you achieved it will be a stand-alone lecture at UKEA in 2018, the recollections of what happened were both funny and thought provoking.

To the point where I decided to actually write them down as I discovered, much to my shock, some of my original copies of the documentation, were lost.
The question was, not what to write, but what to omit? We are dealing with Escapology and in order to tell the story correctly we need to reference things that, in any other field, would be easy to discuss, yet due to our links with magic and the need for secrecy and the prevention of exposure, I found myself having to dance poetically around the elephants in the room of ‘shims’ and how they worked.

Equally would people want to read about all the small stories? By that I mean, the stabbing my foot on the way to the stage? The Spinal Tap moment where I walked in a circle trying to get to the performance area? Or how about the time I collapsed and nearly dropped the weight lifting bar on the back of my neck?

Well, the last one made the cut but overall many stories vanished as I felt compelled to keep it short.

Some twenty odd thousand worlds later, the book is finished and, maybe, one day will see the light of day, or there will be a link on my obscure Facebook page to Amazon.com

Would I recommend writing about Escapology? For the most part, yes I would. We have lost too many icons who were not able to put their thoughts onto paper, or podcast. I would hate for the next generation to be as rudderless as I was when I first started.

20,000 WORDS
WOW, I Bet Lots Of Escapologists Have A Story To Tell!

The Magic Nook
www.magicnook.com

"Do-It-Yourself" Magic for "Built-It-Myself" Magicians

A great tribute site to the amazing David De-Val

http://www.davidde-val.com/
Our mate Mr. Rob has discovered an interesting find. It has left me wondering if this might be of any value to an escape act. This comes from the book “Get Tough” by W. E. Fairbairn you can find it here… http://www.vrazvedka.ru/main/learning/ruk-b/fairbairn-01_09.shtml. Here is what He presents to us…. 

"The Grape Vine"
Select a tree, post, or lamp-post of about seven inches in diameter.
1. Make your prisoner climb on the tree as in Fig. 100.
2. Place his right leg around the front of the tree, with his foot to the left. Place his left leg over his right ankle, as in Fig. 101, and take his left foot back behind the tree. Force him well down the pole until the weight of his body locks his left foot around the tree, as in Fig. 102.

Note. - Even though you have left your prisoner's hands free, it will, if he has been forced well down the tree, be almost impossible for him to escape. Normally, the average man placed in this position would get cramps in one or both legs within ten to fifteen minutes, when it is not at all unlikely that he would throw himself backwards. This would kill him.

Caution. - To release your prisoner: Two persons are necessary, one on either side. Take hold of his legs and lift him up the tree; then unlock his legs.

So we have two challenges here. Think very carefully before you respond.

Remember, throwing your body backwards to relieve the pain in your legs means smashing the back of your head on the ground. If that does not kill you, it will certainly leave you in very poor condition for running or fighting.

So, one, How would you escape if you’d been left alone in this hideous position?

Two, Could this be worked into a stunt for an escape show of some kind.?

Let me know your answers and they will be published here in a future issue.

This site is well worth the time to study if you want to learn about lock picking.
http://www.lockpickguide.com/

http://www.withoutakey.co.uk/
Dean Gunnarson: Brings Las Vegas to China

“Wild about Harry”
John Cox” Houdini web-site
www.wildabouthoudini.com
So proud and honored to be part of this amazing team of Las Vegas Magic Stars starring Greg Gleason, Jeff McBride, Ariann Black, Bill Cook, William Bradshaw, Stacey Smithson, Kwun Lee and all our special dancers and crew. I hope everyone has a chance to watch it live.

