



THE OFFICIAL
CIA MANUAL
OF TRICKERY
AND DECEPTION

DECLASSIFIED

H. KEITH MELTON

ROBERT WALLACE

UNCORRECTED
PROOF
NOT FOR SALE

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**THE OFFICIAL
CIA MANUAL
OF TRICKERY
AND DECEPTION**

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AND ROBERT WALLACE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is unlikely that either John Mulholland or Dr. Sidney Gotlieb, the CIA officer who authorized the creation of “Some Operational Applications of the Art of Deception” and “Recognition Signals,” ever anticipated their manuals would become available to anyone without security clearances. Both men understood that their respective professions, as magician or CIA officer, required oaths of secrecy.

The magician’s oath states:

As a magician I promise never to reveal the secret of any illusion to a non-magician, unless that one swears to uphold the Magician’s Oath in turn. I promise never to perform any illusion for any non-magician without first practicing the effect until I can perform it well enough to maintain the illusion of magic.

Members of the magic community disavow anyone seen as betraying this oath, but also recognize the necessity to expose secrets of their craft responsibly to students and others desirous of learning magic. In his 2003 book, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned to Disappear*, illusionist and author Jim Steinmeyer addressed the conundrum faced by those seeking to write about magic, yet still preserve its mysteries:

In order to understand how Houdini hid his elephant, we’re going to have to explain a few secrets. We’ll have

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to violate that sacred magician's oath. In the process, I promise that there will be a few disappointments and more than a few astonishments. But to appreciate magic as an art, you'll have to understand not only the baldest deceptions, but also the subtlest techniques. You'll have to learn to think like a magician.

In his popular general market book of 1963, *Mulholland on Magic*, the skilled practitioner himself revealed many of the principles of magic that a decade earlier had been included in his operational manuscript for the CIA. The real secret that Gottlieb and Mulholland sought to preserve, however, was not of specific tricks, but that professional intelligence officers, not just performing magicians, would be acquiring the necessary knowledge to apply the craft to the world of espionage.

In a sense, this book is the result of two historical accidents. The first "accident" is that of the thousands of pages of research conducted under the CIA's decade long MKULTRA program, to our knowledge, only two major research studies—Mulholland's manuals—have survived CIA Director Richard Helm's order in 1973 to destroy all MKULTRA documents. Mulholland's manuals are a rare piece of historical evidence that the CIA, in the 1950s, through MKULTRA, sought to understand and acquire unorthodox capabilities for potential use against the Soviet adversary and the worldwide Communist threat. The manuals and other declassified MKULTRA administrative materials further reveal that many of America's leading scientists and private institutions willingly participated in secret programs they agreed were critical to the nation's security.

The second "accident" was the authors' discovery of the long-lost CIA manuals while conducting unrelated research in 2007. Although portions of the manuals had been previously described,

Acknowledgments

referenced, or printed in part, we were unaware of the existence of a copy of the complete declassified work along with the original drawings and illustrations. Neither the CIA's library, nor its Historical Intelligence Collection, contained a copy of Mulholland's manuals.

Notable public references to the Mulholland manuals were made by magician-historian Michael Edwards in a 2001 article, "The Sphinx & The Spy: The Clandestine World of John Mulholland," in *Genii: The Conjurors Magazine*, April 2001, a partial reproduction of Mulholland's first manual in *Genii*, Vol 66, no 8, August 2003, and Ben Robinson's *MagiCIA: John Mulholland's Secret Life*, Lybrary.com, 2008. Neither the CIA's library, nor its Historical Intelligence Collection, contained a copy of Mulholland's manuals.

When retrieved by the authors, the manuals' text was legible, but the poor quality of photocopied pages of Mulholland's accompanying illustrations, drawings, and photographs required careful study to understand his original intent. To enhance the manuals' readability, corrections to grammar, punctuation, and related errors that do not alter the substance of the original material have been made. We are indebted to our HarperCollins editor, Stephanie Meyers, for recommending Phil Franke as the illustrator, who has re-created the style and precision of the original images. The reader will find Phil's mastery of capturing human hand and arm movements, which are central to Mulholland's explanation of his tricks, to be superb art.

From the first day we mentioned this project, Daniel Mandel, our agent at Sanford J. Greenburger and Associates, was an enthusiastic promoter. We are deeply appreciative for the personal interest in the subject by Steve Ross, then at HarperCollins, and his actions in making the project possible. Stephanie Meyers provided excellent suggestions and guidance in constructing the

Acknowledgments

overall work and seeing it through to publication. The Harper-Collins graphic design team has created a distinctive cover that reflects the historical look and significance of the material.

While researching, writing, and rewriting the book, we received the daily good-spirited assistance of Mary Margaret Wallace in typing and editing drafts that bounced back and forth between the authors. Consistent encouragement and well-placed suggestions and criticisms from Hayden Peake and Peter Earnest substantially improved our initial drafts. Tony and Jonna Mendez offered perspectives from their experiences that enabled us to translate many of the elements of magic from theory to practice. Additional appreciation is owed to Jerry Richards, Dan Mulvenna, Nigel West, Michael Hasco, David Kahn, Brian Latell, as well as Ben, Bill, and Paul for their insights and contributions. Susan Rowen served as our “hand model” and kept our spirits roused as the authors re-created each of Mulholland’s original photographs as references for artist Phil Franke.

John McLaughlin, former deputy director and acting director of the CIA, reviewed the manuscript to validate our use of magic terminology, as well as contributing the book’s preface and administrating the “magician’s oath” to the authors. John is an accomplished amateur magician and, by virtue of his distinguished career at the CIA, is uniquely qualified to understand the rich overlap between the tradecraft of the intelligence officer and the magician. As a senior research fellow and lecturer at Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., he often begins presentations on strategic deception with demonstrations from his repertoire of magic tricks.

FOREWORD

by John McLaughlin

This is a book about an extraordinary American magician and the way his life intersected with American intelligence at a pivotal moment in its early history.

John Mulholland was never a household word, like the world famous escapologist Houdini or, more recently, the illusionist David Copperfield. But among professional magicians from the 1930s to the 1950s, he was seen as the very model of what a magician should be—urbane, highly skilled, inventive, and prolific. He was very successful professionally, entertaining mostly in New York City society circles. He published widely on magic, both for the general public and for the inner circle of magicians who subscribed to the professional journal he edited for decades, *The Sphinx*. His impact on the art of magic was enormous.

Mulholland's 1932 book, *Quicker Than the Eye*, was one of the first books I stumbled on as a magic-struck boy combing the public library in the 1950s. I fondly remember being transported by an author who seemed to have traveled the world and witnessed marvelous things I could only imagine.

That's what fascinated me about Mulholland then. As a life-long amateur magician who spent a career in American intelligence, what fascinates me about Mulholland today is the way the story told here resonates with something I came to conclude in the course of my professional life: that magic and espionage are really kindred arts.

Foreword

The manual that Mulholland wrote for the Central Intelligence Agency and that is reproduced here sought to apply to some aspects of espionage the techniques of stealth and misdirection used by the professional conjuror.

Many may ask what these two fields have to do with each other. But a cursory look at what intelligence officers do illustrates the convergence.

Just as a magician's methods must elude detection in front of a closely attentive audience, so an intelligence officer doing espionage work must elude close surveillance and pass messages and materiel without detection.

In another part of the profession, analysts must be as familiar as magicians with methods of deception, because analysts are almost always working with incomplete information and in circumstances where an adversary is seeking to mislead them—or in the magician's term, misdirect them.

Counterintelligence officers—people who specialize in catching spies—work in a part of the profession so labyrinthine that it is often referred to as a “wilderness of mirrors”—a phrase, of course, with magical overtones.

Finally, there are the covert-action specialists. In any intelligence service, these are the officers who seek at the direction of their national leaders to affect events or perceptions overseas, especially during wartime. Principles of misdirection familiar to magicians were evident in many of the great British covert operations of World War II—such as deceiving Hitler into thinking the 1943 Allied invasion from North Africa would target Greece rather than its true target, Sicily. This was the conjuror's stage management applied to a continent-sized theater.

The manual Mulholland produced for the CIA does not read the way a book for experienced magicians would read. He is clearly addressing an amateur audience and takes care to explain

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things in the simplest of terms. Yet he draws on the underlying principles of magic to explain how intelligence officers could avoid detection in the midst of various clandestine acts.

A case can be made that Mulholland's instruction influenced the more mundane aspects of espionage tradecraft—how to surreptitiously acquire and conceal various materials, for example. As best we know, however, the methods he designed for more aggressive actions—clandestinely delivering pills and powders into an adversary's drink, for example—were never actually used.

The fact that he was asked to contemplate such things is emblematic of a unique moment in American history. American leaders during the early Cold War felt the nation existentially threatened by an adversary who appeared to have no scruples. Mulholland's writing on delivery of pills, potions, and powders was just one example of research carried out back then in fields as diverse as brainwashing and paranormal psychology. Many such efforts that seem bizarre today are understandable only in the context of those times—the formative years of the Cold War.

These were also the formative years for the American intelligence community. It is important to remember that this was a very new field for the United States. Most other countries had long before integrated espionage into the national security tool kit; the Chinese strategist Sun Tsu had written about it in sophisticated terms in the sixth century B.C., and older countries such as Britain, Russia, and France had been at it for centuries. While the United States had used intelligence episodically, it was not organized as a national level effort until 1947, and our young country struggles still today with its proper place in our national security strategy.

I doubt many intelligence officers today would recognize John Mulholland's name. But the essence of his contribution had little to do with notoriety or fame. It was in effect to help the nation's

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early intelligence officers think like magicians. Given the close kinship between these two ancient arts, that was a significant contribution indeed and one that continues—in stealthy ways that Mulholland would probably admire—to this very day.

INTRODUCTION:

The Legacy of MKULTRA

and the Missing Magic Manuals

Magic and Intelligence are really kindred arts.

—JOHN MC LAUGHLIN,
FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

In 2007, the authors discovered a long-lost CIA file, once classified top secret, which revealed extraordinary details of the agency's connection to the world of magic decades earlier. The documents, part of project MKULTRA, shed light on a fascinating and little-known operation—the employment of John Mulholland as the CIA's first magician. An accomplished author and America's most respected conjurer of his day, Mulholland authored two illustrated manuals for teaching CIA field officers how to integrate elements of the magician's craft into clandestine operations. Due, in part, to the extraordinary levels of secrecy surrounding MKULTRA, the manuals were considered too sensitive to be distributed widely and all copies were believed to have been destroyed in 1973.¹ Nearly fifty years after they were written, rumors of the existence of a long-lost copy of the "magic" manuals continued to fly through the corridors at Langley, but many intelligence officers thought they were a myth.² To understand the CIA's first magician, and how his remarkable

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manuals came to be, it is necessary to recall one of the most dangerous periods in U.S. history.

With its establishment in July 1947, the CIA received two primary missions—prevent surprise foreign attacks against the United States and counter the advance of Soviet communism into Europe and third-world nations. Officers of “the Agency,” as the CIA became known, would be on the front lines of the Cold War for four tense decades fueled by nuclear stalemate, incompatible ideologies, and a Soviet government obsessed with secrecy. At home, the USSR’s security and intelligence organizations, the KGB and its predecessors, cowed the internal population, and abroad they attempted to undermine foreign governments aligned with the West.

The Soviet Union’s successful testing of a nuclear weapon in 1949 caught the United States by surprise and created two nuclear powers competing in an international atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. President Eisenhower received a startling top secret report in 1954 from a commission headed by retired general James H. Doolittle that concluded, “If the U.S. is to survive, long-standing American concepts of ‘fair play’ must be reconsidered. We must learn to subvert, sabotage, and destroy our enemies by cleverer, more sophisticated, and more effective methods than those used against us. It may become necessary that the American people become acquainted with, understand, and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy.”³

The report affirmed a threat to the Western democracies from Soviet-sponsored aggression and called for an American offensive and defensive intelligence posture unlike anything previously authorized in peacetime. As a result, the CIA’s covert action role expanded from Europe into the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the Far East. Reflecting on those years more than half a

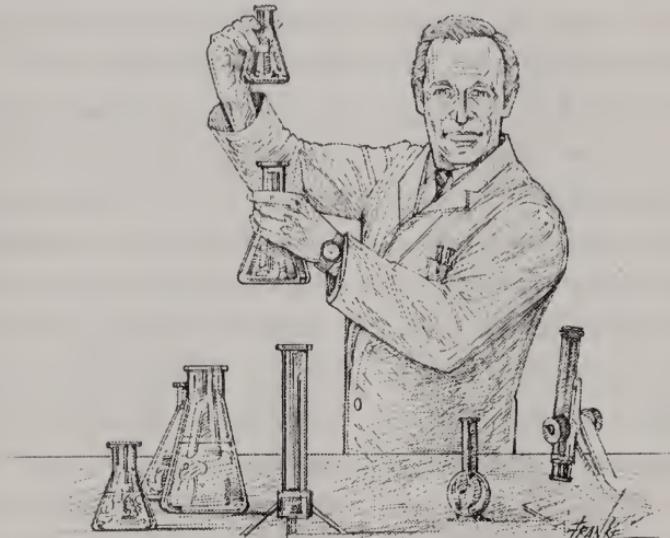
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century later, former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger asserted that during the decade of the 1950s only the United States stood between Soviet-led communism and world freedom.⁴

The CIA had been engaged in covert programs since its creation and in 1951 formed a special unit, the Technical Services Staff (TSS), to exploit advances in U.S. technology in support of espionage operations. One of TSS's first employees was Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, whose degree in chemistry from the California Institute of Technology made him a logical choice to head the handful of chemists in the staff. Initially the chemistry branch created and tested formulas or “special inks” for secret writing that enabled CIA spies to embed invisible messages in otherwise innocuous correspondence.⁵ To conceal the liquid “disappearing inks,” TSS reformulated the liquids into a solid form that looked like aspirin tablets and repackaged the tablets in pill bottles that would pass unnoticed in an agent’s medicine cabinet. When a spy had information to convey, he would dissolve the tablet in water or alcohol to reconstitute the ink for his secret message.

TSS supported other activities of the Agency as well: forging travel and identity documents for agents who worked under alias names, printing propaganda leaflets, installing clandestine microphones and cameras, and building concealments for spy equipment in furniture, briefcases, and clothing. To those uninitiated in the craft of espionage, the secretive work of the TSS scientists and engineers at times appeared to accomplish the impossible. In reality, this handful of CIA scientists was demonstrating the third law of prediction advanced by science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”⁶

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Dr. Sidney Gottlieb.

Dr. Gottlieb and his chemists expanded their research during 1953 to counter another unanticipated Soviet threat. The three-year-long Korean War had stalled and the alliance of North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union seemed on the road to mastering the art of "mind control." Such a capability could render soldiers, and possibly entire populations, vulnerable to Communist propaganda and influence. Reports reached the CIA about Soviet clandestine successes with mind control and newly discovered capabilities to brainwash, recruit, and operate agents with the aid of drugs.⁷

Mind control appeared to allow the Communists, using a combination of psychological techniques and newly developed pharmacological compounds, to remotely alter a subject's mental capacities and control his "free will."⁸ Despite limited research on similar topics during World War II and the early 1950s, the science underlying the reported Soviet successes remained a mys-

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terry. America needed to understand the scientific basis of mind control and develop safeguards and, if necessary, applications for its own use.

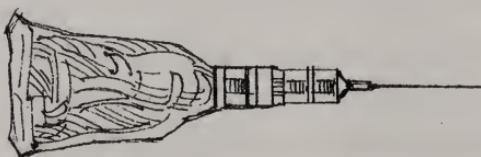
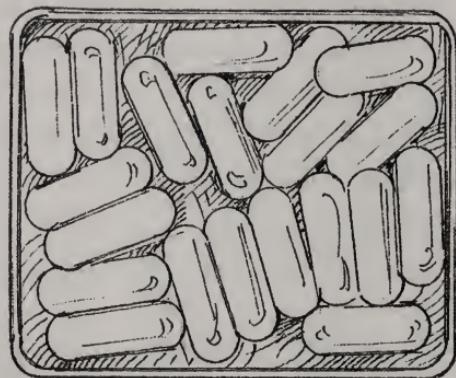
In March 1953, Allen Dulles, director of central intelligence, entrusted the thirty-four-year-old Gottlieb with one of America's most secret and sensitive Cold War programs, code-named MKULTRA. Dulles authorized TSS and Dr. Gottlieb's chemical staff to begin work on multiple projects for "research and development of chemical, biological, and radiological materials capable of employment in clandestine operations to control human behavior."⁹

MKULTRA eventually encompassed 149 subprojects and remained one of the CIA's most carefully guarded secrets for over twenty years.¹⁰ Its projects aimed to understand how drugs and alcohol altered human behavior and to protect American assets from Soviet psychological or psychopharmaceutical manipulation. The research included clandestine acquisition of drugs, clinical testing on and experimentation with humans, some of whom were unaware of said testing, and grant proposals and contracts with hospitals, companies, and individuals. The scientists investigated topics ranging from concocting truth serums to developing a humane way to incapacitate guard dogs using a powerful tranquilizer mixed into ground beef.¹¹ Several projects involved research on little-understood mind-altering drugs such as LSD and marijuana. In the end, the research produced an assortment of potential offensive capabilities involving incapacitating, lethal, and untraceable toxins.

