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Subject: Aero Aces

Introduction: I have always been overly conscious of "history" and credits in magic. Many people only have one good idea and they should get credit for it, this is their claim to immortality. For this they will be remembered, in magic, through the ages.

I feel it is criminal to "steal" another persons ideas and even worse to publish untruths which smear the actual inventors reputation. I, however, find myself in this odd position and am forced to send out the enclosed "history". Unlike the "history" in Richard Kaufman's "Jennings '67" book the following can be authenticated.

An interesting fact for those "history" buffs is that all the extra versions of the "Miesel / Cervon Invisible Palm Aces" that are in "Jenning's '67" were worked out by Mr. Jennings in the 1980's not the 1960's. Not only did I know this but one of the editors of the book told me he knew it too! He told me that he realized when he was going over the book that Richie was constructing a fake history for this trick. If that isn't enough the person who supplied the material to Richie told me that Larry worked this material out in the 1980's and the dates were clearly labeled on the tapes as 1980's not 1960's. None of the material said to be worked out prior to Larry's Invisible Palm Aces was worked out in the 1960's! There is much that I disagree with in "Jennings '67" but I am limiting myself to the following at this time.

AERODYNAMIC ACES

(Miesel / Cervon Invisible Palm Aces)

Bruce Cervon

The impetus for the generation of this letter is the release of Richard Kauffmans latest book "Jennings '67". It has nothing to do with the unfortunate and untimely passing of Larry Jennings.

The article in this new book was planned and written a long while ago due to a controversy which has been extremely active since 1989, the Aerodynamic Aces/Open Travelers controversy. Many of you are already aware of some of the following facts but Mr. Kauffman's latest dis-information (he has published a great deal) forces me to allow the magic world at large to have all the facts as they stand. I'm sure Mr. Kauffman will continue to re-write magical history but there is nothing I can do about that.

This has been a rather prolonged controversy but I will stick to the facts so that you can make up your own mind. If you want to read more about it find a copy of Jon Racherbaumer's Swipe #1 (3/1991). Jon

devoted a whole issue to it and his findings are pretty much what you will reads here.

The problem arose because "The Invisible Palm Aces" routine became a very popular routine with magicians and the public alike. It turned out to be very commercial and cardmen began considering it a classic. Therefore it was a "plum" to claim it. There have been quite a few versions in print but who is it's inventor? What belongs to who? This question has been clouded by several, chiefly Larry Jennings and now Richard Kauffman. Here are the answers.

The history of the trick is followed so you can see it's origins. Unseen and unnoticed by all that followed; the first version of the "only four aces" effect is "Invincible" by William Miesel. It was published in THE NEW PHOENIX #362 (October -1961). Miesel's version apparently uses four regular Aces that "are not covered by three odd cards." However, it does NOT use the Tent Vanish or Invisible Palm. It's workable, but no one paid any attention to it and no other variations ever came out.

Marlo published in THE NEW PHOENIX #375 (December-1962) "The Open Travelers". which supposedly used only four kings (actually 6 cards) and the deck. As a check will show it was unduly complicated and the effect was quite a bit different then the later plot. There was no Tent Vanish or Invisible Palm. Later in 1970 Larry Jennings used Marlo's title, "The Open Travelers."

Now comes the place to pay attention.

In September of 1966 THE PALLBEARERS REVIEW (Volume 1- Number 11) contained the following: "The literature on tricks using a small number of cards is relatively scarce, but the following should typify the kind of thing that can be produced by this approach. Basically it is a four-ace routine, but the number of cards in use has been reduced from the traditional sixteen to just five."

"Required are the four Aces and an indifferent card. The aces are shown and placed in a packet off to the left. The indifferent card is placed by itself off to the right."

"The indifferent card is covered with the right hand, the packet of aces with the left. On uncovering the cards, it is seen that the indifferent card has changed places with the AH."

"The indifferent card is placed to the right along with the AH. Both packets are covered; when next shown, the packet on the right now contains two aces, the indifferent card having again traveled to the packet on the left."