https://www.facebook.com/dean.gunnarson.9/videos/10159396005570495/

Break a Chain Dean!
and anti-terrorist expert he is so qualified I personally believe that if one was to scour the Earth it would be impossible to find anyone better: he also has many medals, is a qualified criminologist and was one of the authors of the first book on Brazilian knife fighting ever released in the USA. This also means that if when working at some high-level event or location you want the very best man to consult and so tell you how best to make sure that a terrorist does not attack when you are in chains, he would be the man to call. . But the name of the book I will now discuss is, “No more delay, putting an end to the EU trade in “Tools of torture”.”. The important thing seems to be that it points out the torture and improper practices of the EU and of course countries within the EU: European Union. I can however talk about the things talked about within the book because this is a list of known items that many, but not all people reading this will be familiar with: but hopefully is useful anyway. These are: electric shock belt, electric shock cuffs and other items to give electric shocks, spiked batons and spiked shields, thumb cuffs, finger cuffs: no mention of finger cuffs specifically and I assume this is merely another way of using thumb cuffs: thumbscrews mentioned although apparently little used, leg irons, chains: gang chains are especially mentioned: and shackles, restraint chairs are also mentioned.
Monday August 21st.
A DAREDEVIL and escapologist debuted his “thrilling” water torture cell illusion during a magical field day festival. The event took place in Prestatyn on Friday at Bastion Field. Dubbed ‘The Greatest Show on Turf’, the festival featured escapologist Dave Diamond who fascinated visitors with his act. The Water Torture cell, called the Upside Down by Harry Houdini, was first performed in 1911 as part of a one act play called Houdini Upside Down. It subsequently became one of his most famous acts.

As well as Dave, the festival featured hooper Nula Hula, magician Jay Gatling (the Conwy Wizard), Punch and Judy from Professor Llusern, music by Joseph Leo and Christian Parry, circus skills with Erwyd Le Fol (the Conwy Jester), Nerf Wars, sumo suits, face painting and a fair from Big Bounce.

Kimberley Edmunds, events coordinator at Prestatyn Town Council – who organized the

The interesting point is that this means that some of the items some escape artists are using could also be categories as torture devices: for instances thumb cuffs with serrated edges inside to cause pain when applied. Another thing that I found interesting is that the shock cuffs would be categories as being a restraint and yet it seemed to suggest that the electric shock mechanism needed a person to press a remote-control button and this means that the prisoner would be tortured, restrained and guarded.

However, this article should not be classed as a risk assessment in anyway: but I did find the book interesting. For those that want to read this free document for themselves here is the link.


Speaking as a fan of Amnesty International, I wonder what escape theme this article might inspire?
the event – said: “When the act was first performed, the promoters insisted that the tank was covered so as not to cause fainting’s and panics’ amongst the spectators.

“This was not the case in Prestatyn. Dave Diamond completed his challenge in full view of the crowd.”

Dave said: “I used to compete in extreme marathons, lasting for days at a time, but over time I wasn’t getting the same adrenaline rush as I used to and I decided I needed a new challenge.

“I always had a fascination with feats of endurance and decided that this would be my next adventure.”

Russel Erwood, who is the Conwy Jester, assisted Dave in the challenge. Training took place over 18 months.

“I have performed or consulted on all of Houdini’s escapes during my career, apart from this one,” Russel said. When Dave contacted me I jumped at the chance to be involved. Training has been challenging but Dave is such a determined person.”

Anyone who missed Dave’s daring escape can see it again when the escapologist returns to North Wales as part of the North Wales Burlesque and Cabaret Festival on Saturday, January 27 2018.

Photo: Robert Mann
suzanne.kendrick@nwn.co.uk

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The Chain Game is technically not an escape, so why is it being reviewed in the Chainletter? The answer is your editor going out on a limb. I know there are two kinds of escape artists. One type are the purists who do escapes and only escapes. The others are those who mix magic and escape. Why mix magic and escape

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“A lone yellow link, inspected by the audience, magically connects to a length of ordinary silver chain. The link travels from one end of the chain to the other, and everywhere in between. The Chain Game, with its one yellow link, is handed out for inspection. There is nothing to find. Beautiful. Baffling.

Includes the chain, a rubberized metal link, gimmicks, velveteen travel bag, and DVD. “

***** – Jerry

I hate to admit it, Aaron fooled me with this in person. I thought I knew how it worked and he could see it on my face when I asked to see the link that had just come off the chain. He got me. Ordered!

The Chain Game is not an escape, so why is it being reviewed in the Chainletter? The answer is your editor going out on a limb. I know there are two kinds of escape artists. One type are the purists who do escapes and only escapes. The others are those who mix magic and escape. Why mix magic and escape
in the same show? Some escape artists will be very clear that this is a crime. The two art forms are not the same or even related, and so should not be mixed in one show. They will point out that the only reason that escape artists are perceived as magicians was due to Houdini being a magician first and later an escape artist.