However, the absence of scientific data in the early 1950s about the effective and safe dosage levels of the new drugs, including LSD, presented a problem for the MKULTRA researchers. As a result, Gottlieb and members of his team performed experiments on themselves that included ingesting drugs and

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observing and recording their own reactions. In late 1953, an early LSD experiment involving several government scientists went horribly bad.



"Hush puppy" pills would put does to sleep. To avoid suspicion, adrenaline-filled syrettes would reawaken the dogs after the mission was complete.

Dr. Frank Olson was working at the U.S. Army Special Operations Division (SOD) biological weapons facility at Ft. Detrick, Maryland, and assisting the CIA on MKULTRA projects. Along with half a dozen other scientists, he volunteered to attend a retreat during mid-November 1953 at the remote Deep Creek Lodge in western Maryland, organized by Gottlieb.¹² Together with seven other researchers from TSS and Ft. Detrick, Olson was served Cointreau liqueur that had secretly been spiked with seventy micrograms of LSD. After thirty minutes, the partici-

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pants were told of the LSD and alerted to begin studying their reactions. Most reported little effect, but Olson had a "bad trip" that night. As his condition worsened in the following days, Gotlieb's deputy, Dr. Robert Lashbrook, escorted him to New York City for psychiatric counseling. This attention and treatment seemed to calm Olson temporarily, but later that evening on November 24, 1953, he jumped to his death from a tenth floor window of his New York hotel room.

CIA executives, seeking to protect the secrecy of the MKULTRA program, did not fully reveal the circumstances of Olson's death to his family. No other fatalities from the MKULTRA experiments occurred, but two decades passed before Olson's widow received a delayed apology from President Gerald Ford and a financial settlement from the U.S. government.¹³

Soviet intelligence in the 1950s, however, was less averse to death, either from accident or from assassination. Nikita Khrushchev, the successor to dictator Joseph Stalin, continued the existing policy of "special actions" as a central tool for dealing with the leaders of anti-Soviet émigré groups.¹⁴ The first target of the post-Stalinist era, Ukrainian nationalist Georgi Okolovich, was spared when the assassin, KGB officer Nikolai Khokhlov, confessed the plot to his victim and defected to the CIA. On April 20, 1954, Khokhlov gave a dramatic press conference and revealed both the assassination plot and his exotic weapon to the world.¹⁵ The execution device was an electrically operated gun and silencer hidden inside a cigarette pack, which shot cyanide-tipped bullets.¹⁶ This failure was followed soon thereafter by the successful assassinations of Ukrainian leaders Lev Rebet in 1957 and Stephen Bandera in 1959. Both were killed by KGB assassin Bogdan Stashinsky, who defected in 1961 and revealed that he had disposed of his weapon, a cyanide gas gun concealed in a rolled-up newspaper, in a canal

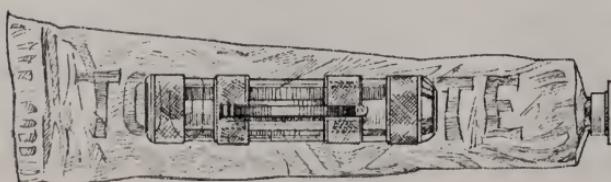
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near Bandera's residence in Munich, Germany.¹⁷ An analysis of the KGB cigarette pack gun and Stashinsky's cyanide weapon, recovered from the canal, stimulated accelerated U.S. efforts to create comparable weaponry for the United States.¹⁸

From the beginning of MKULTRA, CIA scientists researched lethal chemical and biological substances, as well as "truth serums" and hallucinogens, as they continued work begun in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. Under a joint project code named MKNAOMI, TSS and the SOD cooperated on development of ingenious weapons and exotic poisons. One Army produced handgun, called the "nondiscernible bioinoculator," resembled a .45 caliber Colt pistol that, fitted with a telescopic sight and detachable shoulder stock, fired a toxin-tipped dart silently and accurately up to 250 feet. The dart was so small—slightly wider than a human hair—it was nearly undetectable and left no traces in the target's body during an autopsy.¹⁹ Other dart-firing launchers were developed and concealed inside fountain pens, walking canes, and umbrellas.²⁰



Nondiscernible Bioinoculator, fired a toxin-tipped dart silently and accurately up to 250 feet.



A toothpaste tube used as concealment for STINGER.

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Research was also conducted on a variety of exotic poisons including shellfish toxins, cobra venom, botulinium, and crocodile bile.²¹ Under the MKULTRA program, the CIA stockpiled eight different lethal substances and another twenty-seven temporary incapacitates either for specific operations or as on-the-shelf capabilities for possible future use.²² In one example, a tube of poison-laced toothpaste was prepared for insertion into the toiletry kit of President Patrice Lumumba in 1960. However, the CIA office chief in Leopoldville, Larry Devlin, rejected the plan and tossed the tube into the nearby river.²³ About the same time, CIA treated a handkerchief with an incapacitating agent, brucellosis, to be sent to a targeted Iraqi colonel,²⁴ but the man was shot by a firing squad before the handkerchief ever arrived.²⁵



Illustration of original vials of poisons used for MK-ULTRA.

Perhaps some of the most creative and almost whimsical CIA plots considered in the early 1960s were part of Operation Mongoose, meant to discredit or assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro using an assortment of incapacitating and deadly paraphernalia.²⁶

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Various devices considered for assassinating Castro.

HALLUCINOGENIC SPRAYS AND CIGARS: One bioorganic chemist proposed spraying LSD inside Castro's broadcasting studio in Havana to cause him to hallucinate.²⁷ Since Castro famously smoked cigars, another idea suggested impregnating Castro's cigars with a special chemical to produce temporary disorientation during his rambling speeches during their live broadcast to the Cuban people.²⁸

CONTAMINATED BOOTS: When Castro traveled abroad, he often left his boots outside the hotel room door at night to be shined. CIA considered dusting the insides of the boots with thallium salts, a strong depilatory, which would cause his beard to fall out. The chemical was procured and tested successfully on animals, but the plan scrapped when Castro canceled the targeted trip.²⁹

DEPILATORY, POISONED AND EXPLODING CIGARS: Similar to the dusted-boot concept, Castro's cigars could be treated with a powerful depilatory, causing loss of beard and corresponding damage to his "macho" image. A special box of

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cigars was to be provided for Castro during an appearance on David Susskind's television talk show. However, after a senior CIA officer questioned how the operation could ensure that only Castro would smoke the cigars, the idea was abandoned.³⁰

In another attempt, a Cuban double agent was recruited to offer Castro a cigar treated with botulin, a deadly toxin that would cause death within seconds. The cigars were passed to the agent in February 1961, but he failed to carry out the plan.³¹ Cuban security officials eventually created a private cigar brand, the Cohiba, exclusively for Castro, to safeguard his supply against future assassination attempts.

A third concept involved planting a box of exploding cigars at a place where Castro would visit during a trip to the United Nations and "blow his head off." The plan was not carried out.³²

In addition to cigars, Castro enjoyed Cuba's oceans and beaches, which offered an operational venue for:

EXPLODING SEASHELLS: TSD was asked in 1963 to construct a seashell filled with explosives. This device was to be planted near Cuba's Veradero Beach, a place where Castro commonly went skin diving. CIA discarded the idea as impractical when it failed an operational review.³³

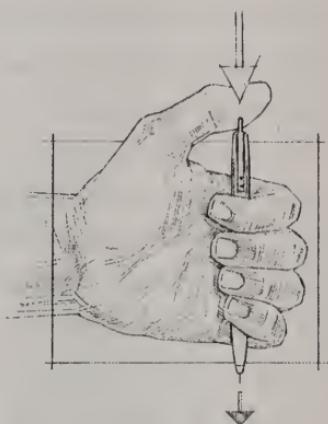
CONTAMINATED DIVING SUIT: A proposal was made for an intermediary to present Castro with a diving suit and breathing apparatus contaminated with tubercle bacillus (tuberculosis germ).³⁴ CIA obtained a diving suit and dusted it to produce Madura foot, a chronic skin disease. The plan failed when the intermediary chose to present a different diving suit.³⁵

POISONED PEN: About the same time that President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas—November 22, 1963—a CIA officer met secretly with Rolando Cubela, a Cuban agent in Paris,

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and offered a *poisoned pen* to kill Castro. The device, a Paper Mate ballpoint, was modified to conceal a small hypodermic syringe for injecting Blackleaf-40 poison. Even the slightest prick would result in a certain death, though the agent would have time to escape before the effects were noticed. After learning of Kennedy's death, however, Cubela reconsidered the plan and disposed of the pen prior to returning to Cuba.³⁶ A decade later, in 1976, American policy governing lethal actions against foreign leaders was formalized when President Ford issued Executive Order 11905 prohibiting political assassinations.³⁷

From the earliest days of MKULTRA, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb recognized that CIA's drugs and chemicals, regardless of their ultimate purpose, would be operationally useless unless field officers and agents could covertly administer them. During the same month MKULTRA was authorized, April 1953, Gottlieb contacted John Mulholland, then fifty-five years old and one of America's most respected magicians. Mulholland was



A hypodermic syringe was concealed inside this modified Paper Mate pen for an operation against Castro.



John Mulholland—world-renowned magician, "Deception that is art."

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an expert in sleight of hand or “close-up” magic, a style of conjuring that appealed to Gottlieb because it was performed only a few feet from the audience.³⁸ Further, sleight of hand illusions required no elaborate props for support. If Mulholland could deceive a suspecting audience who was studying his every move in close proximity, it should be possible to use similar tricks for secretly administering a pill or potion to an unsuspecting target.

To do so, CIA field officers would need to be taught to perform their own tricks and John Mulholland, the author of several books about performing magic, appeared to be the ideal instructor.³⁹ When approached, Mulholland soon agreed to develop a “spy manual” for Gottlieb describing “the various aspects of the magician’s art, which might be useful in covert operations. The instructions would provide information enabling a field case officer to develop the skills to surreptitiously place a pill or other substance in drink or food to be consumed by a target.”⁴⁰ Mulholland accepted \$3,000 to write the manual and the CIA approved the expense as MKULTRA Subproject Number 4 on May 4, 1953.⁴¹



John Mulholland's business card during the 1950s.

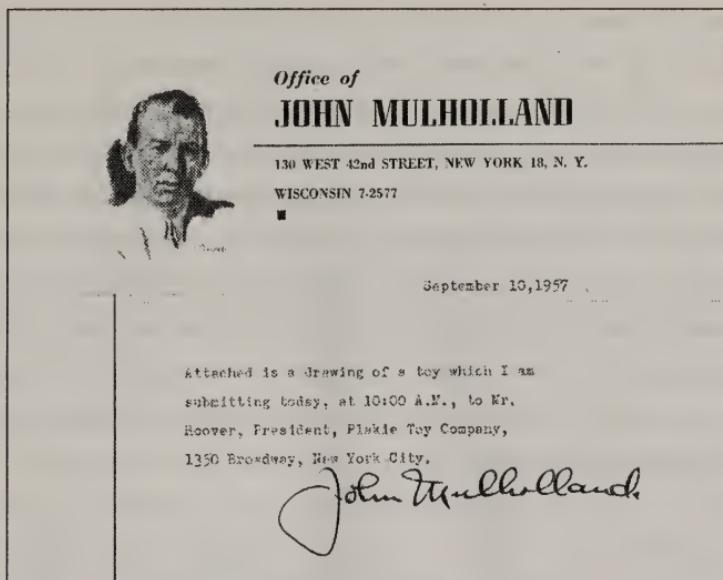
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As part of the broader top-secret MKULTRA program, confidentiality regarding the CIA-Mulholland relationship and possible operational use of the techniques of magic was essential. Multiple layers of security included a formal secrecy agreement with Mulholland, "sterile" correspondence using alias names, cover companies, and nonattributable post office boxes. CIA used various covers for Dr. Gottlieb. Initially he communicated with Mulholland as Sherman C. Grifford of Chemrophyl Associates through a numbered post office box in Washington, D.C.⁴² Subsequently the P.O. box number changed, as did the cover name, to Samuel A. Granger, president of the notional Granger Research Company.⁴³

As an added measure, Mulholland's writing contained no reference to the CIA or clandestine operations. Field case officers were called "performers" or "tricksters" and the covert acts referred to as "tricks." Mulholland pledged never to divulge, publish, or reveal the information, methods, or persons involved.⁴⁴ Information compartmentation practices at the time make it unlikely that Mulholland was told about any of the other MKULTRA subprojects and there is no evidence that Mulholland designed the sleight-of-hand tricks for any specific operation.

By the winter of 1954, the manuscript, titled *Some Operational Applications of the Art of Deception*, was complete.⁴⁵ Gottlieb, apparently pleased with the effort, then saw another area for the magician's skills: the CIA needed new methods for secret communication between officers and spies. Gottlieb invited Mulholland to suggest how the CIA might appropriate "techniques and principles employed by 'magicians, 'mind readers' etc. to communicate information, and the development of new [nonelectrical communication] techniques."⁴⁶ For this new assignment, Mulholland produced another, but much shorter manual titled "Recognition Signals."

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John Mulholland's stationary from 1953 to 1958.

In 1956, Gottlieb again expanded John Mulholland's role as a consultant to consider "the application of the magician's techniques to clandestine operations, such techniques to include surreptitious delivery of materials, deceptive movements and actions to cover normally prohibited activities, influencing choices and perceptions of other persons, various forms of disguise; covert signaling systems, etc."⁴⁷ Mulholland's work for TSS continued until 1958, when his failing health from constant smoking and advancing arthritis limited his ability to travel and consult.⁴⁸

Mulholland's manuscripts, "Some Operational Applications of the Art of Deception" and "Recognition Signals," are among the few remaining documents to reveal MKULTRA's research. Virtually all of the program's reports and operational files on the "research and development of chemical, biological, and radiological materials capable of employment in clandestine operations to control

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human behavior" were ordered destroyed by DCI Richard Helms in 1973, ten years after most of the research had ended.⁴⁹ According to a CIA officer in the 1970s, the Mulholland manual(s) "is the only product of MKULTRA known to have escaped destruction."⁵⁰ Gottlieb, MKULTRA's principal officer, had written in 1964, "It has become increasingly obvious over the last several years that the general area [of biological and chemical control of human behavior] had less and less relevance to current complex operations. On the scientific side these materials and techniques are too unpredictable in their effect on individual human beings to be operationally useful."⁵¹



During operation *Midnight Climax*, individuals were lured by prostitutes to safe houses and secretly monitored to see the effects of drugs.

But the destruction of the MKULTRA documents would itself become a problem for the Agency. In the wake of *New York Times* articles alleging CIA abuses and misconduct related to domestic spying in December 1974, a U.S. Senate Committee, headed by Senator Frank Church, launched an investigation. One sensational revelation from the hearings involved the discovery of

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nonoperational MKULTRA financial and administrative documents that had escaped destruction two years earlier. Senate scrutiny of the files revealed that drug experiments with provocative names such as Operation Midnight Climax had been run from CIA safe houses in California and New York. These experiments observed the effects of LSD on unwitting individuals or "clients" who were lured to the safe houses by prostitutes. Their reactions to drugs were surreptitiously monitored from behind one-way mirrors to judge the effectiveness of LSD, "truth serums," and other mind-control substances.⁵²

Although he had been retired for two years, Gottlieb was called as a witness by the Senate committee and questioned for four consecutive days in October 1975. The questioning concentrated on the drug experiments and Gottlieb apparently was not asked about the John Mulholland contract. Subsequently, following months of investigative work and thousands of hours of testimony, the Church Committee cited the CIA for a failure of "command and control" for only two drug experimentation projects including the 1953 event that had resulted in the death of Dr. Olson. The committee then concluded that none of the officers conducting MKULTRA had undertaken or participated in illegal or criminal activities.

Keeping his promise of secrecy, Mulholland died in 1970 without revealing his clandestine role as "the CIA's magician."⁵³ The public learned of his covert relationship with the CIA, and the Agency's interest in drawing on the techniques of conjuring and magic for its espionage mission, only when the MKULTRA documents were declassified in 1977.⁵⁴ For nearly twenty-five years, the story was nearly forgotten until a well-researched article by magic historian Michael Edwards appeared in *Genii* magazine in 2001, a follow-up August 2003 piece by Richard Kaufman in *Genii*, and a biography of Mulholland by magician

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Ben Robinson was published in late 2008 under the title, *Magi-CIAAn: John Mulholland's Secret Life*.⁵⁵

Declassified CIA documents, the *Genii* articles, and Robinson's book described an elusive, illustrated "manual" written by Mulholland detailing how to perform magic tricks for potential use by intelligence officers. The seven chapter titles of Mulholland's first hundred-page manuscript were listed in the MKULTRA documents, but Edwards noted, "Today—five decades after it was written—the tricks and approaches set forth in this manual are still classified 'top secret.'"⁵⁶

Robinson, commenting about the secrecy surrounding Mulholland's manual, stated: "Of a one-hundred and twenty-one-page manual comprised of eight chapters, the government has allowed only fifty-six pages to be made public. Of the fifty-six pages seen, roughly two-thirds of the pages are visible; the remaining third has been redacted [blacked out]."⁵⁷ An internal history of the Technical Services Staff written by a CIA historian in 2000-2001 referred to the "top- secret" Mulholland manual and indicated that no known copies existed.

