Any successful person will tell you not to listen to those who would shoot you down and tell you that you cannot accomplish your goals. The weekend of June 8th we had our escape artist non-convention in Las Vegas. It was an amazing success.... Well sort of.

What went wrong? Almost everything; and yet we all had a great time.

Allan and Rebecca had flown in from England and arrived a few days before I did. Our first planned event was lunch at an upscale restaurant on the Vegas strip. Our first miss was when one of the group had to bow out for having a 101 degree fever. That cost us two members. A few others were also MIA. Still, Rebecca, Allan and I had a wonderful lunch together.
Naturally we spent a great deal of time talking about Rebecca’s father the late, great David De-Val.

One of the best things we discussed was Allan and Rebecca’s amazing visit to David Copperfield’s magic museum. Your editor clearly was not there, but am very much looking forward to reading the write up from their visit at some later date.

After a wonderful lunch we drove over to the Boulevard Mall to visit Dixie Dooly’s magic shop. It was closed. This struck all of us as odd, since Dixie had listed that the store should be open and many people seemed to be gathering for a magic show at the stage outside.

Next we had an appointment to see Dixie’s museum and theater at the Royale Resort. We drove over there and though what can only be described as a hideous mis-communication, we showed up at the theater and found it quite locked up and closed. After connecting with Dixie by text it was decided to leave his museum tour for another time.

Instead we went to visit the magic shop inside the Stratosphere hotel. This was fun. Scott, the counterman, was entertaining and informative. He sold his magic well and joined us in sharing anecdotes and magic.

That evening we took a break from escape magic and went to see the show “The Mentalist Live” at one of Planet Hollywood’s theatres. The show was excellent, and thanks to Group-on” reasonably priced.

Saturday we met at a bar and grill owned and run by Rick Harrison, of “Pawn Stars” fame. We had another wonderful afternoon.

Rick Maisel, the washing machine escape artist, joined us later that evening and we excitedly went to see Penn and Teller live at the Rio hotel. The show was great and the company was even better.

Did this qualify as an escape artist convention? No, of course not. Was it a great time? Absolutely. Maybe next time we can do this again, but with a few more people!
I recently picked up a pair of Penetration Handcuffs produced by escape artist and magician Jeff Scott.

BRAND NEW from Dynomite Magic!

These police-style handcuffs have been gimmicked twice, allowing you not only to escape in a flash (same features as our Quick-Escape Handcuffs) but they will also allow you to pass your cuffed hands through solid objects (the Penetration).

Possible Effects:
- Handcuffs through body
- Melt-through Mirror Penetration
- Passing through steel

Includes Penetration Handcuffs and instructions for several effects

*All escapes come with some level of danger.
Buyer agrees that they are 18 or older and assumes all risks associated with use. For entertainment purposes only.

These handcuffs from Jeff Scott are a wonderful buy. The price is reasonable and the product is well made. Jeff combines two effects in one, these cuffs are both bridge jumpers and penetration handcuffs. As such they can be used in a number of ways and Jeff provides some suggestions in the package. If you have never seen a “melt-through-manacle” effect it is definitely worth checking out and maybe even performing.

These cuffs are likely not for audience examination, but a cuff switch can solve that problem easily.

Order yours at www.dynomitemagic.com

I give these handcuffs two thumbs up.
I was still living in New York City in 1985. Magic was not at a high point at that time. Doug Henning, “The Magic Show” had closed years earlier and there wasn’t much out there.

I got a phone call from a friend of mine. Her mom had gotten tickets to see a performance art show that she did not want. She gave the tickets to her daughter and would I like to go and see this show.

Performance art? Having been raised in Greenwich Village, that could mean anything, and a lot of iso called performance art was garbage, but I decided to go; Then I saw Penn and Teller.

They opened with a rendition of the poem “Casey at the Bat.” this is an upside down straitjacket escape done by Teller. There is so much more to this than just a straitjacket escape. It is part serious, part comedy, and yes, I think it qualifies as performance art. In a world where most performance art is not too good, this was a diamond in the rough.

I sat in awe through the rest of the show and I was hooked.

From the moment I suggested running a Las Vegas escape convention, I was met with nay sayers. I make it my personal business in life not to listen to nay-sayers. They are not always wrong, but they do kill ambition.

The first point that was made to me was I should not run the convention as I would not be able to make money from it. This is very possibly true, but it starts from a misrepresentation, and a mistake. It makes the assumption that I am looking to profit from this undertaking; I am not. If I were to make a few dollars to cover my hotel cost, that would be fine, but I don’t need to make a profit. If I needed that, I would have to jack up process. Instead, my thought was to sell dealer tables cheap and charge some admission, really just to cover the costs of running the event. Not being enslaved to money is a wonderful thing.

A great tribute site to the amazing David De-Val

http://www.davidde-val.com/
So, if money isn’t the big issue, then what is?