'The process continues until all of the aces have traveled invisibly to the right-hand packet, leaving the indifferent card alone on the left."
(Karl Fulves)

In November of 1968 there appears in the EPILOGUE #4 the "Face-up Flyers" by Vernon-Cervon. Karl Fulves cites the earlier PALLBEARERS REVIEW problem from 1966:

“...a one-at-a-time ace routine was suggested using four aces and one odd card. I had thought this the lower limit on the number of cards in use, but Dai Vernon cut it back still further, devising an effect employing just the four Aces, in which each ace invisibly joined the leader ace. Vernon proposed the problem to Bruce Cervon, and Bruce worked out the virtually sleightless handling outlined below.”

Dai Vernon had read the problem in the Pallbearers and told me that he had always wanted to do a one at a time aces but with only THE FOUR ACES. This, he said, was a plot he had thought of years ago but had never worked out a good method. After discussing this with him I worked out some solutions and recorded them in my note books.

Jon Rachumbaumer called attention to the following four points (among others) concerning the “Face-up Flyers” in his “Swipe” Magazine. For the most part these points and the similar ones in “The Aerodynamic Aces” are what makes the trick different and a classic.

- (a) The “Face-up Flyers” uses the Tent Vanish (as originally performed in Vernon’s “Slow Motion Aces”) and establishes its precedence in this kind of presentation.
- (b) It also establishes the handling of placing an empty hand onto a “double” at the Leader position, separating the cards, then lifting the hand to show TWO cards. This is not a VISIBLE appearance, but a card SEEMS to materialize out of nowhere. Its DISAPPEARANCE and REAPPEARANCE is suggestively strong. (This finesse suddenly skyrockets the routine.)
- (c) It establishes the Rub-a-Dub Vanish for the final Ace.
- (d) The handling integrates the deck with EVERY vanish.

The “Face-up Flyers” went out to a very limited audience as only 140 copies of that issue were printed. All the experts and “in the know” types subscribed to it.

In 1966 I was secretive about my then unpublished methods and performed them only for the public, non-cardmen, and friends like Mike Perovich, Tom Blue, and Dai Vernon. I sent the “Face-Up Flyers” to Karl Fulves in March, 1968, two years after entering it into my private notebooks.

It would seem to me that this alone, considering that Bill Miesel had an earlier version of this trick, should cause the effect to be called the “Miesel/Cervon Invisible Palm Aces”. But lets go on.

Before I sent the “Face-Up Flyers” to Karl I had already been performing my second method. This was a feature of my act in 1967 and I called it the “The Aerodynamic Aces”. I taught this method during my 1969-70 Lecture Tour of over thirty cities. I sold the “Perpetual Motion Poker Routine” (copyright 1969) at each lecture, the “Aerodynamic Aces” is explained in this booklet.

As far as the invisible palm aspect of "The Aerodynamic Aces" goes the booklet states: "Right hand is openly placed over the packet as if palming a card etc. etc." (the underlining appears in the original). I vanished the second ace using the bluff tent vanish (that is; the card is never turned face up). This was not in my the lecture notes write-up, only those who saw the effect done saw this "touch". (After all I didn't think it was a big deal, I was mimicking Finley's "Tent Vanish" without palming a card.) The "Tent Vanish" plays a very large part of the "Face-up Fliers" which appeared in print prior to all but the Miesel version. Hundreds and hundreds of magicians saw the "Aerodynamic Aces" which is entered in my "Castle Notes" as a "4 Ace Effect," August 22, 1966.

Jon Rachumbaumer also called attention to the following three points (among others) concerning the "Aerodynamic Aces" in his "Swipe" Magazine.

- (a) apparently uses ONLY four Aces, no extra cards.
- (b) Aces vanish one at a time and visibly join a leader.
- (c) The "Invisible Palm" patter line is used as each disappearance is performed the as per Tent Vanish.