We now know that under his CIA contracts Mulholland produced at least two illustrated manuals. The first described and illustrated numerous "tricks," primarily sleight-of-hand and close-up deceptions for secretly hiding, transporting, and delivering small quantities of liquids, powders, or pills in the presence of unsuspecting targets. The second, much shorter manual revealed methods used by magicians and their assistants to pass information among one another without any appearance of communication. The manuals were written in the form of general training instructions rather than for support for specific operations. Only one copy of the original manuals is known to have survived.

For Gottlieb and his successors, the techniques of deception used by performing magicians, when added to the "magic" of

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technology, presented an intriguing potential to enhance the clandestine delivery of materials and secret communications. Mulholland's principles of magic were consistent with the CIA's doctrine of tradecraft, and in the ensuing decades talented consultants from the world of magic provided the CIA with innovative illusions to mask and obscure clandestine operations. Multiple elements of the magician's craft can be seen throughout the world of espionage, most notably in stage management, sleight of hand, disguise, identity transfer, escapology, and special concealment devices such as coins.

Stage Management and Misdirection

**The proper secret for a magician to use
is the one indicated as best under the
conditions and circumstances of the
performance.**

—JOHN MULHOLLAND

John Mulholland instructed officers that their success, as opposed to that of magicians, depended upon the fact that they are not known to be, or even suspected of being, tricksters. The deceptive techniques he taught for delivering CIA pills, powders, and potions were to be performed clandestinely, yet in full view of audiences that, if aware of the nature of the activity, would immediately confront and arrest the spy. Awareness and "management" of the potentially hostile environment, where audiences are culturally diverse, uncontrolled, and sometimes unseen, is as critical to a spy's success as his special devices. Similarly, a successful stage magician understands that the execution of a trick may not produce an effective illusion unless the stage and audience are consciously managed.

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Mulholland, the master of “close magic,” instructed his CIA “tricksters” that “the more of the performer that can be seen, the less his chance of doing anything without detection. As an example, a performer on the stage would be seen were he to put his hand into his pocket, but that action can be made without being seen while standing close to a person so the hand is outside of his range of vision.”⁵⁸ This style of magic was ideal for the CIA-intended actions that needed to be performed in close proximity to the target.

Sight lines, limiting what the audience is allowed to see, are arranged so that the magician’s trick may be executed without exposing secret equipment or maneuvers.⁵⁹ The placement of the magician’s scenery, props, lighting, and even a distractingly beautiful assistant further protect and safeguard the illusion. Sufficient time is allocated for preparing complex illusions and an unlimited number of rehearsals may be conducted to tweak and perfect the performance. In contrast to espionage, where a single mistake can be deadly for the spy, slipups by a magician during a “live show” carry little consequence beyond momentary embarrassment.

To create an effective illusion, the spy and the magician employ similar craft and stage management techniques.⁶⁰ Plausible reasons are substituted for reality to conceal true purposes, and spectator attention is lulled and diverted. For both spies and magicians to be successful, execution must be carefully planned, exhaustively practiced, and skillfully performed.

Magicians plan performances by asking themselves “what is my stage?” and “who is my audience?” Mulholland taught that these questions should be supplemented by asking “what is my goal for the operation” and “how can I carry out the operation secretly?” Only after these questions have been sufficiently answered can the likely stage and audience be assessed.

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For the magician, the perfectly executed illusion is the ultimate goal. For the spy, illusion is only a means to divert attention from a clandestine act. To be successful, the espionage illusion must withstand both the direct observation of onlookers (casuals) and the scrutiny of professional counterintelligence officers (hostile surveillance), without exposing either the participation or identification of the agent. Typical clandestine acts of this type involve covert exchange of information, money, and supplies between the spy and intelligence officer.

Proper stage management techniques provide reasons for the magician's audience to believe their eyes instead of their reason. People have an almost infinite capability to self-rationalize and "know" that humans cannot levitate or survive being cut in half, yet both appear to occur on a well-managed stage. The CIA learned to exploit such tendencies in operations where the spy needed the hostile surveillance team to ignore direct visual observations and rationalize events as nonalerting. For example, an intelligence officer may always park his car at the curb directly in front of his house. This is observed by surveillance. On the day a dead drop is left for an agent, the car is parked across the street from the house.⁶¹ The agent recognizes the different parking location as a signal, while surveillance sees no significance.

Strategic misdirection becomes even more effective when combined with camouflage and illusion. During World War II, stage magician Jasper Maskelyne used his skills for "deceiving the eye" to support the British Camouflage Directorate.⁶² Inflatable rubber tanks were created to misdirect enemy attention away from real tanks that were disguised with plywood shells to appear as transport trucks. Operationally, an entire column of "trucks" could shed their artificial skins and reappear on the battlefield "out of thin air," as if by magic!

Such operations also had applications in naval deceptions. In

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1915, "Q-boats," apparently harmless, worn-out steamers appearing to be easy prey, lured German submarines close in to finish them off with their deck gun. The Q-boats had been fitted with concealed guns disguised in collapsible deckhouses or lifeboats. Naval uniforms for the crew were exchanged for old secondhand uniforms to disguise their crew and captain, who remained hidden to portray a lightly manned and vulnerable vessel. Only when the submarine drew close enough "for the kill" would the trap be sprung, and the superstructure pivoted away to reveal the Q-boat's formidable weaponry.⁶³

Reminiscent of the Q-boats' successful deception, in 1961, CIA officers acquired standard Chinese junks in Hong Kong for conversion with high-speed craft equipped with marine diesel engines, fifty-caliber machine guns, and a battery of camouflaged 3.5-inch rockets. The boats, which appeared externally unmodified, would patrol covertly off the Vietnamese coast above the DMZ, and, if necessary, be able to quickly discard their camouflaged junk superstructure and hull "like magic" before disappearing at high speed.⁶⁴

For agent operations, a retired CIA technical officer, Tony Mendez, has described the elaborate stage management techniques used in Moscow against elite surveillance teams of the KGB's Seventh Directorate. By "lulling" the surveillance team with an unvarying pattern of daily commute in and around Moscow, the alertness of the watchers would eventually, and naturally, degrade. Then, after months of an unchanging travel pattern, the CIA officer would "disappear" during his "normal" commute for the brief time necessary for a clandestine act—usually filling a dead drop or posting a letter—before reappearing at his destination only minutes behind schedule.⁶⁵ The watchers were not alarmed by the short gap in a routine schedule.

Mendez explains that when using misdirection, "a larger

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action covers a smaller action as long as the larger action itself does not attract suspicion.”⁶⁶ A CIA officer stationed abroad once commented that having a dog was essential as a mask for secret communication with agents. Taking the dog out for long walks at night (the larger action) provided numerous opportunities to secretly mark signal sites and service dead drops (the smaller actions). Surveillance teams became used to the pattern of the late night walks and were lulled into a false belief that no smaller-action clandestine activity would occur.

Both magicians and spies must effectively manage the stage and sight lines to create an illusion. CIA officer Haviland Smith, the former senior CIA officer in Czechoslovakia during the late 1950s, developed new operational techniques to exploit weaknesses in the sight lines of the surveillance teams working against him in Prague. He discovered that when he was walking in urban areas, on routes he used frequently, the trailing surveillance team was always behind him, and when he made a right-hand turn, he would be “in the gap” or clear of surveillance for a few seconds. Rather than acting suspiciously to evade surveillance, he managed the sight lines to operate “before their very eyes” while “in the gap.” Smith repeated the technique during his next posting in East Berlin, and again it worked. By properly managing his stage, all of his operational activities could be conducted in these gaps, and out of sight.⁶⁷

Smith continued to refine his techniques for working “in the gap” to covertly exchange information with spies and in 1965 consulted with a magician for tips on using misdirection.⁶⁸ Smith initiated each operational sequence employing an orthogonal approach—right angles or right hand turns—to ensure he would be free from trailing observation. In a personal demonstration set up at Washington’s Mayflower Hotel in front of his boss, the head of the East European Division, he added the new twist of

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misdirection. Smith had another officer—Ron Estes—make a right-hand turn into the hotel carrying a small package in his right hand beneath his raincoat. Smith, posing as the agent, was waiting inside the door, standing next to a bank of pay phones. As Estes approached, he shifted his raincoat from his right hand and shook it briefly before letting it flop into his left hand. In that same instant he handed the package unnoticed to Smith with his right hand. The movement of the raincoat successfully diverted attention to the left of Estes and away from the package. Smith received it without notice and moved quickly away and down a stairway. The CIA observers were unaware of the technique and inquired impatiently when the activity would take place. It worked. Misdirection had compounded the effectiveness of stage management.⁶⁹

Performing theaters can be artfully arranged for illusions that provide the stage magician with distinct advantages. Stage lighting assures the audience focus is drawn to visible details intended to enhance the illusion, masking those that are unwanted. Props and paraphernalia are arranged in advance. Access to the stage is controlled and restricted to avoid exposing the magician's secrets. The intelligence officer lacks such advantages, as the location or stage of his performance will be dictated by the requirements of the secret operation. As such, little assured control can be exercised over the audience, lighting, and sight lines. Regardless of how well designed and rehearsed clandestine "magic" may be, uncertainty always accompanies the real "performance." For the field officer and agent, unseen as well as unanticipated spectators or hidden surveillance can expose a clandestine operation with disastrous consequences. Thus special precautions are required.

Robert Hanssen, a trained FBI counterintelligence officer

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who volunteered to spy for Soviet and Russian intelligence, selected the footbridges in the parks of northern Virginia for his stage. At night, he hid tightly wrapped and taped plastic trash bags crammed full of secret U.S. documents or retrieved sacks containing money or diamonds. Hanssen cleverly controlled the stage by choosing to “perform” when the parks were mostly unoccupied and at sites in heavily wooded and secluded park locations. He carefully selected each operational site to minimize his visibility to passersby while permitting him to detect possible surveillance prior to placing or removing bags from beneath the footbridge.⁷⁰ Under these circumstances, Hanssen exploited an advantage over even the magician’s controlled stage since the absence of any audience virtually guaranteed his success.⁷¹

For the Central Intelligence Agency, few operations were more dangerous, or important, than the covert or “black” exfiltration of endangered officers, agents, and defectors from hostile countries or hostage situations. During the Cold War, the CIA and British intelligence, MI6, employed stage management techniques, frequently similar to those in the world of magic, for more than 150 secret operations to bring individuals and their extended families “out of the cold.”⁷²

Stage management by the British intelligence service saved one of its most important spies from certain death in 1985. KGB Colonel Oleg Gordievsky, the senior KGB intelligence officer and acting *rezident* in London, who was working secretly for the British intelligence, was betrayed by CIA turncoat Aldrich Ames and recalled to Moscow under suspicion. KGB investigators had circumstantial evidence from Ames that pointed to Gordievsky, but lacked the proof necessary to arrest the senior KGB officer. Each day he was subjected to lengthy interrogations as the investigators built their case against him, but allowed to return at night to his apartment, which was rigged with hidden listening

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devices. They hoped that overhearing a private confession to his wife, or an attempt to contact the British, would provide the final proof of his treason.⁷³ However, Gordievsky secretly activated an emergency escape plan provided to him by MI6, and after eluding surveillance while on his daily jog traveled by train and bus to the Finnish border.

Concurrent with Gordievsky's secret travel, a pregnant British diplomat was driven from Moscow to Helsinki for medical attention. As her car and driver neared the Finnish border, they rendezvoused with Gordievsky and concealed him in the trunk of their diplomatic vehicle. At the border, while KGB Border Guard officers were examining papers, their German shepherd guard dog began to sniff suspiciously at the area of the car concealing Gordievsky. Thinking quickly, the pregnant diplomat took a meat sandwich from her bag and offered it to the curious dog as a distraction. Her impromptu stage management, employing misdirection, saved the agent's life and Gordievsky became the only person known to have escaped Moscow while under the direct observation of the KGB's Seventh Directorate.⁷⁴

A classic CIA example demanding exacting stage management for a secret exfiltration is the rescue of six US diplomats stranded outside of the American embassy in Iran after the compound was overrun and seized by Iranian "students" in November of 1979. Mendez, then chief of the disguise section of the CIA's Office of Technical Service, adapted exfiltration techniques to the particular situation. With the assistance of Academy Award winner and Hollywood makeup specialist John Chambers, he created the deception necessary for their rescue. Mendez and his associates formed a notional Hollywood film company, "Studio Six Productions," to produce a science fiction film titled *Argo*. Studio Six announced that the film would be shot in Iran and a team would be dispatched to scout potential locations out-

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side Tehran. Fooled by this subterfuge, the Iranian government was expected to agree to cooperate with the Hollywood company as part of efforts to reverse the negative international publicity following the embassy takeover.

To prepare the world stage, Mendez opened Studio Six production offices on the Columbia Studio lot in Hollywood and established credibility by running a full-page business advertisement in the industry's most important trade paper, *Variety*. Mendez, posing as a European filmmaker, adopted an alias name, obtained visas from the Iranian embassy in Switzerland, and, accompanied by a colleague, traveled to Teheran in January of 1980. Once contact was established with the six diplomats hidden at the residence of a Canadian official, Mendez explained how their cover as filmmakers, combined with disguise and fabricated Canadian passports, could be used to exfiltrate them out of the Tehran airport. Mendez, a magic enthusiast as well as an accomplished "document validator" or forger, used a simple sleight-of-hand trick with wine-bottle corks to illustrate how deception and stage management would be used to overcome potential obstacles. His "magic and illusion" demonstration, called "The Impassable Corks," instilled confidence for the plan among the diplomats.⁷⁵

Mendez and his colleague worked through the weekend to create "new" Canadian passports and forge the necessary Iranian exit visas. Each of the six diplomats received cosmetic "make-overs" using disguise materials that restyled their looks to appear "Hollywood." One conservative diplomat sported snow-white hair with a "mod" blow-dry. Mendez observed that after the transformation, "[the diplomat] was wearing tight trousers with no pockets and a blue silk shirt unbuttoned down the front with his chest hair cradling a gold chain and medallion. With his top-coat resting across his shoulders like a cape, he strolled around

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the room with the flair of a Hollywood dandy.”⁷⁶

Seats for the escaping diplomats posing as the film’s “scouting team” were booked on a Swissair flight departing from Tehran’s Mehrabad Airport early on January 28, 1980. Mendez and his CIA colleague arrived at 5:30 A.M. to “manage the stage” at a time when the departure officials would be sleepy and most of the potentially troublesome Revolutionary Guards were still in bed. The escapees’ luggage was emblazoned with Canadian maple leaf stickers and Mendez hovered about his “stage,” the airport departure lounge, impressing onlookers with “Hollywood-talk.” The activity effectively supported the newly acquired manners and dress of the disguised diplomats, and by late afternoon, all reached Zurich, Switzerland, and freedom.

Illusionist Jim Steinmeyer, when commenting on the techniques of the escape, noted: “Mendez’s improvisation was performed within carefully rehearsed scenes, meticulous paperwork, backstopped stories, and exhaustive research. If the six Americans seemed to saunter effortlessly through the Teheran airport, it was because the stage had been beautifully set and the scene masterfully presented. It was a demonstration of Kellar the Magician’s famous boast that, once he had an audience under his spell, he could ‘march an elephant across the stage and no one would notice.’ ”⁷⁷



Dr. Gottlieb's TSS staff later became the CIA's Office of Technical Service and employed a new generation of magicians and illusionists.

Sleight of Hand

As beginners, magicians love the colorful boxes they first saw on magic shop shelves—the trick props that seem able to do anything. As sophisticates, they learn that these mechanical props are no substitute for pure ability . . . sleight of hand.

—JIM STEINMEYER, *HIDING THE ELEPHANT*

A common and incorrect belief is that the hand is quicker than the eye. Quick movement does not explain an effective illusion by either magicians or spies. In fact, the hand is much slower than the eye, and for deceptive purposes, neither should ever move quickly. An illusion is primarily mental, not visual; when magicians and spies fool the minds of audiences, eyes observe only what the performer intends.

Mulholland employed sleight of hand, the skilled manipulation of objects in a manner undetectable to the observer, in creating effective deceptions and illusions. He also recognized that such techniques could be learned by intelligence officers and applied in espionage. By replacing quick or clumsy movements that would attract the attention of hostile surveillance teams or an intended target, Mulholland described “sleights” that would appear to observers as natural and innocent, whether those be gestures, alterations in body posture, or changes in hand position.

Effective sleight of hand employs psychology, misdirection, and a natural sequence of steps to create an illusion. Magicians and spies use misdirection so that their audiences will look toward an intended direction and away from the covert act. Since the human mind can only focus on a single thought at a time,

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controlling the target's visual perception of events unfolding around him can implant a false image and memory. For example, Mulholland instructed officers that the flaming of a match rising in one hand to light a target's cigarette would mask the discrete drop of a pill from the other hand. The target's eyes, focusing, as intended, on the match, were incapable of also noticing the pill, the covert action.

Mulholland realized that CIA officers needed small props to enhance their limited sleight-of-hand skills. He understood that spectators were less likely to suspect items with which they were already familiar. Commonly seen objects, such as cigarettes, matchbooks, pencils, and coins, appeared almost ubiquitous and inconsequential. Since most onlookers would not suspect that these items could be used as espionage devices, they could be concealments for hiding the pills, potions, and powders such as those produced by MKULTRA.

Intelligence officers employed other sleight of hand techniques using conjuring paraphernalia. "Flash paper," a staple for many magicians, was popular when cigarette smoking was common and acceptable. CIA officers employed it when taking secret notes in hostile and threatening environments; if the officer sensed danger or considered an operation compromised, touching the paper with a lit cigarette would result in its complete and instantaneous destruction. To the surveillance teams, none of the officer's movements appeared unusual and only the ash residue remained if searched.