I feel there are two issues, first is location. As wonderful as Las Vegas is, it may not be the best location. Why? There is too much happening there. There are magic shows everywhere and many other kids of shows too. This seems like a good thing, but it can also be a distraction. When Mark and Sheila Cannon ran their conventions, they were in an amazingly isolated place that was very close to an international airport, but not much else. This had drawbacks too, but it pretty much guaranteed the focus. Would be on the convention and not be scattered.

Another issue is why should people come? The last convention was in 2009. The internet was firmly established as a viable way of communicating, and while it was nice to see my peers and colleagues live, I knew them fairly well online. So why come to a convention? More importantly, why spend potentially lots of money to come to a convention? What draw is there? What the convention needs is an event to make people want to be there.

The Cannon’s found an excellent way to load up the Saturday night show. He gave the profits to charity and let the charity group sell tickets and stock the theater. That worked. Whoever came up with the idea, it was brilliant.

So what is the draw we need? A world record attempt? A lecture from a legend? Are there any legends in the escape business at this point?
There are people like Spencer Horsman who are trying to gain worldwide fame status. Dean Gunnarson has been quietly working his way up for years, and now he is on TV with his own show. Would he lecture? Or is there someone I am not aware of out there just waiting to come in and help us out?

One thought was to have Jeff McBride host the event; he was not interested though. Thanks to the TV show “Extreme Escapes” there are several Vegas based magicians who have dipped their toes into the escape world. Will one of them be interested and willing?

I am not giving up on the idea of a Las Vegas Escape Artist Convention. Even though Vegas has major downsides, I think it still has merit and value as a venue. It will certainly take some planning on our parts to pull it off. One thing we really will need is a Point Person. Someone in Vegas who can scout out and talk with hotels, shows and caterers.

Remember, don’t listen to the nay-sayers.

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This site is well worth the time to study if you want to learn about lock picking.

http://www.lockpickguide.com/

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"Without a Key" for all your lock picking needs

http://www.withoutakey.co.uk/
Two weeks ago I was taking advantage of a trip to New York. I found myself sitting at a table of people who had attended the same high school I had. We were having a mini reunion of sorts. I had promised myself that two words I would not use at this reunion were “magic” and “escapes.” You see I wanted to keep a low profile as it would be too easy for me with my strong personality to take a discussion and dominate on such topics. Truth was I wanted to hear from everybody else too. Someone else while talking about crime and law enforcement brought up the topic of handcuffs. I said nothing.

A former friend of mine, who served on ASB with me and now repairs ATM machines for a living informed us that there were three kinds of handcuffs that one could buy and use.

The first are toy handcuffs. These are sized for young children and don’t really lock. They are made of plastic and look more like props than anything else. (Note your editor once used the DVR to freeze the action on an episode of “Cold Case” and saw the arrested perp wearing a pair of these. Ha ha.)

The second type are police cuffs. These are what you will be wearing if the police choose to make you their guest for a time. They are also, he said, not possible to escape from if you don’t have the key. I kept my mouth shut like a good little escape artist should, and did not mention that I know five ways to open police cuffs and the key is only one of them.

The third, he explained is the type magicians use. These are the ones with the quick release levers on them. I wanted to get up right then and call him out for an idiot. If a magician were to use such a stupid prop, would he dare pass them out for examination? When I was doing my college dorm escapes, examination was the name of the game. Spectators could examine the cuffs to prove they were real because they were real!

Instead I said nothing. Even though his statement made me feel cheap. I took it as an insult to magicians. I don’t know if he saw me shooting him the daggers or not, but without meaning to I know I did.
The book “A Key By Any Other Name, is written by Riley, a British escape Artist and member of the UKEA. Riley has impeccable credentials, including having performed the “Jail Break” which few of our group have really performed.

This book focuses not so much on planning an escape as much as alternative ways of opening handcuffs. I am not going to expose anything here, if you want Riley’s methods, buy the book, but I do want to mention some of the topics he covers.

Riley shows us different styles of keys. The simple Smith and Wesson standard key and some of the higher security keys to some of the more secure and difficult to beat styles of handcuffs.

The 104 handcuff has a smaller keyhole to make picking more difficult, but that won’t stop Riley. He mentions some modifications the your editor had never thought of, or even imagined. Quite clever and quite useful. Also more practical more resilient than any methodology I ever came up with.

Riley will guide you through proper techniques of both picking and shimming; two time honored ways of keyless escaping from handcuffs.

But wait there is more. Riley goes into details of proper shims and picks and even explains how different key holes and keyways effect your picking technique. The detail here is flawless and clearly comes from experience.

Possibly one of the most versatile parts of the book is a discussion of David’s “Tool X.” Not too hard to make, it must have taken an incredible mind to come up with it. Again I will not tip what it is or haw to make it here, but do know that if you are a hard working escape artist, this tool will get much use and be a mainstay in your arsenal against handcuffs.

It is explained in this book that it came about from work done by Riley in conjunction with the Late David De-Val. David was unable to complete the work due to his unfortunate and untimely passing away. Riley decided to finish and publish this work as a guide and an assist for future generations of escape artists like you and me.

You can find and purchase this book at www.de-val-magic.co.uk