EXPERT CARD MYSTERIES came on the market in January of 1970, but has a copyright imprint of 1969 and Larry Jennings had published a variation of my effect ("Jennings' Open Travelers"). Larry's version features the Tent Vanish, the Invisible Palm, and Rub-a-Dub Vanish. The same as mine which appeared in 1968!

The last paragraph of the Jennings' write-up reads: He credits Marlo's "Open Travelers" for instigating his thinking, credits Vernon for the presentation angle, and thanks Mike Skinner for suggesting the cover-up steal of the first Ace. Check this same trick in The Classic Magic of Larry Jennings (written by Mike Maxwell) the Marlo, Vernon and Skinner credits are missing.

This was all many years ago BUT IT IS THE PUBLISHED RECORD and indisputable.

Now we get to the part which is not in print. Mr. Jennings publicly admitted that he saw me perform the ENDING of "The Aerodynamic Aces."

This was on July 3rd, 1967 (Which I ascertained by checking back through old SHIT Club meeting letters) prior to a club meeting of the "Sleight of Hand & Intimate Tableworkers" at Lou Derman's home. He asked me to repeat the effect and I politely refused. He then, surreptitiously, asked several club members to describe the effect.

Twenty-three years later in 1989 Larry Jennings told Jim Patton, and

others that the effect and method for the "Open Travelers / Aerodynamic Aces" is his. He worked it out, then showed the trick to Dai Vernon. Later at a convention around the same time he showed the trick to Ed Marlo and to no one else. He then swore Dai to secrecy. Larry says that Dai violated that secrecy agreement and gave me the effect as a problem. This is how, Larry said, I came up with several methods.

Larry agreed with my story concerning him seeing me perform the ENDING of "The Aerodynamic Aces", at a meeting of the "Sleight of Hand & Intimate Tableworkers" at Lou Derman's home. He also agrees that he asked me to do the effect again and I refused. Larry also agreed with my story that he asked various members of the club to describe the effect that I did. According to him, he found out I was doing his effect!

Larry then claimed he went to Vernon and confronted Dai with the facts, accusing him of giving me the effect. Vernon said, according to Larry, that, yes, Dai had given the effect to me as a problem and he was sorry.

Thus ends Larry Jennings's story of what happened twenty-odd years earlier and it fits the facts fairly well... until you look closely.

Point by point:

1. The effect and method for the "Open Travelers / Aerodynamic Aces" is his. (Larry Jennings)

This obviously would be prior to my first recorded version in my "Castle Notes," "4 Ace Effect," dated August 22, 1966. The date of my first version has exactly the correct timing to substantiate the claim that THE PALLBEARERS REVIEW Vol. 1 #11, September 1966, was the motivating force for the Professor to have just read and discuss with me his ideas concerning the problem. The Pallbearers would have come out exactly at this time, in late August, because it was the September issue.

Larry says his inspiration was Marlo's "Open Travelers" it seems somewhat coincidental that he would have worked this trick out just prior to this problem coming out in the Pallbearers.

2. He (Larry) worked it out, then showed the trick to Dai Vernon. Then, at a convention around the same time, he showed it to Ed Marlo and to no one else. He then swore Dai to secrecy. Larry says that Dai violated that secrecy agreement and gave me the effect as a problem. This is how, he says, I came up with several methods.

Please note that Larry had no written proof, notes or otherwise and I do . Unfortunately his "witnesses" have passed away.

3. Larry agrees with my story concerning him seeing me perform the ENDING of "The Aerodynamic Aces", at a meeting of the "Sleight of Hand & Intimate Tableworkers" at Lou Derman's home.

This would be difficult to disagree with as there were so many in attendance. As I said before the date of this meeting was July 3rd, 1967. The difference between my "Castle Notes" entry and this club meeting date is over ten months. This is quite a long time for Larry to

have performed the effect for no one. I had been doing it for everyone! Everyone, except rival cardmen. I have always tried to establish my ideas with dated notes and by showing the items to friends.