In later years, as smoking became less acceptable, CIA officers preferred making written notes on water-soluble paper instead of flash paper. Covert communications and tasking instructions were printed on this special, water-soluble paper so they could be destroyed quickly and completely in a cup of coffee, splashed with water, or even swallowed. Ryszard Kuklinski, the CIA's

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most valuable Cold War agent in Poland in the 1970s, kept his secret escape plan on water-soluble paper taped beneath a kitchen cabinet so it could be quickly destroyed in a nearby pan of water.⁷⁸

A principal skill of intelligence officers is taking photographs without being detected. In the 1960s, the CIA needed an effective way to make a Minox subminiature camera “disappear” quickly after taking a secret photo. The solution employed sleight of hand and a device from the magician’s repertoire of disappearing objects. In this case a “holdout,” a simple piece of elastic for making a coin disappear from an outstretched hand and up the performer’s sleeve, worked well. However, instead of elastic, CIA technicians used a retractable tape measure to fit the mechanism with thin black cord and mounted it on a leather armband.⁷⁹ The cord attached to the end of the Minox, and after the photo was taken, the officer had only to release his grip to allow the camera to retract and “disappear” up his sleeve.

Using sleight of hand can enhance a clandestine operation in other, less direct ways. For example, undercover officers often face difficulties infiltrating suspicious groups who are wary when approached by strangers. One solution was a simple trick, the “magic beer coaster,” to attract attention and have the target “come to him.”⁸⁰ A folded U.S. fifty-dollar bill was inserted into a Heineken beer coaster that had been sliced apart with a razor, then reglued and placed in a book press to flatten as it dried. The officer appeared several nights at the bar and drank alone while slowly tearing apart a stack of Heineken coasters. When the bartender eventually asked why he was doing this, the officer responded, “Heineken places fifty-dollar bills as a little-known promotion in unmarked beer coasters.” An hour later, the officer

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employed sleight of hand to introduce a gimmicked coaster into the stack in front of him. When he later tore apart the prepared coaster and "discovered" the fifty-dollar bill, he celebrated loudly and offered to buy a round of drinks. The onlookers came to him! Though the fifty-dollar coaster attracted attention, the full effectiveness of the illusion was dependent on the officer's stage performance and his sleight of hand.

Disguise and Identity Transfer

Disguise is only a tool. . . . Before you use any tradecraft tool you have to set up the operation for the deception.

—TONY MENDEZ, FORMER CIA "MASTER OF DISGUISE"⁸¹

Magicians regularly employ doubles, identical twins, full disguise, or disguise paraphernalia to create effective illusions. CIA disguise technicians employed skills learned in Hollywood to devise a variety of effective disguise solutions. As with stage disguises, the shorter the time the subject will be studied by observers, the less elaborate the disguise must be. A light disguise might include only a wig, glasses, mole, facial hair, dental appliance, and articles of clothing. One application of such disguises occurred during meetings with an unknown volunteer, called a "walk-in," who sought to meet with "someone in American intelligence."⁸² In such cases, the CIA officer would put on a light disguise to provide limited protection against being later identified by terrorists or the local counterintelligence service. However, if the "volunteer" appeared to have valuable information and the attributes to become a future spy, his identity had to be protected, and a light disguise could effectively mask his appearance as he departed the meeting.

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In the late 1970s, Hollywood makeup artist John Chambers worked with CIA technicians to create a new generation of face masks using techniques developed for the hit movie *Planet of the Apes*.⁸³ His masks blended articulated facial elements to appear "lifelike" when individuals talked or blinked their eyes. Illusions created with the new masks could withstand scrutiny for several hours or longer. More elaborate disguise could effect an ethnic or gender change as well.

Custom clothing altered body type and weight distribution and dental appliances altered facial features and speech tone. Hair could be dyed and makeup employed to give a younger or older appearance.

The FBI has used disguise techniques for years when pursuing evidence in counterintelligence investigations against U.S. traitors who spied for the Soviet Union and thought they had successfully retired. A disguised undercover officer, a special agent who spoke with a heavy East European accent, dressed in a poorly fitting suit tailored in the former Soviet Bloc, sought to "reestablish contact" with former agents.⁸⁴ Though the "retired" spies were initially



CIA field officers in Moscow frequently donned light disguises, such as that of a Russian worker, for meetings with agents; circa 1982.

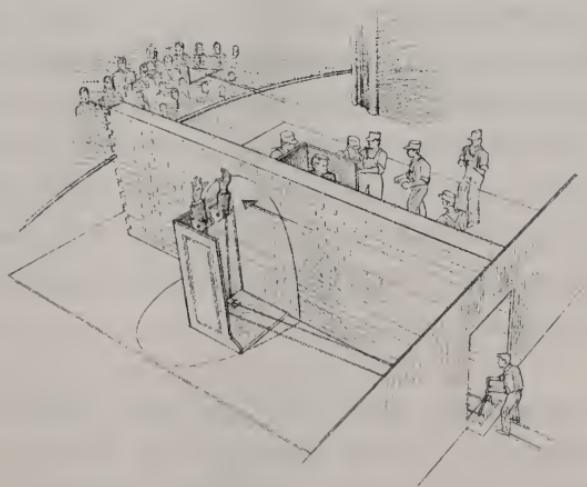
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wary, the special agent's stage management, attire, and disarming questions such as "do we still owe you money?" eventually elicited replies and provided evidence. One notable catch from this operation was retired U.S. Army colonel George Trofimoff, who had been an important KGB spy for twenty-five years until his retirement in 1994. When recontacted by the undercover officer in 1997, he provided compromising details over the next two years before sufficient evidence was gathered for his arrest. His motivation in talking was to recover payments for information provided during his career as a spy, but for which, he alleged, no payment had been received. In 2001, Trofimoff, then age seventy-five, was convicted and received a life sentence.⁸⁵

Disguises can also be used with greater speed and creativity than sometimes imagined. When, in less than a second, a magician's assistant is transported from one side of the stage to the other, there can be no other apparent explanation for the audience except "It's magic!" Illusionists perform similar feats nightly and Houdini's mysterious "disappearance through a newly constructed brick wall" act was one of his most famous illusions. R. D. Adams, the craftsman who constructed Houdini's magical apparatus, described the illusion: "A dozen or more bricklayers in overalls appeared before the audience and built a bona fide brick wall seven or eight feet high extending from the footlights to almost the rear of the stage. When it was completed, Houdini was ready to 'disappear.' After a few appropriate remarks, he stepped behind a small screen, something like a prompter's box, which the bricklayers pushed slowly to the center of the wall. The bricklayers moved over to the other side and adjusted a similar screen there opposite the first one. 'Here I am, here I am,' Houdini would shout, and waving arms thrust through holes in the screen gave evidence of the fact. Then the arms would disappear and Houdini would step forth from the screen on the other side of the wall."⁸⁶

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At the time, respected skeptics speculated that Houdini did this by using a trapdoor, which allowed secret passage from one side of the stage to the other. Such speculation was inaccurate, however, since the investigating committee that validated the integrity of each performance would have detected the trapdoor. To confound the audience in later performances, Houdini even placed a sheet of paper or a sheet of glass beneath the wall to demonstrate that a trapdoor was not used. The secret, Adams explained, was: "Houdini disappeared through the wall only in the minds of the exceedingly gullible. As a matter of fact while the first screen, behind which he had stepped, was being pushed back against the wall, he leaped into a pair of blue jumpers and pulled a workman's cap down far over his face. When the screen touched the wall, he was one of the bricklayers as far as the audience was concerned. He got behind the second screen disguised as a bricklayer. From this point he did his calling to the audience. Mechanical arms and hands, operated by a hidden rope leading to the wings, furnished the gestures, which convinces Houdini was behind screen No. 1 instead of No. 2 completing the illusion."⁸⁷



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Such a baffling, and effective, illusion can also be accomplished employing an identical or disguised twin.⁸⁸ One assistant seems to vanish, and almost instantly reappears in another location, sometimes, for effect, even suspended above the stage. To deceive the audience, the lovely blond assistant, and her replacement, must be of similar body type, dressed in similar attire, using the same makeup and hair (wigs). To the audience, who never sees them together to form a comparison, they appear identical. The less time the audience has to scrutinize elements of the deception, such as details of the assistant's appearance, the more effective the illusion. The magician never announces the deception in advance, and the audience has no opportunity or reason to scrutinize any of the onstage participants.

At the CIA, the identical-twin illusion became known as "identity transfer." An officer would disappear from one location and reappear somewhere else as the same or a different person. When this was properly staged, surveillance teams were never aware of the switch and officers were able to evade hostile surveillance prior to performing operational acts. Successful CIA identity transfers involved an entire "little theater" presentation, which was performed for several hours before the swap took place. The actual transfer required only a few minutes at the most, and was nearly impossible for even a trained observer to detect. The staged scenario presented to surveillance was geared toward fooling their minds, rather than just fooling their eyes. Disguise was critical, but only one element of the "magic" demanded by an identity-transfer illusion whether performed in an auditorium or on the street.

Moscow represented one of the CIA's most dangerous operational areas during the Cold War due to the effectiveness of the KGB's Seventh Directorate surveillance apparatus. CIA of-

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ficers serving in Moscow were never publicly identified; they worked during the day in a variety of cover jobs and then at night and on weekends as intelligence officers. Though they were protected from prosecution by diplomatic immunity, their greater concern was that hostile surveillance of their clandestine activities might expose their agents, who were subject to arrest and execution. Therefore, it was imperative that an officer "go black"—become free of surveillance—before conducting an operational act and keep his agent safe. Different ruses, utilizing techniques similar to those developed by Houdini decades earlier, proved successful.

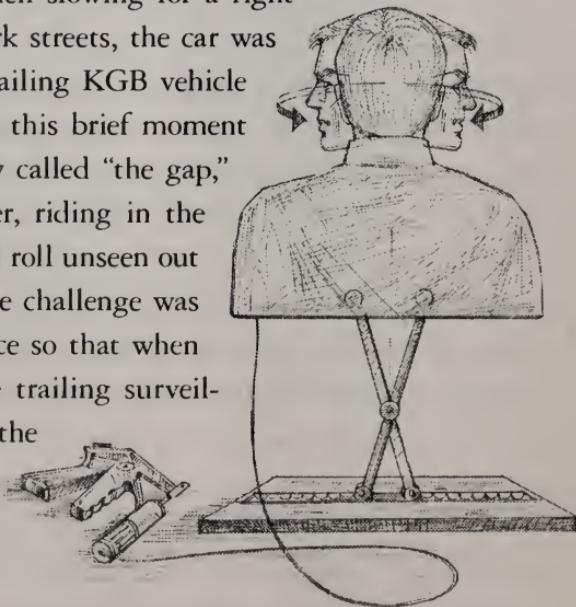
In one of the first successful identity-transfer performances in Moscow, an American intelligence officer planning a clandestine meeting with a top spy had to assure himself he would be free of surveillance. The officer carefully choreographed a performance with a similarly sized fellow worker during an official social function they both would attend.

On the appointed evening, the officer, accompanied by his wife, arrived at the reception dressed in his normal suit and tie. His partner in the operation, who was not under suspicion, arrived separately in garish, 1970s mod-style clothing. Both knew that their arrival and appearance would be noted by KGB surveillance posted around the official compound. Then a third official, driven by his spouse, arrived at the function on crutches wearing a leg cast, ski jacket, and cap, following an unfortunate skiing accident the previous weekend. Once all were inside, the intelligence officer swapped clothing and "identity" with the garishly dressed man and left the reception in the company of the injured official, whose wife was driving the car.

The exit of the mod-dressed man accompanied by his friend on crutches would be observed by KGB surveillance who assumed the intelligence officer was still inside. Once away from the

compound, the officer changed into nondescript clothing hidden in the vehicle and met safely with his agent. Before returning, he again changed into the garish outfit and, in the company of the injured skier, reentered compound they had earlier left. There a clothing and identity switch was made with the original partner. The normally dressed, suit-and-tie officer rejoined the function apologizing for being called away for a few minutes to "answer questions from another self-important bureaucrat in Washington." The successful performance, using identity-transfer techniques that fooled the KGB, would have made Houdini proud.⁸⁹

Another identity transfer technique permitted an intelligence officer to exit a car while being driven through the darkened streets of Moscow, yet appear to the trailing surveillance vehicle as if he were still inside. To set the stage, the intelligence officer and driver moved at normal speed through the nighttime streets knowing that KGB surveillance teams were following in their cars from behind at a discreet distance. Experience had taught them that when slowing for a right-hand turn on the dark streets, the car was out of sight of the trailing KGB vehicle for a few seconds. In this brief moment *in obscura*, which they called "the gap," the intelligence officer, riding in the passenger's seat, could roll unseen out of the slowed car. The challenge was to disguise his absence so that when the headlights of the trailing surveillance vehicle turned the corner, two silhouetted figures would still be seen in the car ahead.



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The answer was the CIA's creation of a three-dimensional human torso sitting atop a spring-activated scissor-lift mechanism fitted with a rotating head, which collapsed into a small portable briefcase or duffel bag. This piece of equipment acquired the name "jack-in-the-box" or JIB. With one hand, the driver could unlatch the carrying case and lift the JIB instantly into place.

Instead of using offstage ropes to manipulate artificial hands and legs as in Houdini's disappearance through a brick wall, the CIA used a trigger grip to rotate the JIB's artificial head and create an effective illusion for the KGB surveillance vehicles. When the officer was ready to reenter the car, the JIB could be pushed back into its resting position and the "briefcase" shoved to the floor.⁹⁰ The CIA understood that by controlling the location of the event (an empty street in Moscow), the lighting (an unlit area), the audience (the trailing surveillance car), the timing (when the cars were a sufficient distance apart), and the sight line (visible only from the rear), they could stage-manage an effective illusion.

One of the CIA's most unusual plans for an identity transfer required a big dog. In the 1970s, a plan was conceived to post an officer abroad with an adult male Saint Bernard weighing more than 180 pounds. When identity transfer was needed, the dog would be swapped for an agent concealed in a full Saint Bernard skin and inside a portable kennel. A tape recorder and small speakers hidden in the kennel provided sound effects to enhance the effectiveness of the illusion. The agent-dog would be taken to a safe location for "examination by a veterinarian." Once inside the safe house, the agent could be safely debriefed, and when the "examination" was completed, he could redon the dog skin, get into the kennel, and be returned "home."⁹¹

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The idea of swapping identities with an animal was not completely new and had been previously developed during World War II. The British Special Operations, Executive (SOE) created an innovative camouflage for parachutists secretly landing in German-occupied France. A two-piece, collapsible rubber cow was painted in advance of the operation to blend with livestock in the landing area. The plan then called for agents to parachute the rubber cow with them, land, and bury their parachutes. That done, they would climb into their respective half of the two-person cow, join up, and remain concealed until members of the local French Resistance units arrived and led them to safety. Tests showed the camouflage to be effective at night, and though rubber cows were produced, no record exists of them being used operationally.⁹²

Escapology

Anything that can be locked by one man
can be unlocked by another.

—ESCAPE ARTIST STERANKO

Danger is sometimes an unfortunate consequence of espionage and even the most skilled intelligence officers and spies may be caught and incarcerated. The art and practice of escaping from constrictions, be they ropes, handcuffs, straitjackets, jails, or even a country, is *escapology*. Magicians and performers have long employed such techniques to entertain audiences expecting to see an "impossible" escape. Spies have been equipped with similar tools and techniques for situations in which imprisonment could lead to death and escape is not expected.

Creative minds have continually devised special equipment and techniques to escape from virtually every type of restraint.

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Secret escape techniques developed by magicians over the last 150 years to amaze audiences have also been used by spies.

Escaping locks and chains requires special technical knowledge, a hidden key or tool, or a willing confederate. In the early 1900s, Harry Houdini employed all of these to become one of the most famous celebrities of his day. His creativity and innovation were exhibited during a 1903 visit to Moscow when he issued a challenge to the Russian secret police proclaiming his ability to escape from their dreaded “Siberian transport cell or carette,” a large horse-drawn “safe on wheels” used for conveying prisoners to Siberia.⁹³

The challenge was accepted and Houdini, stripped naked in freezing weather and searched thoroughly by three police officers, was manacled, shackled, chained to foot fetters, and locked inside the vault-shaped wagon. The lock controlling the door was inaccessible from the inside and a small slit on the outside of the carette allowing access required a different key to open it than the one to lock it.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, minutes later, Houdini emerged to the amazement and fury of his wary hosts. How he had escaped was soon obvious to his jailers, but they remained puzzled about the trick he used to sneak his tools into the prison.

Houdini’s preparations began the day before the escape, when his assistant, Franz Kukol, managed to glimpse the underside of the carriage. Kukol observed that the carriage’s plain wooden floor was protected only by a thin layer of zinc. Kukol recognized that just two tools were needed for the escape: a flexible metal wire used by surgeons for cutting bone called a Gigli saw and a tiny cutting tool.⁹⁵ Houdini’s plan was to completely avoid the heavy doors and locks, and cut through the floor to escape the carriage.⁹⁶ Houdini had managed to conceal his escape apparatus during the probing searches of his jailers in a small “sixth finger.”⁹⁷ As the guards searched first his upper body, then his

lower body, he switched the hollow finger between his trousers and hand. Once locked inside the carette, Houdini effected his escape in only a minute by cutting a slit in the zinc layer and sawing through the floorboards.⁹⁸ He credited his escape abilities to technical skills, physical ability, and trickery in concealing the equipment necessary for the act.