The other side will argue that after one or two escapes, three if you are lucky, the audience no longer cares. The tension has been lost as they know the artist will surely escape. This means that a full set of an hour or longer show, will need something to break the cycle. The performer must entertain, excite and mystify another way. That answer is magic. Indeed your editor himself once performed a full show of five or six escapes and was told by a layperson after that she was bored after the second one; she knew how it would come out.

So for those who, like the editor, are always looking for magic that seems escape related, I offer the Chain Game. This effect is offered by Arron Smith at The Magic Depot. The cost is $49 and it includes everything you need to learn and perform the effect. Some will equate this as a smaller version of the linking rings. Let me make it clear, it is not the linking rings.

Nor does the gimmick you get resemble the linking rings at all. What you get is a small silver chain, and three different gimmick devices that you can use as you see fit. The yellow link can jump on the chain, jump off and even change sides. There is much potential as to what can be made to happen with this device. The DVD enclosed shows all the methodology, and you will need a small bit of skill both in sleight of hand and in manipulation. The skill needed is far less than some straight out magic though and anyone who tries will master this quickly.

What is not included, perhaps wisely, is any specific routine and patter. That is left up to the performer to apply.

What will the editor do with this beautiful prop? Since I do a signature routine with a big old chain and padlock, I can do The Chain Game, get the applause and say something like, “Now watch what I do with this bigger chain!” and Shazam! I am an escape artist again, in fact with the right patter, I always was.

Aaron recommends doing only two of the three possible effects at a time, but I wonder if you might do two, and then bring it back later in the show for the third?

Given the quality of the props and the possibilities for routining, I rate this “highly recommended.”
I recently purchased this innocuous looking bracelet. To the casual observer, it is just another plastic bracelet that became popular a few years ago. It came in a size 10 wrist all ready for Andre the Giant to put on. Seriously it is a one size fits all deal. The good news is that you can easily cut a small bit off at a time, until it fits the way you like it.

So what does it do? When you pull apart the two ends, it reveals a plastic handcuff key sized to fit most standard style modern cuffs.

The idea of this is great, the execution looked a little cheap, but the price was right. Basically it looks like someone took a hollow soft plastic tube and epoxy glued a plastic handcuff key stem into it. The business end sticks out and can be more or less invisibly wedged into the other end to make the bracelet. Once on, you are well equipped against handcuffs and will be undone only by a thorough search. (Note: I doubt you would fool a law officer with it.)
The show started with Kevin as the emcee. He did the famous spinning drill head shrinker/head grower routine. The effect even works over the internet; which was pretty cool. That was his opener and the audience was paying rapt attention. I also was listening closely. I was listening to see how Kevin’s energy was on stage. After such a horrific event, no one would fault Kevin if he lost a step or two…. But no. His energy may or may not be what it was, but he performed flawlessly on stage. If there was any weakness there, neither his voice nor his stage moves showed any of it.

Kevin introduced Kristen who came out to do her first escape, the upside-down straitjacket. This is of course is a classic and Kristen performed it with her usual flair and grace.

Next we heard an impassioned speech about the risks and dangers of texting and driving. I had not known the cause of the accident before. Now we all do. A young girl driving fifty miles an hour ran a light as she was texting and not paying attention to the road. Kevin wheeled over and unveiled his mangled car seat as evidence.

Next we see Kristen do her skillful gypsy tie escape. A volunteer was chosen from the audience.

Kevin went into the audience to get a gentleman to help out. There was no bannister on the steps, but he made it up and down like it was easy. The gypsy tie switch took all of eight seconds or so and left a very confused volunteer who saw that Kristen, who had pulled his jacket off was still tied up.

Kevin did a sales pitch for Back of the Room merchandise as Kristen got ready for the grand finale.

Here it came, the Living Illusions signature full view Water Torture Cell...

Keven called for a volunteer and they chained Kristen up appropriately. The two of them then locked the lid in place. As I have often said, this is a work of art.

Kristen made her escape to thunderous and well deserved applause.

For any who may have had their doubts, Living Illusions has returned! Kevin, Kristen... Rock on, Break a chain and God bless.