4. He (Larry) also agrees that he asked me to do the effect again and I refused.

Once again true, the reason for my refusing to perform the effect a second time was obvious! He did not want him doing my effect as at that time we were very much in competition.

5. Larry also agrees with my story that he asked various members of the club to describe the effect that I did. According to Larry, he found out I was doing his effect!

Again true, Larry surreptitiously asked various members about the effect (they came to me that same evening and told me), however, he did not tell any of these people or me that this was his effect!

6. Larry then says he went to Vernon and confronted Dai with the facts, accusing him of giving me the effect. Vernon said, according to Larry, Dai had given the effect to me as a problem and was sorry.

Larry would not have had far to go to confront Dai Vernon with the facts as Dai was at that very same July 3rd meeting! Dai was watching me do the "Aero-Aces" as Larry walked into the informal pre-meeting which was in Lou Dermans home. (The actual meetings were held in a different building.) During that meeting Larry said nothing to Dai or to myself about this being his effect. Nor did he ever tell me (or did I hear until 1989) that this was his effect!

Several weeks after questioning the members at the SHIT Club meeting in July 1967, Larry was performing his version of my effect "The Open Travelers". Prior to this Larry had no effect, presentation, or handling that was LIKE the "Aerodynamic Aces" or "Face-Up Flyers." Nor had he said anything to me about it. He did, however, publish his version of my effect without credit. Much to my chagrin. I said plenty to him but he said nothing about the trick until 1989 when, Twenty-three years after I worked the trick out, Mr. Jennings' claimed the complete origination!

The Jennings' write-up in Expert Card Mysteries credits Vernon for the presentation angle (not the posed problem), and thanks Mike Skinner for suggesting the cover-up steal of the first Ace. Think about this: Mike Skinner did NOT join the Los Angeles magic scene until the very weekend that Larry saw me perform the effect at the "SHIT Club" meeting, Fourth of July Weekend, 1967 (You can check this fact in Mike Skinners "Classic Sampler" book). If he suggested the cover-up steal used in Larry's routine, how could Jennings have performed "The Open Travelers" PRIOR to July 4th weekend of 1967? The answer is he couldn't.

The Last item concerns Dai Vernon and is perhaps my strongest evidence. Dai was a most honorable man, everyone who knew him will vouch for that, he would never let a "mistake or "slip" he had made go this far.

If the Professor had, as Larry claims, "let the cat of the bag" he would have rectified it as soon as possible. He would have

- (1) told me this was Jennings' effect (according to the above story) after being informed by Larry, or
- (2) told me it was Larry's effect when I asked him if it was okay to send the "Face-up Flyers" into Fulves for EPILOGUE, or
- (3) told me when the trick appeared in print in the November 1968 issue of Epilogue,
- (4) or told me sometime during the years after.

The Professor never at any time told me it was Larry's effect. Why? Because it was Vernon's effect and my method as stated above!

The specific presentation of taking a card into an "invisible palm" and moving it from the deck (or a packet) to a Leader card(s) and having it visibly appear is mine. The original presentation which I used from the "Face Up Flyers" went like this: "After palming the card, I noticed a drunk fellow lying on the floor, looking up into my hand. So I made the card invisible and he couldn't see it." I later dropped the line and kept the fake palm, the idea which proved to be commercial. It was through my Castle performances and lectures that the trick caught the fancy of laymen and magicians alike.

Larry simply put together a different handling, building completely on my exact presentation. If I had been credited in the "Open Travelers" which appeared in "Expert Card Mysteries" there would have been no controversy as Larry's version of the effect was different enough to stand as a fine method for the effect.

So to sum up, Bill Miesel had the first "four card only" ace assembly. I, with my version, popularized the effect by adding the Invisible Palm presentation and more magical-looking technique. After that the effect became a "classic". Therefore it is my contention that the routine should be credited as the "Miesel/Cervon Invisible Palm" type routine.
Bruce Cervon

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"Work is for people who don't know how to do magic..."