A few years earlier, in 1900, Houdini's escaping skills had attracted the attention of William Melville, the head of Britain's Scotland Yard Special Branch.⁹⁹ Dismissive of what he presumed were theatrical stage handcuffs, the chief encircled Houdini's arms around a pillar and snapped on regulation Scotland Yard handcuffs. Melville was amazed at Houdini's self-extrication within seconds and pronounced, "Scotland Yard won't forget you, young man."¹⁰⁰

Melville fulfilled his own prediction. When British agents began training in 1914 to operate against Germany during the buildup to World War I, those attending an MI5 spy school received lectures taught by Melville on "how to pick locks and burgle houses." Other presentations included the Technique of Lying, the Technique of Being Innocent, the Will to Kill, Sex as a Weapon in Intelligence, and (finally) Dr. McWhirter's Butchery Class, which taught you how to "top [kill] yourself if you were caught."¹⁰¹

The impact of Houdini's magical escape techniques influenced later generations of clandestine officers. Clayton Hutton, a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps during the first world war, volunteered his services to British military intelligence in the late 1930s.¹⁰² None of Hutton's skills seemed of value until he mentioned his great interest in "magicians, illusionists, and escapologists." He described responding to a hundred-pound challenge from Houdini in 1913 for anyone who could construct a wooden box from which the magician could not escape. Hutton accepted

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the challenge and Houdini was handcuffed, put in a sack, and locked in Hutton's formidable wooden packing case. To Hutton's dismay, Houdini escaped within minutes.

Hutton said he learned years later that his own assistant, Ted Withers, a first-class carpenter, had been bribed by Houdini for three pounds before the performance. Withers gimmicked the case with false nails at the end to enable an easy escape.¹⁰³ Houdini cut the sack "using a small razor blade he had palmed when shaking hands with the last man to come up on stage—a confederate."¹⁰⁴ After hearing the story, the British intelligence officer conducting his interview, Major J. H. Russell, commented, "You may be the man we want. We're looking for a showman with an interest in escapology. You appear to fit the bill."¹⁰⁵ Hutton got the job.

MI9, a division of British military intelligence, was responsible for helping service personnel evade capture where possible, escape when necessary, collect intelligence, and distribute information.¹⁰⁶ Their efforts were centered at the secretive Intelligence School 9 (IS9), where Hutton worked to invent, design, and adapt aids for evasion, escape, and secret communication with prisoners of war.

Evading capture required small, easily carried, and hidden equipment for terrain and directional knowledge such as maps and compasses. Hutton remembered the methods Houdini had used thirty years earlier to conceal his escape aids and adapted them to hide MI9's gadgets from determined searches by German police and guards. Escape maps were concealed within false backs of playing cards or printed on silk or rice paper to be folded silently into tiny volumes. Miniature telescopes were hidden inside a cigarette holder, and smoking pipes, belt buckles, and even magnetized razor blades were used to hide compasses. The face of a standard brass uniform button unscrewed to reveal a hidden

compass and was one of Hutton's most effective deceptions. In his first hidden compass design, the button was unscrewed with a standard left-hand thread. When German guards got wise to the concealment, Hutton quickly changed the design to utilize a right-hand thread on the buttons; the deception worked as planned, and the more the German guards tried to "open" the new buttons conventionally, with a counterclockwise rotation, the tighter they became.¹⁰⁷

The imagination required for conceiving devices seemed to have no limits. One escape kit, fitted within a pocketknife, contained wire cutters, saw blades, and a lock breaker.¹⁰⁸ Another kit, concealed in a boot heel that was accessible through a hinged flap in the straight edge of the heel, contained a silk map, a compass and a small file. The brother of magic dealer Will Gladstone had first created the hollow heel for the "Mokana shoe" in 1901, which Houdini used successfully to evade the invasive police searches that preceded his escapes.¹⁰⁹ Though stripped naked, he had requested shoes to ward off cold feet.¹¹⁰

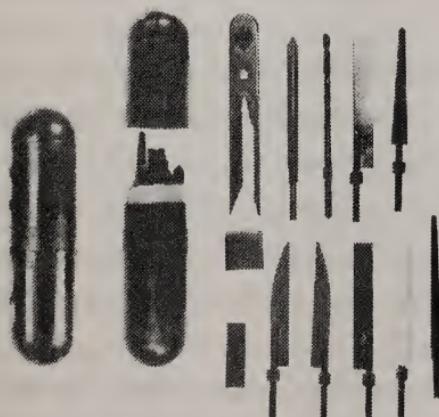
During World War II, others from the world of magic applied their craft to support the British intelligence services. One-time missionary Charles Fraser-Smith created gadgets and tricks for Britain's SOE and MI6 to deceive the Axis. Among these were pocket-size radio receivers, a device that seemed impossible at a time when home radios were so large that they were considered pieces of furniture. The radios allowed agents as well as prisoners to receive one-way communications. One set, designed for smuggling into POW camps, was purposefully manufactured crudely to appear as if it had been cobbled together by the prisoners.¹¹¹

Tools such as the Gigli saw used by Houdini were capable of cutting through a one-inch steel bar and could be concealed within the shoelace of a British pilot "just in case."¹¹² Concealed knife blades for cutting ropes were fitted on the back of copper coins and

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passed unnoticed during a search. Other knife blades were concealed in a boot-heel reinforcement so even if the wearer was captured and hog-tied, the blade could be reached. Military uniforms were designed for "quick change" conversion into civilian clothes by use of dye concealed inside the ink bladders of standard-looking fountain pens.¹¹³ "Cut down" and recolored, the uniforms provided a lower profile for escapees. Even military issue leather flying boots were designed for instant conversion to civilian walking shoes by making a few cuts with a small, concealed blade.

The secret escape apparatus developed by Houdini and early twentieth-century magicians continued to influence spy gadgetry during the Cold War.¹¹⁴ Houdini had hidden a small egg-shaped container holding a variety of small lock picks in the back of his throat while being searched. The concealment was safe from all but a search by the most determined jailers.¹¹⁵ The CIA, using a similar design, created an escape-and-evasion suppository as a portable "tool kit" packed within a waterproof black plastic shell. This "spy's Leatherman" featured nine escape tools, including wire cutters, pry bar, saw blades, drill, and reamer packed into the four-inch-long-by-one-inch-diameter kit.¹¹⁶



The CIA Escape and Evasion Rectal Suppository was a multipurpose toolkit packed within a smooth waterproof black plastic or aluminum shell; circa 1955.

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Lock picking, which even for Houdini was a last resort, has always been a useful skill for spies. Spies were taught the magician's principle to "beg, borrow, bribe, or steal" the master or original key, if possible, before attempting to break into or escape from a locked enclosure. Once obtained, the master key could be covertly impressioned using clay, wax, or even a small bar of soap, and returned. From this impression, an exact duplicate key could be cut and concealed.¹¹⁷ The OSS, and later the CIA, issued key-impressioning kits using modeling clay in a pocketable aluminum mold for this purpose.¹¹⁸ For actual lock picking, should that be necessary, the CIA improved on the design of a small concealable pocketknife designed first by the OSS that contained six small tools of the type Houdini employed seventy years earlier in his own concealed escape kits.¹¹⁹

Concealments

**The CIA concealment specialist combines
the skills of a craftsman, the creativity
of an artist, and the illusion of a
magician.**

—CIA CONCEALMENT ENGINEER

Traditionally, conjurers must be smartly groomed and remain polished, refined, confident, and poised throughout the performance. Their clothing must be well tailored, yet incorporate special pockets for concealing performance paraphernalia, including tricked coins, cards, handkerchiefs, flowers, hollow thumbs, and even live animals!¹²⁰ Spies also wear clothing designed specifically for their "performances."¹²¹

If the magician desires to produce a large rabbit, he might employ a "rabbit bag" under his arm. However, if his dress suit is

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cut too tightly, the bulge will be visible. Conversely, if the conjurer's attire is noticeably large to accommodate the bulk of the rabbit, suspicions will be raised. Author Dariel Fitzkee observed, "Any variation from the norm attracts undesirable attention from the viewpoint of the magic. The conjurer must remain natural at all times. When something unnatural is evident, a spectator becomes vigilant and alert to deception."¹²² Whether one is a magician or a spy, specially tailored clothing must distribute both the weight and bulk of hidden items while keeping the items accessible for the performance or secret operation.¹²³

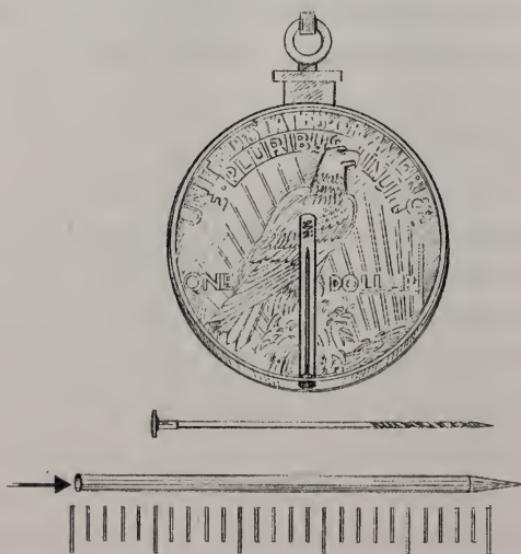
CIA officer Richard Jacob was wearing a specially tailored raincoat when detained in Moscow in 1962 just after retrieving Minox film concealed in a matchbox, which had been hidden behind a radiator in a public hallway and placed there by the CIA's top Soviet spy, GRU colonel Oleg Penkovsky. Jacob's modified raincoat included a slit inside a pocket. When Jacob saw he was about to be detained, he dropped the matchbox through the slit to the inside of the coat, letting it fall to the floor. Thanks to the accessibility of the flap within his special clothing, he was not apprehended with the stolen secrets in his hand or coat pocket.¹²⁴

Other forms of attire, such as shoes, can be ideal concealment cavities for use by both conjurers and spies. The hollow Mokana shoe used by Houdini for hiding escape tools became a favorite for spies throughout the Cold War.¹²⁵ Concealment heels were used by East German agents to transport Minox film cassettes in both men's and women's shoes. In the 1960s Czechoslovakian intelligence (StB) technicians placed an entire eavesdropping transmitter in the heel of an unsuspecting U.S. ambassador's shoe.¹²⁶ When it was activated, the ambassador became a walking broadcasting station who was "bugging" his own secret meetings.¹²⁷

For a CIA application, the US Army Special Operations Division at Ft. Detrick, Maryland, worked in the late 1950s with the

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Technical Services Staff to create a concealment coin for U2 pilots overflying the USSR.¹²⁸ The coin was a silver dollar mounted inside a bezel with a loop on the end for holding a chain that could be worn around the neck. Inside the hollow shaft of a straight pin, a poison needle was concealed.¹²⁹ The pin fit into a small hole drilled into the edge of the coin and held in place by the silver bezel. When a small hole in the bezel was aligned with the hole in the coin, the straight pin was ejected by an internal spring. With a tiny prick of the skin by the needle, death would be nearly instantaneous.¹³⁰ On May 1, 1960, CIA pilot Francis Gary Powers was issued the modified coin as he prepared to depart from Peshawar, Pakistan, and overfly the Soviet Union.¹³¹ After his U2 was shot down over Sverdlovsk, USSR, he parachuted safely into a farmer's field, hid the pin in his pocket, and discarded the coin. Both the coin and pin were recovered by the KGB and used as evidence against Powers at his subsequent trial for espionage.¹³²



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Concealed devices can be made part of clothing or hidden inside body cavities to support clandestine operations. During the first half of the twentieth century, conjurers created the illusion of telepathy or “second sight” using only voice codes.¹³³ As new technologies became available in the 1970s, subminiature radios could be hidden inside the performer’s clothing and connected by small wires running from his neck to a concealed earpiece. The performer’s stylishly long hair hid the wires. Later the telltale wires disappeared as hearing-aid-size radio receivers could be fitted directly into the ear canal.¹³⁴

The problem then became one of hiding the earpiece rather than the wires.¹³⁵ The solution was a CIA-developed color-matched silicon covering, which was camouflaged to replicate the inner ear’s contours and shadows.¹³⁶ So effective was the illusion that the KGB missed the device during a search of CIA officer Martha Peterson after her detention at a dead drop in Moscow in 1977. Peterson’s surveillance radio, attached to her bra with Velcro and concealed in her armpit, was discovered, but the absence of visible wires caused the KGB to ignore the concealed earpiece.¹³⁷

Other body parts and orifices were useful for concealment as well. In the late 1960s, the CIA fielded a military request to provide a means of concealing a subminiature escape radio on a downed pilot who was likely to be captured and searched. Advances in miniature circuitry using transistors had produced a radio one-half the size of a cigarette pack, but it needed a hiding place. CIA engineers knew that guards were less likely to search another male’s genitalia and created a false rubber scrotum that fit over the wearer’s testicles. Matched to skin color, and incorporating full anatomical detail, the prosthesis was visually undetectable, but formed a cavity large enough to conceal the escape radio.¹³⁸

Tooth "Container" - 1960s

The KGB prepared an agent's tooth to serve as a "container" for transporting small pieces of film. The tooth was fitted with a special lock that was opened using a small pin. The concealment was detected by the West German Bundes Kriminal Amt (BKA) during the physical examination of a suspect's mouth.



The KGB prepared this concealment tooth to show how microdots could be hidden inside the agent's mouth. The tooth was fitted with a special lock that was opened with a needle.

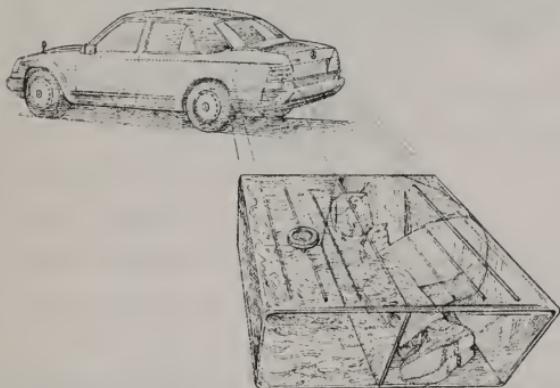
Concealing larger objects presents a different set of problems. Magicians consider any object on the stage, from the performing table to the props themselves (including their bases or platforms), as a partial concealment cavity for the object, animal, or person to be hidden. Concealing the conjurer's "load" in a hidden cavity is a science that employs lighting, positioning, design, craftsmanship, and viewing angles to deceive the audience. The platform holding the woman about to be sawed in half appears impossibly small to



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conceal a second woman, and yet, by fooling the eye, the mind accepts the illusion as reality.

The CIA employed such a ruse during a Cold War operation to smuggle a spy concealed within a new Mercedes being driven out of Eastern Europe. The car's original fuel tank was redesigned to allow a person, though contorted, to fit inside it while to any observer the car looked factory-new.

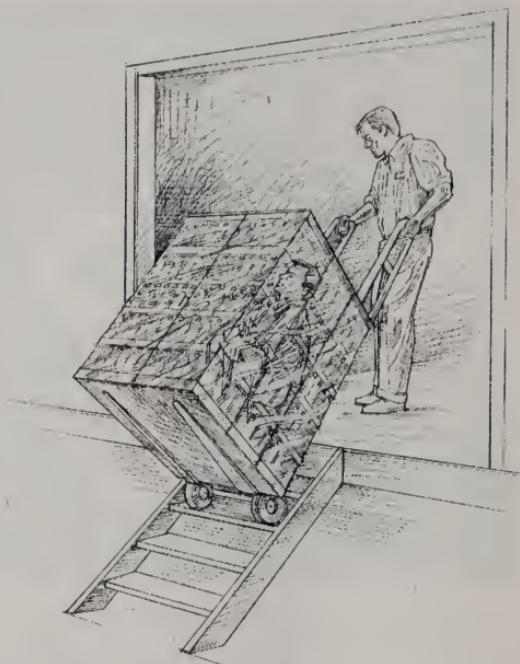


Intelligence services have employed other concealments for illusions when faced with the challenge of moving a person unnoticed while under surveillance. Their creative solutions adapted the same principles of deception used by magicians. One was to construct a stack of luggage to be rolled on a hand dolly. The pieces of luggage appeared unmodified, but each contained hidden openings that allowed a person to sit inside. No single piece of luggage was large enough for the deception, but when they were stacked together, a person could fit inside.¹³⁹ A second technique involved stacking cases of bottled water side by side on a large rolling cart. Each case was wrapped in plastic, and to observers it appeared that light was passing through all of the cases. In actuality, however, the outer cases were only shells with

Mylar inside the outer row of plastic bottles to reflect the light outward. Inside the stack of cases was a cavity large enough to hide a person. Each illusion had been constructed using the designs of a new generation of Hollywood illusionists brought to the CIA in the mid-1970s. The same principles of optical illusions

that amazed audiences in Las Vegas stage performances paved the way for more daring and successful CIA clandestine operations.¹⁴⁰

A primary area for CIA concealment technology involved designing unsuspicious “hosts” for money, film cassettes, and other spy paraphernalia to be exchanged between agents and field case officers at dead drops.¹⁴¹ The hosts might appear as innocuous tree branches, discarded soda cans, or even construction bricks left over at a building site.¹⁴² Each item was left at an agreed on time and location for recovery a few minutes later. In the Cold War years before digital technology, such timed exchanges were a primary method of clandestine communications and still being used by Robert Hanssen at the time of his arrest in 2001.

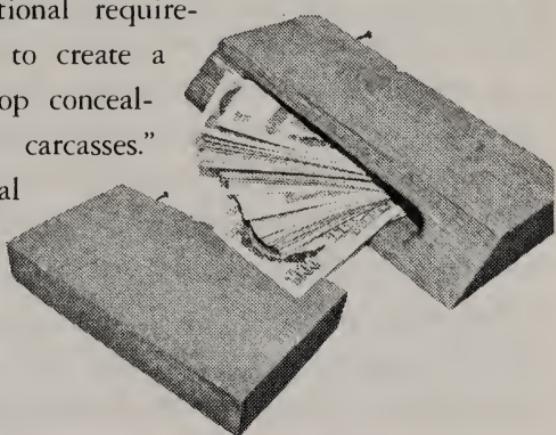


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Cold War operational requirements led the CIA to create a category of dead drop concealments using "host carcasses." Virtually any animal carcass could be configured with a cavity for exchanging spy gear. The more repugnant the host carcass, the less likely it would be disturbed until collected. Pigeons and

rodents, because they are small enough to be carried in a pocket and are found in almost every part of the world, were especially attractive hosts. Their eviscerated and preserved body cavities were large enough to hold money, instructions, subminiature cameras, film, notes, and codebooks.¹⁴³ The carcasses, filled with paraphernalia for the agent, could be tossed from a slow-moving vehicle at predetermined locations along the darkened streets of virtually any city. Who would disturb the carcass of a dead rat or rotting pigeon? That question had to be answered when deployed rats unexpectedly went missing. Hungry cats, unaware of the concealed treasure, had carried the rats off before the agents arrived. The solution to the problem was a liberal dousing of hot pepper sauce on the rodent before the operation.

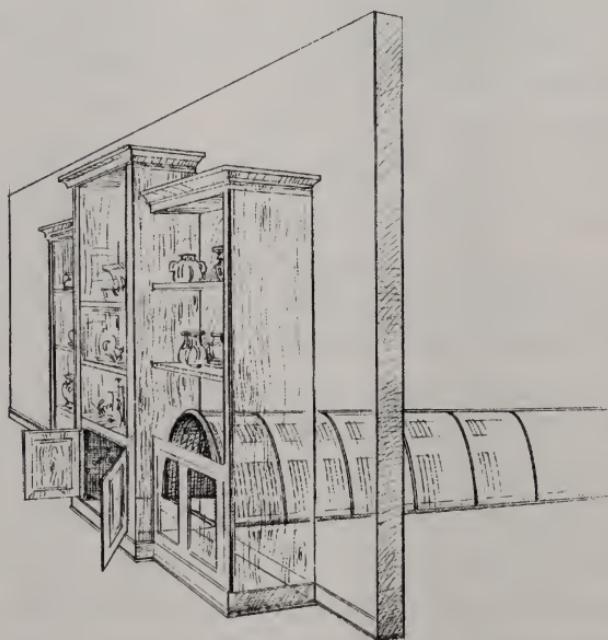
When a magician pours water from a pitcher on the stage, the audience sees it as real. Yet the hidden compartment concealed by a mirror inside the pitcher is never observed as water is pouring out. The CIA used the same principle when designing "active" concealments for agents—each item retained its origi-



Woodblock concealment for hiding money and documents at an agent's apartment.

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nal function but masked a concealed cavity inside. The Cricket cigarette lighter concealing a tiny document camera was unlikely to be examined after demonstrating that it produced a flame. Likewise, a working fountain pen was dismissed by the KGB as a possible host for a suicide pill.¹⁴⁴ Less sophisticated "passive" concealments can be effective when a device needs to perform no function other than to conceal the cavity. For example, a large wooden storage cabinet in a basement mounted against a wall performs no function except to mask the entrance to a hidden crawl space for secretly entering or exiting the house.



The concealments and tricks Mulholland envisioned for intelligence officers in his manual combined classic methods of the magician's art with the most nonsuspicious host objects available. Smaller packages attracted less attention and a concealment device had to fit naturally into the "act" being performed. Few

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props served this purpose better than the coins found in every pocket and purse.

Magic Coins

The best magicians come to understand that these gimmicks are mere tools for the presentation. Illusion, not mere gimmicks, must be present in any real magic performance.¹⁴⁵

—JIM STEINMEYER

Coins provide objects for the tricks of magicians and spies that can easily deceive and confound audiences as well as espionage targets. The magician employs sleight of hand to make them appear, vanish, or change for amusement. A spy's coin can mask the presence of an attached pill, conceal a hidden powder, or contain a secret message.



"A trick becomes a piece of sheer incredibility in Mulholland's hands."

—Fulton Oursler

As mentioned previously, the magician plays to an audience that expects to be deceived, while the spy's trick occurs before an unwitting audience and unsuspecting target. Magicians refer to performances with coins as "close-up magic" because of the small size of the physical objects being manipulated and the short distance between the performer and the audience. The audience must be close enough to the performer to see the effects; otherwise it will not be deceived or even be aware of the illusion. For the intelligence officer, performing the trick in close proximity to the target minimized exposure to onlookers and limited the target's sight lines as well.¹⁴⁶

Coins are well suited for close magic, but manipulating them requires dexterity, skill, and grace.¹⁴⁷ For both magicians and spies, their universal presence offers great advantages. Coins create no suspicion, in contrast to other pieces of magical apparatus such as linking rings, wooden boxes, stage cabinets, and top hats, which, simply by being onstage, arouse curiosity and questions.¹⁴⁸ Most people, do not assume that coins will be modified or used in deception. Such perceptions can be readily exploited to deceive an unwitting target.

Mulholland understood that maximum audience deception would occur when real coins were used to create espionage "magic." As a result, most of the coins used in his manual of deception for the CIA were unmodified. For example, in one trick a pill was affixed to the back of a real coin with a small dab of gum of Arabic or magician's wax. The coin would appear as just one of several others when held in the trickster's palm.

Professional coin manipulators employ a number of gimmicked coins that mirror the techniques used in "spy coins." These magic coins are constructed in ways that permit them to seemingly change denominations, multiply, pass through solid objects, and survive penetration. These and other gimmicked

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coins are designed for quick manipulation in performing an illusion.¹⁴⁹ They were not, however, survive close examination, or, in most instances, satisfy the requirements of a professional intelligence service that primarily uses coins for clandestine communication—transporting and exchanging information. Hollow coins were employed by Soviet agents in the early 1930s to conceal secret information on microdots, “soft film,” or “one-time-pads,” particularly while traveling or passing information between agent and handler.¹⁵⁰

In the United States, attention was drawn to the Soviet use of spy coins for the first time in the early 1950s during the famous Hollow Nickel Case.¹⁵¹ In 1935, a young Brooklyn newspaper boy dropped a nickel that was discovered to be modified when it was split open to reveal a tiny piece of film hidden inside an interior cavity. On the film was a censored message. The nickel was part of a sophisticated covert communication exchange between Soviet spy Rudolph Ivanovich Abel and his assistant, Reino Häyhänen, who had accidentally lost the spy coin.¹⁵²



Coin “Containers”

Hollow coins have long been a favorite hiding place for secret messages. During the “Cold War” the KGB modified this large 5 ruble coin to conceal “gama” and censored instructions on “soft film”. This coin opened by carefully unscrewing the center. Other types of concealment coins were opened using a pin.



Russian SPY coin machined to create a cavity for concealing soft film and ciphers. The coin opened by inserting a small tool (or needle) into the loop of the numeral 9 in the date, 1991, on the bottom face of the coin.

On June 26, 1953, the nickel was examined by the FBI and appeared unmodified, but had a tiny hole drilled in one side so that a fine needle could be inserted to force the sides apart. The examiner, Special Agent Robert J. Lamphere, examined the coin and correctly concluded that there was a Soviet "illegal" operating in New York City. However, the FBI was unable to identify the owner of the coin, or break the cipher.¹⁵³

The mystery remained unresolved until Häyhänen defected in Paris in 1957 and revealed that Rudolph Ivanovich Abel had received censored instructions from Moscow using the coin. A subsequent search of Häyhänen's apartment uncovered another spy coin of similar construction—a fifty-markka coin from Finland. It, too, had been hollowed out and had a small hole in the first *a* of the word *Tasavalta* appearing on the tail side of this coin. Abel was convicted of espionage in 1957 and served five years of a thirty-year sentence before being exchanged in 1962 for CIA pilot Gary Powers.¹⁵⁴

The effectiveness of coins as hiding places also made them easy to lose. They were small, could easily be dropped, mistakenly spent, or become mixed in a handful of similar coins. In the early 1950s another Russian "illegal," Valeri Mikhaylovich Makayev, lost a hollow Swiss coin containing operational instructions on microfilm while returning to his post from leave in Moscow. The KGB recalled him to the Soviet Union and his career was ended.¹⁵⁵ There is no record of the coin being discovered and it may still be in circulation.

Intelligence services of the Soviet Union as well as Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary used concealment coins throughout the Cold War. The East German foreign intelligence service, the HVA, produced concealment coins with three different methods of opening. Each appeared externally unmodified, but required different techniques to access their contents.

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The “pinhole coin” required a special tool or needle to force the sides apart. The design is very similar to KGB concealment coins.

The “screw-top coin” had an exterior shell with a second and smaller face of the obverse design of the original coin that fit within the milled edge of the shell. The pieces matched perfectly and only the lighter weight of the coin might give it away.¹⁵⁶ Placing the coin in the palm and using the opposing thumb to unscrew the inner face provided access to the concealment.

The “bang-ring coin,” fitted with an obverse facing to appear unaltered, required that the agent also possess a fitted machined ring for opening.¹⁵⁷

In 1966, the KGB sent Major Yuri Nikolayevich Loginov, posing as a Canadian businessman of Lithuanian heritage, to South Africa. Longinov established his cover business and began laying plans to emigrate to the United States. He carried a small coin concealing a tiny piece of soft film that contained his personal code, a list of radio frequencies, call signs, a listening schedule, a summary of instructions for meetings with other KGB agents, and a brief compendium of his legend.¹⁵⁸

The concealment, an Indian rupee coin, had been machined at the Moscow workshops of the KGB’s OTU—Operative Technical Unit.¹⁵⁹ This spy coin was constructed from two rupee coins machined to fit together. When the two sides were joined, the resulting coin appeared unaltered, a nearly perfect illusion. Identical in design and construction to the hollow nickel provided to the FBI in 1953, the coin could only be opened using a tiny needle, which was inserted into a small hole in the face of the coin near the milled edge of side one. The needle was used to separate the two sides, making access to the coin’s secrets precise, but the opening process was slow. This type of spy coin worked perfectly

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for Russian spies, although it would not have allowed the quick access required in a magic performance.

Other intelligence services also machined concealment coins to be used covertly for storing or transporting cipher material and agent communication details. Most coins for clandestine operations employed threaded openings, which screwed together and were reusable by the agent. In rare circumstances, when the coin might be subjected to extra scrutiny, a "onetime," non-threaded coin was constructed, loaded, and sealed like a dead drop. Its weight, with the loaded microfilm, was identical to an unmodified coin, but opening required special knowledge. For example, a temperature-sensitive coin seal required mild heating in a cup of coffee or tea to release the glue or low melting alloy that secured the two pieces together.¹⁶⁰



For the fiftieth anniversary of OTS in 2001, a concealment coin (nonoperational) was created. The interior cavity was accessed by unscrewing the inner face of the coin.

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The process of creating threaded and screwed together coins required a machine shop lathe to mill out the inside of the coin and cut threads on the male and female sections. The face inside the rim would be hollowed out on one coin leaving the bottom and rim, and on the other coin the back side and rim would be removed for dead space and threads. While in theory only two coins are needed to make one modified coin, in reality at least six were usually required because of the difficulty in getting both sides to match up when screwed closed. Machinists preferred thicker coins with wide rims and an inside borderline since the seam where the two sections fitted together would be invisible to the naked eye. Depending on space, and what material was removed, weight was added to match weight of the unmodified coin.

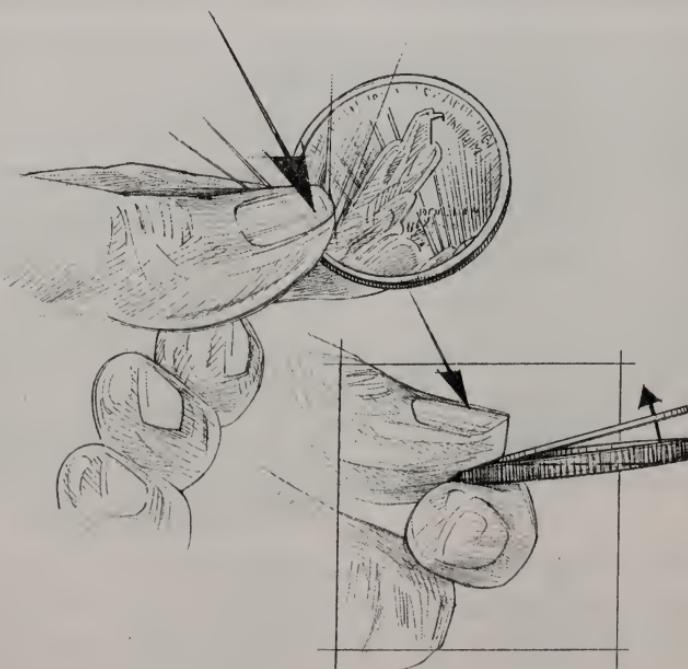
A threaded coin was opened by applying downward pressure on the face of the coin and turning right or left depending upon which type of thread was cut. When used by agents for storage or transport of microfilm, finely cut threads fit more snugly and were less likely to come loose during carrying or handling. The pieces fit together so well that some officers and their agents had difficulty applying sufficient finger pressure to open them. In that case, a piece of sticky tape placed on the bottom of the fingers made it possible to grasp the face of the coin and open it.

On display at the CIA Museum in its Langley, Virginia, headquarters is an Eisenhower silver dollar described as follows on the museum's Web site.¹⁶¹

"Silver Dollar" Hollow Container: This coin may appear to be an Eisenhower silver dollar, but it is really a concealment device. It was used to hide messages or film so they could be sent secretly. Because it looks like ordinary pocket change, it is almost undetectable.¹⁶²

The origin of the CIA's silver-dollar container is uncertain, but the method of quickly accessing its hidden cavity makes it an unlikely candidate for concealing messages.¹⁶³ The ability to open the coin by simply squeezing at spot near the edge makes it insecure for concealing secret messages because the sensitive contents might be revealed accidentally, or prematurely, and contrasts with other CIA concealments that require a planned effort for opening.¹⁶⁴

The design of the CIA silver dollar, for example, employs a feature that is more desirable to a magician—a large cavity that can be opened easily during a performance. In this case, it appears that Mulholland transferred the fruits of his magic to the CIA. Magician and author Ben Robinson's research into John Mulholland's papers discovered:



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The clever “dope coin” that Mulholland machined for the Agency in 1953 is made from a 1921 Silver Dollar and opens when the word “peace” is gently pushed between thumb and forefinger. Mulholland charged fifteen dollars in machine fees when he submitted his bill for the presentation of this highly secret tool. Apparently Mulholland was no stranger to this device. He had been working on such a prop since his early 20s.¹⁶⁵

The method described by Robinson for opening the Mulholland “dope” coin is identical to that for opening the CIA silver-dollar hollow container. If usable at all, the coin’s large cavity and quick accessibility would have been better suited for the covert delivery of powders—one of the major topics in Mulholland’s manual.

The principles of magic learned from Mulholland and his fellow conjurers like Houdini and Maskelyne combined with twentieth-first-century technology will continue to influence espionage “tricks.” Even the ultimate tool for both magicians and intelligence operations, an “invisibility cloak,” now appears possible. Scientific experiments have confirmed that light waves can be bent to make objects invisible to the naked eye or appear to be something else.¹⁶⁶ The concept of invisibility is not new and was popularized in 1897 by H. G. Wells’s science-fiction novella *The Invisible Man*.¹⁶⁷ Stage magicians in the twentieth century regularly made objects, people, and even elephants disappear, as illusionist Jim Steinmeyer chronicled in *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned to Disappear*.¹⁶⁸ Because such techniques employed mirrors and other special apparatuses and were performed only onstage, the illusions had limited application to espionage.

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The effect of an electronic cloak of invisibility on clandestine operations would be sweeping. Sensors, listening devices, cameras, and data intercept devices could be hidden in plain sight. Dead drops could be serviced with impunity and electronic identity transfers performed on command. New technologies, however amazing, provide only additional methods for creating deceptions and illusions; the goals and objectives of both the spies and magicians remain unchanged.¹⁶⁹

A copy of the only known example of Mulholland's two original manuals overlooked during the destruction of MKULTRA files in 1973, was discovered by the authors in 2007. Subsequently, master illustrator Phil Franke used the poor-quality photocopies of Mulholland's original photographs as the basis for painstakingly redrawing the illustrations. Each image details the exacting movements and techniques used by Mulholland to teach the CIA's "tricksters." These images, along with the retyped original manuals text, are reprinted together here for the first time.



"World Renowned Magician"
John Mulholland

John Mulholland was a master magician and showman.

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"Magic is the art of creating illusions agreeably." Crest from *Mulholland's Book of Magic*, 1963.

SOME OPERATIONAL APPLICATIONS OF THE ART OF DECEPTION

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I. Introduction and General Comments on The Art of Deception

The purpose of this paper is to instruct the reader so he may learn to perform a variety of acts secretly and undetectably. In short, here are instructions in deception.

There are few subjects about which so little generally is known as that of deft deception. As the American humorist Josh Billings said, "It ain't so much ignorance that ails mankind as it is knowing so much that ain't so." Practically every popularly held opinion on how to deceive, as well as how to safeguard one's self from being deceived, is wrong in fact as well as premise. Therefore, prior to explaining either theories or methods, an effort will be made to uncover that which "ain't." This is particularly important because successful deception depends so much on attitude of mind, and holding even one erroneous belief will make it difficult to attain the proper mental approach.

Parenthetically, the writer is assured that the reader is a person of unquestionable integrity, possessing more than average intelligence and schooling. In other words, this is a person to whom the practice of deception is quite foreign. However, the reader's admirable attributes of honesty and learning do not make his present task easier, for it takes practice to tell a convincing lie. Even more practice is needed to act a lie skillfully than is required to tell one. Though practice is essential to successful deception,

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much less practice is needed than might be imagined provided a person knows exactly what he is to do, how he is to do it, and why it is to be done in that way. The success of the act becomes more a matter of memorization of details than of physical repetition.

As examples of those who deceive by physical trickery, i.e. doing something in addition to talking, may be named magicians, crooked gamblers, pickpockets, and confidence men. To cite fallacious beliefs regarding the methods of each of these examples will show how wrong popular opinion is.

"The hand is quicker than the eye" generally is given as the reason for a magician's success in mystifying his audience with any trick of small size. In large tricks, for instance where a person is caused to disappear, the secret is generally attributed to the use of mirrors. There are a number of other equally wrong "solutions" used to explain the methods of magicians, but the two given will show how basically wrong is uninformed opinion.

Stating that the hand can move more rapidly than the eye can follow suggests that a movement can be made and the hand returned to its original position so quickly that no motion at all is discernible. This is not possible.

The most rapid coordinated movement man has ever learned to make is done by a few of the leading pianists. Some of these highly trained musicians have gone as high as eight to nine strokes on a key per second, with one finger of one hand. It was discovered through mechanical tests with

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player pianos that the mechanism had to be in very good order to have one key function at the rate of ten times per second. It may be assumed that some pianist could develop the manual speed of ten strokes per second. However, even at such a rate, the movement would not be invisible because the normal eye can catch movement at the speed of one-one-thousandth of a second. The sight of the average person therefore is one hundred times faster than the most highly trained person can move one finger.

The mind may not register exactly what is accomplished in a very rapid motion of the hand but that a motion has been made will be quite obvious. It should be noted that a magician, unlike all other tricksters, acknowledges that he intends to deceive. His performance, because trickery is expected, can have no unexplained or, at least, unacceptable movements of the hands. A magician may not be seen to make any false motions and he should realize that he should perform all his secret movements with deliberation. Movement of any kind attracts attention—hence moving signs—and trickery depends upon not attracting attention to the method of performance. Magicians do not use speed in their actions.

Mirrors have been used by magicians in a few feats but their effective use is limited. A mirror can hide only one object by giving the reflection of another as a substitute. A mirror cannot make an object invisible. A mirror's single function is to reflect something. A mirror cannot reflect

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nothing—and when a mirror is given nothing to reflect, the mirror itself becomes visible. Further, a mirror only can be used in trickery where it is possible to have every edge abutting some visible solid object, for otherwise the edges can be seen. Another detail which precludes the general use of mirrors in magic is that the larger the audience the closer the object to be reflected has to be to the mirror because of the angle of reflection. In large modern theaters this fact makes mirrors of no use to magicians. Traveling magicians, and these are the vast majority, find it utterly impossible to transport large mirrors due to their weight and fragility.

In short, while there is a slight basis for the public to believe that magicians use mirrors to achieve their mystification, the public is wrong in its understanding of the functions of the mirror in optical trickery and wrong in believing that mirrors generally are used in magic.

These two examples, 1. the totally wrong general belief that magicians depend upon rapidity of action, and 2. the misconception of how and when mirrors are used in magic, are typical of the wrongness of popular beliefs regarding magic. That magicians depend upon hypnotism and that magicians generally use confederates are among the other fallacies to which the public clings. None of these have any more validity than the one occasionally heard that magicians make objects invisible by painting them air color.

The great misconception about all trickery is

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that there is a single secret which will explain how each type of trick is performed. For instance, consider the feat of causing a rabbit to appear in a hat that had just been shown to be quite empty. It generally is thought that there is a specific method of getting the rabbit secretly into the hat. The fact is that there are several score of different methods for performing this feat and a person conversant with the majority of methods may be mystified (and most probably will be) upon seeing the trick performed by a method he does not know. As another example, people still wonder about the secret which permitted Houdini to escape from any type of physical restraint. The fact is that he released himself by a different secret method for each way in which he was confined. He had at least one method for escaping from each type of handcuff, shackle, and box, and each way of being tied with rope, cord, bandages, or straitjacket. There is no overall secret to magic, or any part of magic. It is the multiplicity of secrets and the variety of methods which makes magic possible. The proper secret for a magician to use is the one indicated as best under the conditions and circumstances of the performance.

All tricksters, other than magicians, depend to a great extent upon the fact that they are not known to be, or even suspected of being, tricksters. Therein lies their great advantage, for they need only do their trickery when it is to their advantage and when they have conditions favorable for success. Further, having made no commitment

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as to what they are going to do, they can utilize that trick which is most suitable under the conditions of the moment.

The main error in public thinking about the tricks of gamblers is in believing that the tricks are designed to make winning a certainty. Actually these tricks are intended only to give the gambler enough advantage to increase the probability of his winning above that of the chance expectation. Working on this basis also minimizes the possibility of the gambler's tricks being discovered.

It generally is believed that a skilled card shark can deal to himself any card he wishes and whenever he has such desire. This can't be done, although a skilled manipulator of cards can, now and again, arrange to give himself a good hand. Even such skill may not ensure winning, for chance may give his opponent a better hand. The professional gambler depends largely upon a thorough knowledge of the game played, his memory of the cards played, and a full understanding of the mathematical probabilities of winning in any situation. This is not suggesting that the gambler will not take advantage of any means which he can use to his own aid but merely that he doesn't, and usually cannot, do the things which people generally believe.

The opposite situation also exists in the common belief about gambling that demanding a new deck at the start of a game will ensure that the cards do not have secret marks upon their backs. The new deck may have such marks, or it is not at

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all difficult to substitute a marked deck for an unmarked one. Also it is quite possible to mark cards while the game is being played.

Pickpockets are very generally accredited with such delicacy of touch, brought about through long practice, as to be able to put a hand into a person's pocket and remove it, along with some valuable, without the person feeling the action. This is easily possible with a sleeping or intoxicated person, but for the sober, as well as awake, individual, deftness is not enough on the part of the pickpocket. The method generally used is to accustom the victim to being touched (usually done in a crowd) so that he is not aware of the extra touch at the time the theft is made. The public has been told about pickpockets having jostling confederates. At times confederates are used but they seldom are as rough as the word *jostling* would indicate. While the confederate may assist in preparing the victim by accustoming the victim to being touched, his chief task is to accept the loot and leave the vicinity so that the pickpocket is free of incriminating evidence.

Sellers of goldbricks (also confidence men and others of like ilk) rely in the main on the cupidity of their dupes. The only person who can be sold a goldbrick must have such avarice that he ignores the obvious fact that the "bargain" he is offered must be untrue or illegal. The chief skill of the seller is in discovering properly greedy victims. However, trickery frequently is used to clinch the sale by substituting false gold for

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real, or substituting other bad merchandise for good. The world has the opinion that the goldbrick seller is one who has the ability to give a super sales talk. Actually he is merely a trickster with knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature.

To summarize from these few typical examples, the public holds wholly, or largely, untrue beliefs about how all trickery is accomplished. The public is satisfied that these false beliefs explain every deception, while actually the public has almost no factual knowledge of the methods used to deceive. One not aware that these generally accepted beliefs are false will be bothered subconsciously and can never learn to perform any false action smoothly and easily.

It is as essential to point out the facts as to point out what are not facts. As has been noted, there never is a single secret for any trick. The sole criterion is that the method to be used is the one to ensure the trick's success. There are two chief reasons for choosing a particular method. One is that it fits the physique, mannerisms, and personality of the performer better than any other method. The other is that conditions at the time of performance favor a particular method. Of course, this latter reason sometimes, as in a theater, can be ignored because conditions of performance are under the control of the performer.

The basic principle in performing a trick is to do it so that the secret actions are not observed. As Alphonse Bertillon said, "One can only see what one observes, and one observes only things which

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are already in the mind." A trick does not fool the eye but fools the brain. In order to do that, it must be performed so that the secret parts are not noticed. This is possible because the trick is merely one or more actions which are added to other actions done for legitimate and obvious reasons. The added motions are not noticed because of the great variation in which people perform any given task and because it is not in the observer's mind to suspect such motions. The added motions must be minor ones, or at least they must not be emphasized more than the other actions. Further, the "secret" actions must fit in with the actions which are done openly.

Here is an example to clarify the generalities. A person, seated at a table in a restaurant, wants to obtain a teaspoon full of salt and put the salt into his left coat pocket, and wishes to do this without being observed.

The trickster picks up the saltcellar and shakes salt on to his food, or into his beer. He does this with the top of the saltcellar held toward himself so that the others at the table cannot see the quantity of salt coming out of the shaker. Seemingly not satisfied, the trickster raps the bottom of the saltcellar on the table. At this point circumstances dictate the performance, for the salt may, or may not, run freely from the cellar. If the salt runs freely, the performer, as if to try out the shaker after he has tapped it on the table, shakes a quantity of salt into his left hand, which is held at the edge of the table.

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If the salt actually is bound up in the cellar, he unscrews the top and pours a quantity of salt into his left hand. In the first instance, as if satisfied by the test that the salt is coming out properly, he salts his food, or beer, by using the shaker. He drops his left hand to his lap or by his side. In the second instance, he takes pinches of salt from his left hand, with the fingers of the right hand, and salts his food. As soon as he has taken enough salt for his needs, he drops the left hand as was done in the other case. Naturally, when the left hand is dropped below the table, the fingers are closed so that the salt is held in the hand. The left hand is held at the side, or in the lap, for as much as a minute before the salt is put into the pocket. This wait is to ensure that there will be no obvious connection between the salt going into the hand and the hand going into the pocket. While this illustrates how something can be done which will not be observed although it can be seen, it also illustrates another point: not everyone can do a trick in the same way. A person with very moist hands would have to use another method because all the salt would adhere to his hand and could not be left in his pocket.

Timing also is most important. Timing has two elements. One has to do with when the trick is done. For instance, it obviously would be wrong, in the example above, to handle the saltcellar immediately after another person has used it successfully. The other point in timing is the cadence in a series of actions. The accent is given

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to what is wished to be noticed. There will be little attention paid to those actions which are not stressed.

The example makes it obvious that what is essential to the success of the trick is the naturalness with which the performer acts the part of wanting salt, has trouble getting salt, doesn't let it bother him, and gets the salt he wants. It should be performed as if it were one of those minor bothers which beset mankind. He should go through all the actions as if no thought were needed (which it isn't) and is just one of those automatic actions one does regularly. Above all the trickster does not try to make any action slyly. The salt openly goes into the left hand and then the hand is dropped. He calls no attention to dropping the hand and thereby attracts no attention to the action. As with most tricks, it will be seen that it is not a matter of digital dexterity that is required for the success of the trick, but instead, a carefully thought out sequence of actions, naturalness in performance, and the ability to fit oneself to circumstances.

In planning a trick, the first consideration is to determine exactly what is to be accomplished. This would seem to be so obvious a fact that there would be no need to mention it at all. But, unless one is reminded that he must know fully and exactly what is his aim, one will begin with generalities. The invariable result of planning, when working from generalities, is complication of method. A trick to be good must be simple in its

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basic idea. It is true that, at times, it may become easier to do a trick through elaborating the details of performance, but the basic idea must be simple.

After the full requirements of what is to be done have been determined, the next step is to decide how the task can be done most easily, provided secrecy is not necessary. In most instances, that is the way it will be done in the trick except that some addition is made which will keep the action from being noticed. Again referring to the trick of secretly putting salt into the left coat pocket, it is obvious that the easiest way to do this openly is to pour the required amount of salt from the shaker onto the left hand and then to put that hand, and the salt, into the coat pocket. That also is what is done when performing the trick. However, because the spectators are given something reasonable to think about, apart from the required actions, the extra actions will not be noticed. The trick, in that instance, as is so frequently the case, is due entirely to a false premise induced in the minds of the spectators. The pretense that the saltshaker is clogged is the false premise.

It will be noticed, in the example, that the false idea which masks the essential action is suggested only by a routine which is usual in getting salt from a clogged shaker. The false idea is put over by pantomime rather than by words. At times, too, words are needed to get a spectator to accept some false premise. The great value

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of relying only upon simple pantomime is that the actions can further be minimized by talking on a totally unrelated subject as the actions are made.

Primarily, trickery depends upon a manner of thinking. It is a lie acted. More thought and care are needed to act out a lie than to tell one, for false actions are more obvious in their incongruity than are words. It is easier, for example, to claim to be an automobile mechanic than it is to act the part of one. It is easy for a phlegmatic person to state that he is nervous but exceedingly difficult to act for any appreciable length of time as if he were nervous.

Stating that trickery basically depends upon a manner of thinking needs considerable amplification, for the oblique thinking of the trickster must be acceptable to the spectators. This means that it cannot violate the manners and customs of the spectators nor, in any other way, can be the cause of attracting special attention. Anything unusual in action or speech (unusual to the one watching or listening) will attract attention and should be avoided. Even if a spectator's attention is focused on the actions during a trick and he does not discover that a trick is being done, he may later recall that the trickster acted oddly and possibly have his suspicions aroused.

Before a trickster can plan a trick, he must know who the spectators are to be. This does not mean knowing their names and addresses. It means knowing the kind of people that they are and their nationality. For instance, one might base a trick

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on the action of borrowing a watch and then find that none of the spectators carried watches. Or the trick might require the trickster to slap a spectator on the back only to discover that all the spectators were Hindu, who would resent being touched. These are examples of actual cases where the trickster's lack of knowledge of who the spectators were precluded the performance of the trick which had been planned. The more the trickster knows about the spectators the better he can plan the trick to assure that it will succeed.

The "at-a-tangent thinking" is quite a descriptive phrase of the manner in which a trickster plans his work. He must think of something to do or say which, while it touches the subject, actually shoots off from it. Because the comment touches the subject, it will not be noticed that it actually is going away from the subject rather than around it. Again refer to the saltshaker trick. Attention is called so obviously to the "faulty" shaker that the spectators pay no attention to the perfectly open action of putting salt in the left hand. It should be stressed again that the false action must be so natural as to be acceptable.

There are several points which should be known about the things spectators will notice and those things they will not notice and about some of the spectators' thinking processes which can be depended upon. These are things which are true of all people irrespective of their nationality, educational background, or station in life.

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No action which is expected will be noticed, but all actions which are surprising to a spectator will be noticed by him. However, while all surprising actions will be noticed, many will immediately be forgotten when followed at once by a rational explanation. For instance, pouring a beverage from a bottle into a glass, or tea or coffee from a pot into a cup, will not attract attention. However, pouring the liquid over the food on one's plate will be noticed. It will be noticed but not remembered if, when the liquid is poured on the food, it seems accidental because the body is twitched as if in pain and the statement is made, "There must be a pin on the chair." It will be all the stronger if, upon reaching down, a pin is produced, shown, and discarded. In other words, natural and normal actions excite no interest and, therefore, are not observed, while unnatural and unusual actions will attract attention unless a simple but satisfactory explanation is given at once.

A person who seems to be interested in what it is he is doing will not be noticed but one whose interest is directed toward what others are doing will attract attention. For instance, little attention will be paid to the individual who, when alone, seems absorbed in the book or newspaper he is reading, and when with others devotes his interest to his companions and has but casual interest in his surroundings. One who seems interested in everything except his paper, or his companions, or seemingly is looking for someone who hasn't yet arrived, always will attract attention.

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Posture is important in avoiding being conspicuous. That person attracts little attention who when either seated, or standing, appears to be at his ease; that is, showing no physical effort and with the manner of being confident of having a right to be where he is. He will be noticed if he stands stiffly as if he were a soldier reporting to a high-ranking officer, or slouches as if death were imminent. Noticeable, too, is the person who sits as if he expects the chair to explode, or the one who sits slouched awkwardly in a chair as though he were a rag doll tossed into that position.

Possibly nothing attracts attention as quickly as fidgeting. Constantly shifting position either while standing or seated; repeatedly putting hands in and out of pockets; tapping on a chair area or table with the fingers; or playing with a watch chain, keys, coins, table silver, etc are all to be avoided by the person who wishes to do something secretly.

Summarizing these points: the calm, quiet, relaxed (though not to the point of seeming disjointed) person does not attract attention. This assumes, of course, that he is a normal individual. The person who is exceptionally tall, or short, or crippled, or deformed will be noticed, but once the observer notes the way in which he is unusual, little further notice is paid.

On the subject of being noticed, there is an inverse point that should be noted. At times tricksters have reason to credit, or accuse, some imaginary person with what has been done. A natu-

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ral mistake is to describe someone of a form, and of actions, which are unusual and striking. It usually is easy to ascertain that no such person has been in the vicinity. The proper description will be of a person average in size and coloring and normal in features, but—and this is a very essential point—having some minor oddity such as the first joint missing of the little finger of the left hand, or a large mole close behind his right ear. The description, in short, of almost anyone but mentioning some unlikely, but easily noticed, minor oddity which would identify him if found. Such a description will be acceptable to listeners and at the same time be one most difficult to disprove.

Resuming the description of the attributes of a successful trickster, let it be repeated that he should be so normal in manner, and his actions so natural, that nothing about him excites suspicion. This does not mean that he has to be of any particular size or shape, or that he has to make gestures when he talks, or refrain from making them. It means only that he has to be himself—as he is at his calmest moments. That person who naturally speaks and acts rapidly will do well to learn to make both speech and actions more slowly. Tricks never are done rapidly and slowing up at the time the trick is done becomes noticeable. The big point is to be comfortably natural or, at least, to give that appearance. If one can be natural even in a difficult situation, he will make his work less arduous, for it is very difficult to act the role of one who is at ease and, at the same time, think of

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trickery. The chief cause of stilted actions and lack of poise is due to worry brought about through lack of preparation. When confident that he can do it, he will have a natural manner. There is nothing more important to the performance of a trick than confidence on the part of the performer. Confidence is a direct result of preparation. Confidence is nothing to be exhibited and it is not cockiness. Confidence is merely the feeling of certainty of being prepared to do the job—an awareness of being ready.

Some people, as a matter of fact almost everyone, become nervous and tense when appearing before a large audience. The trained actor realizes, and the novice senses, that due to distance, his natural manner seems false. Because distance both minimizes and otherwise alters, the stage actor makes gestures both broader and slower than he would do intimately. Because doing a trick is a form of acting, beginners tend to be nervous and assume an unusual manner and stilted gestures. Those who do their tricks before only a few should not worry, for they have no need to alter their actions or manner. Not only is there no need, but it should not be done. The popular belief that it is more difficult to perform a trick "right up close" is completely erroneous. The performance on the stage is sufficiently distant so that the spectator's eye sees the entire man. When close by, only part of the performer is within the spectator's range of vision. The more of the performer that can be seen, the less his chance of doing anything

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without detection. As examples: a performer on the stage would be seen were he to put his hand into his pocket, but that action can be made without being seen while standing close to a person so the hand is outside of his range of vision.

Simple tricks, and the reader will never need to do any others, are easy to do, for they require only knowledge, understanding, confidence, and a small amount of ingenuity. And the ingenuity will be needed only in the event of having to combine or alter methods hereinafter set down in order to fill some particular circumstance of which the writer could not be aware. The reader will not find it necessary to develop any manual skills for any of the tricks. He never will be asked to do any action that he does not now do regularly, even though he may need to make the action for a new purpose. There will be no lessons in intricate sleight of hand. All tricks will be simple to do physically. But take this bit of warning—the easier the manipulation in a trick the more essential it becomes for the performer to have every detail clearly in mind. This is because, while expert manipulation can in itself become mystifying, simple trickery depends entirely upon an idea and a routine. However, with your mind and my methods, there should be no real difficulty.

Prior to going on with details of how to do particular tricks, it may be well to review what has been written. First, in order to approach the subject properly, one must have a mind completely free of all the various commonly held, though erroneous, ideas about how tricksters operate. It is

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wise for a beginner to have his mind completely devoid of convictions of any sort about trickery. Starting with a clear mind eliminates 75 percent of the difficulty of learning to do tricks.

Next, it is necessary to restate that trickery depends basically upon elementary psychology. One who expects to perform trickery must understand that the objective of the trickster is to deceive the mind rather than the eye. This understanding will make him ready to accept that the trickster depends upon a form of thinking which will mislead the spectators rather than upon quickness and manipulative ability. To make a positive statement, the trickster relies upon confusing, and thereby deceiving, the minds rather than the eyes of the spectators. Even when eyes are misled, the memory may hold something that will permit working out how the mystery was accomplished after it is over. When the mind has been deceived, it is almost impossible to work backward and discover the deception.

Were it possible for the writer to be with the reader, it would be very easy to demonstrate how readily the mind may be fooled even when what is done is seen by the eyes. It would be very easy because the personal element plays such a large part in the performance. As this is not possible, all that can be done is to set down a couple of tricks on paper.

1. Two farmers live a mile apart and each put a fence of the same length, height, and material in front of his house. The

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eye can see (in the design below) that one farmer is a better fence builder than the other, but unless attention is called to the matter, the mind does not realize the difference.

(-O-O-O-O-O-) (-O -O—O-O -)

2. A man had been studying Esperanto and other universal languages. As he sat at his desk thinking about the matter of universal languages, he absentmindedly wrote these letters:

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The eye sees the letters, but even with the reader's mind cued twice in the story above, it takes some study to see what was in the man's mind. Without the story, and the study, the mind would register only that a number of letters, making no word or words, had been written. It is not immediately apparent that beginning with the second letter and reading every other letter spells out the word universal. And beginning with the next to the last letter and reading backward, every alternate letter spells out the same word.

Now a description of the performer. He must be natural and at ease. He must know in such complete

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detail what he is to do and how he is to do it that he is completely assured and so has full confidence in himself. He has such complete confidence that he not only does not fidget but has no inclination to do so.

Then the performer must have a realization of the element of time. He must know the proper time to start his trickery. He must know the importance of time in each detail of his performance.

Finally, the performer must accept to the full extent the fact that he cannot know too much about what he plans to do. Every detail he knows, beyond the bare essentials to ensure success, adds just that much more to eliminating the possibility of failure. The more details a trickster has in mind in connection with a trick the more certain he will be of his ability to do what is required. To state this in other words, worry, the possibility of error, and the chance of detection can all be eliminated by thoughtful, careful preparation. The situation recalls the occasion when a reporter asked the scientist Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, on his return from a year in Inner Mongolia, to tell about his adventures. "My dear man," said the doctor, "we had no adventures. We had a scientific expedition. Adventures come only through lack of preparation and we were properly prepared." Such is the case with trickery, for proper preparation ensures success.

The performer's knowledge must be so complete that he knows each detail of how and why each point in the trick is done. He must know, as well,

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when conditions of the moment demand a change in the prepared procedure and how to make such change without being disturbed. Such changes will not be manipulative and never require anything but a flexibility of mind coupled with knowledge.

At this point (very possibly at an earlier paragraph) the reader comes to the conclusion that the writer is extremely verbose in explaining a few simple points. Such feeling is not at all objectionable as long as the reader has grasped that the points are simple. The writer's aim is to have the reader successful whenever he performs a trick. The writer is quite willing to acknowledge being both wordy and obvious provided the reader, thereby, invariably has success in his work.

II. Handling of Tablets

In an earlier paragraph it was noted that the reader in performing his tricks need never make any action that he does not now do regularly. This is because he should be able to have his entire mind concentrated upon the performance rather than being diverted by the necessity of having to consider a new manipulative technique. The first illustration will be found to be entirely natural for any person who smokes. Even if the reader is a nonsmoker, he will, most probably, find it to be quite natural. Whether the reader does or does not smoke, he should follow the instructions and actually do the action indicated.

In order that the reader may find exactly what

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his natural actions are, he should get a packet of paper matches before reading further.

Take the paper matches, open the cover, tear off one match, and close the cover. Then light the match and blow it out.

You will have found that it is natural to do these several actions entirely without using the third or little fingers of either hand. Assuming that the reader is right-handed, he will have held the packet of matches in the left hand and between the thumb, on one edge, and the first and second fingers, on the opposite edge. (If the reader naturally is left-handed, he will find all details are the same in all instructions herein-after set down and quite usable provided he read "left hand" whenever "right hand" is set down and *vica versa*.)

Whereas the reader will find that he will use only the thumb and the first and second fingers of the left hand in holding the paper of matches, he may not automatically hold the packet exactly as is required for this first trick. However, he will find that the position of the packet is all that has to be changed and that does not change the grip he naturally uses. Properly held, the thumb is on one side of the edge of the back of the paper cover and the first and second fingers are on the opposite edge. Held in this way, the back of the cover is facing the palm of the hand. This grip makes it possible for the fingers of the right hand to open the front cover, to tear off a match, and to close the front cover,

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without releasing the grip of the left fingers or changing their position.

To continue the experiment, the reader should insert an ordinary straight pin into the back of the packet of matches. The pin is stuck through the lower-right-hand corner (this assumes that the back of the packet is uppermost), a quarter of an inch from the right side and the same distance from the bottom. The pinpoint should be pointed toward the top of the packet and right along the inside of the back and behind the matches. The pin should be pushed all the way in so that only the head protrudes at the back.

Again the packet of matches should be taken, held as described above, opened, one match torn off, the cover closed, and the match lighted. It will be found in doing these actions that the head of the pin never is touched. It also will be found that it is easy, and not at all noticeable, to rub the tip of the third finger of the left hand over the head of the pin. If the nail of the third finger is used, it will be found easy even to pull the pin out of the paper.

Having tried this experiment, it will be obvious how simple it would be to knock off a small pill which had been stuck to the packet at the position of the pinhead. In handling the matches, it will be seen that it is natural, and easy, always to keep the back of the matches pointing toward the inside of the hand or down toward the floor. In either instance the pinhead (or the pill) always will be kept hidden from the sight of both performer and all spectators.

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The above describes how a small pill may easily be carried and handled (though it is minute) and yet is quickly released indiscernibly and with no effort. Such is the secret and the following are the details of performance. The plot of the trick is to put the pill into the beverage of one particular spectator without his, or any other spectator's, knowledge. In the situation where there is but one spectator, the trick is extremely simple. The performer should either be facing the spectator or at his left (again these are instructions for a right-handed person). It makes little difference whether both are standing at a bar or are seated at a table. If the table, however, is so wide that the performer cannot easily reach across it, the trick cannot be done when the performer faces the spectator. If, by half rising from his chair, the performer can reach across the table, then it is suitable. The reason for the respective positions of performer and spectator is that the trick is done with the left hand and therefore requires ample space for the movement of the left arm.

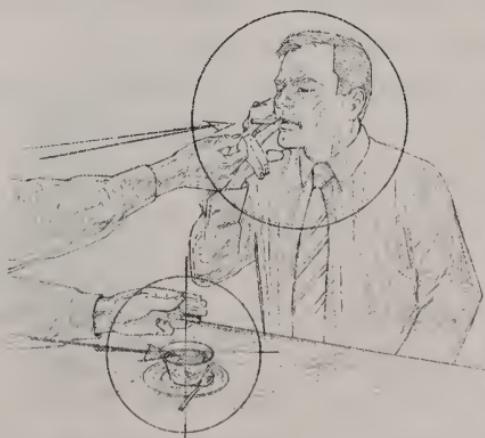
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This trick, by the way, only can be done for a spectator who is a smoker. Another method will be described for performing for a spectator who does not smoke. If, prior to performance, the performer knows whether the spectator does or does not smoke, he need only be prepared to use one method. If that fact is not known, it will be necessary to be prepared to perform either method.

This is the routine for the spectator who smokes. The instant the performer sees the spectator take a cigarette, cigar, or pipe, he takes the packet of matches from his pocket, tears off one match, and holds packet and match ready to ignite the match. He does these things openly because what he does can only be looked upon as a friendly and courteous gesture. As soon as the spectator is ready to light up, the performer should hold the matches close to the spectator and strike the one match. The matches should be held only as close to the spectator as politeness allows but should, if possible, be closer to the spectator than is the mouth of the glass, or cup, into which

the pill is to be dropped.

Left hand lowered for action immediately after match is struck.



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The performer should hold the flame of the match so that the spectator best can use it, and, of course, the performer must look at what he is doing. As soon as the spectator has a proper light, the performer should begin to lean backward into his previous position. In doing this, the left hand, which has been held still since the match was struck, is brought over the mouth of the glass or cup, and the pill dropped into the liquid. Three points should be stressed. First, the left hand must be withdrawn with a continuous motion. There can be no hesitation over the liquid. It should be obvious that the slower the left hand is moved the easier it will be to aim accurately. Second, while the left hand is being withdrawn the performer may drop his eyes from the face of the spectator and thereby see the table, but he should not obviously follow the movements of the left hand. Third, the left hand should come as close to the mouth of the glass as possible. This not only ensures the pill going into the liquid but also lessens the chance of the pill making a splash which could be seen or heard.



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It will be noticed that the pill is dropped as the arm is brought back to the body rather than at the time the arm is extended. This, chiefly, is because any secret move which is performed as a part of a broader action usually can be made less obvious when done as the arm is brought back to the body. This is because once the obvious action has been completed, the spectator's mind no longer takes an interest in the movement of that arm.

The psychological basis for this routine is that a small action will not be noticed when it is done while making a broader gesture for which there is an obvious reason. The reason for the broad gesture must, however, be an essential part of a thought entirely disassociated from the purpose of the small action. Again it should be stressed that the obvious action must be completely natural.

In the circumstances that the performer is standing with the spectator at a bar, the trick is done exactly as if at a table except for the movement of the performer's body. At the bar the performer makes a quarter turn of his body to the right so that he is facing the spectator rather than facing the bar. Otherwise the movements are done entirely with the arms. When at the table, if seated at the left of the spectator, the performer turns at his waist rather than moving his feet, so as to face the spectator.

If the spectator is a nonsmoker, this is the routine suggested. Affix the pill to the back of a wallet, notebook, or small paper pad which would be natural for a person of the character of the per-

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former to carry. Have loosely in the pocket of the wallet, or among the pages of the notebook or pad, a paper with something written on it about which you wish to question the spectator. The writing may be an address, or name, or anything on any subject. Whatever is written only has to be something about which a legitimate question may be asked.

There is an alternative possibility, which is to show something commonly seen about which a remark can be made on a point which it is unlikely the spectator is aware, such as a piece of paper money.

A few minutes' study with any piece of paper money ever made will find some oddity about which a remark may be made with the assurance that the spectator never had noticed the detail. Such a detail is the fact that on the U.S. dollar bills issued during the time John W. Snyder was secretary of the treasury there was no period after the *W* in his signature. The detail need have no importance whatsoever. It need only be something which may be shown and talked about. It is best not to use a detail which may be something the spectator has been asked before, such as, "How many times does the figure 1 and the word one appear on a dollar bill?"

The preparation for using the paper is exactly



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the same as with the matches. The point at which the pill is affixed to the back of the wallet, notebook, or pad depends upon the size of the object. It is to be stuck at a point where the third finger of the left hand can pick it off easily when the object is held between the thumb on one edge and the first and second fingers on the opposite edge. Naturally, the object used must be of such a size that it may be held in this manner and as if it were a natural way to hold it.

The performance, using the paper, is almost the same as the trick with the matches. These are the details of the routine of the performance. First, something is said about the subject mentioned on the paper. Then the wallet, notebook or pad is taken from the pocket. It is brought in front of, and close to, the spectator as it is opened and the paper is taken out. The majority of people in doing this action would open the wallet and extract the paper while the wallet was held close to their own bodies and then reach out only with the hand holding the paper. The point is that there are some people who naturally would do the action the other way. That fact makes it possible for the performer to do it in such manner. He need only remember that it is a perfectly natural action even though it might not be the way he normally would do it. It does not in the least change the manipulations he normally uses. By holding that thought in mind and then going ahead and opening the wallet close to the spectator, the performer will find that the action seems natural even for him.

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The psychological point here is that all that is required is, no matter what the action, that action must be a natural one and appear so. It is not necessary that the action be the one customarily followed by the performer. Any action natural for one person can be performed easily by another person provided no new techniques are involved.

Once the paper has been taken with the right hand and handed to the spectator, the left hand is brought back to the body. In the motion the left hand is brought over the mouth of the glass or cup, and the pill is dropped in.

The character of the performer, or the character he has assumed, plays a major part in this trick and its performance. For instance, if it is in character for the performer to carry a cigarette case, the pill may be stuck to it. After offering a cigarette to the spectator the pill is picked off as the performer brings back the case prior to returning it to his pocket.

If the performance is to take place in a country where paper matches are not commonly used, the trick may be done quite as readily with any size box of matches which may be carried in the pocket. One accustomed to performing tricks could do the trick by using a lighter but, due to the fact that only one hand is needed to operate a lighter, the trick becomes more difficult to do. It is more than twice as hard for a spectator to observe the simultaneous, though varied, actions of two hands as it is to follow the movements of one hand. This is a factor of which it is advisable to take advantage.

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No matter what the object to which the pill is attached, precaution has to be taken that the pill is not scraped off the object during the time it is in the performer's pocket. The most certain way to prevent having the pill accidentally loosened in the pocket is to have a stiff box in the pocket in which the object may be put. The box must be open at the top in order that there will be no fumbling in extracting the object. The box must be shallow enough so that part of the object will extend above the edges and will be easy to grasp. The box should be only so long and so wide as to ensure that the object goes in and can be withdrawn easily. Such a box often can be made from some small container by cutting away a part. A proper box can also be made by cutting and folding a piece of cardboard and pasting paper around the outside.



Types of boxes used to hold prepared objects so that pills will not become dislodged while objects are carried in pockets.

The above trick, even with its variations, is intended for use only in connection with a solid pill