

DENOMOLOLOS

O. I find myself speaking softly into the microphone of my ipod recorder as I wait for the subject of our interview to arrive. He is a somewhat elderly gentleman, a retired educator and a collector of the unusual. He is a student of the black arts and a bizarrist by choice. His name is simply DeNomolos. I am in the very ornate drawing room of his spacious home, which he describes as his wizard's keep. In his library is a collection of magical tomes, esoteric writings, scrolls and clay tablets from which he does his constant research into the unknown. Boxes of every shape and description fill any empty shelf spaces and display cases hold wonders, which only the Master of the Keep could describe.

To say that DeNomolos is an eccentric is an understatement. His knowledge, while humble, is all embracing and he will debate at the drop of a subject. As Devil's advocate and protagonist, he can overwhelm you with verbiage, which, we suspect, is probably his only real vice. Ah, here he is now. DeNomolos, thank you for seeing us.

D. Please, stay seated. It is a pleasure to have you here.

O. Before we begin, I must ask you about this unusual box. Tell me about it.

D. This box is one of several in my collection that were created to look like ancient books. This particular book box was a gift from an old wizard mentor and friend of mine who thought it important enough to be passed along to me. It contains small relics, bags of stones, a set of runes, and small props that I use in my storytelling.

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O. That is amazing. How long have you had it?

D. This box has been in my possession for fifty five years. It is considerably older than that. I have no idea where it came from or who was responsible for making it, but it is one of my favorites.

O. I see boxes everywhere. How many do you have and how long have you been collecting them?

D. Boxes have held a fascination for me since childhood. One of my grandfathers was a box collector and, as a child, I spent many hours opening and examining his collection. Something about a closed box and the opening of such has grown into a fetish and some of my closest colleagues call me a box freak. There I will not disagree. Believe it or not, I have lost count of the number in the collection. Probably hundreds.

O. I see many other curiosities here and on your library shelves as well. Forty years ago I visited the Peabody Museum just outside of Salem, Massachusetts. At that time it was primarily an eclectic accumulation of curiosities picked up by a whaling captain on his travels around the world. The museum is now a world-class museum in Salem, itself. But what you have here reminds me of the charm of that early display. How have you come by these?

D. Estate sales, gifts from friends, flea



markets, museum stores, foreign import markets, and gift shops have been my regular sources. You do understand that some resources can not be named. The collection is ongoing and new maternal finds its way to my door by often times strange and weary dances.

O. I note that you have a particular interest in things Egyptian.

D. In the late thirties and early forties I sat in darkened movie theaters and watched the "B" grade horror movies that provided escape from the realities of the end of the great depression and the early stages of World War Two.

I was highly impressionable, and movies like "Abbott and Costello Meet the MUMMY" stirred something deep inside of me and I decided that I simply must become an Egyptologist.

The whole bottom shelf of my grandfather's library consisted of the National Geographic Magazine dating back to the very first issue and I absorbed every bit of information I could find about Egypt and the Pyramids. The public library was my next challenge, and getting past the librarian, who somehow felt that Archeology and Sociology were not acceptable for young people. We were expected to read the Hardy Boy Mysteries and things like that. My tastes ran to the works of Edgar Alan Poe and Lovecraft until I discovered E.A. Wallis Budge. His books on Egyptian civilization became my constant companions and opened the doors to what became a life-long fascination with things

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Egyptian.

It was understood that the roots of most, if not all, of the Western concepts of basic magic could be traced back to the rites and practices of ancient Egypt.

No one knows where these practices began, but the records show wizard priests back in the fourth Dynasty.

Egyptian magic was a part of their religion and practitioners taught that all natural and supernatural forces were gifts from the gods. The magic was in the action, to be sure, but more important were the rituals. I continue to be fascinated with such things.

O. From your friend, Ed Solomon, I understand that you participated in reenactments of ceremonial rituals held by one of the mystery schools that enjoyed renewed growth and popularity in Egypt shortly after the Second World War. Tell us about those schools and your experiences there.

D. I hate to appear contrary and disappoint you, but there are some things that I can not talk about. It is enough to know that the revival of the mystery schools is still ongoing, and some things are better left secret.

O. We also understand from Ed that a group of like-minded people gather at your home periodically for an evening of mystery and storytelling. He tells me that you not only share your vast knowledge about Egyptian myth and civilization but that he



and his friends have had the opportunity to observe, if not actually participate in, the rites and ceremonies that you prepare for their edification and entertainment. We

have seen a photograph of you dressed in the robes of an Egyptian High Priest. Is this simply your flair for the dramatic or is there a more arcane purpose to those occasions?

D. The roll of the storyteller is enhanced with a bit of costuming. I often appear in period costume when I think the story will be better told and/or sold. I ascribe to the old adage about clothes making the man. I have appeared in native dress, Egyptian robes, bib overalls, hunter's camouflage, and wizard's wardrobe depending on the venue and the depth of the story.

O. DeNomolos, is it true that you possess actual pages from the original Necronomicon? I understand that the only known copy of that book is in the restricted book section at Oxford and that the only person to have access to that book in the last 75 years was Robert Langdon of The DaVinci Code fame. How on earth did you come by those pages?

Oh, I'm sorry, DeNomolos, we are out of space here. May we continue this interview on our website? Our readers should click on to "DeNomolos" to read your answer



to the above question and much more about you and your friend, Ed Solomon.

DENOMOLOUS



O. DeNomolos, we left our printed pages with a question hanging in the wind, as it were. Is it really true that you possess actual pages from the original Necronomicon? I understand that the only known copy of that book is in the restricted book section at Oxford and that the only person to have access to that book in the last 75 years was Robert Langdon of The DaVinci Code fame. How on earth did you come by those pages?

D. It is said that every one has his price and fortunately for me, this includes dusty old librarians, male or female. The pages in my collection are actually some very fine copies that treated with respect, would pass for the genuine article.

O. Do you believe in communication with spirits, or demons, or... whatever? (And, if yes...) Have you ever had any encounters with supernatural beings?

D. It is funny that you should mention that because I really do believe that spiritual energy can, under the right set of circumstances, manifest itself, and as to encounters with supernatural beings, I know Eugene Burger. Did you mean paranormal or supernatural?

O. Tell us more about the gatherings here. Your décor is not quite gothic

and not quite Victorian but the heavy drapes, the ornate candlesticks on the mantle, the fact that we are talking tonight by candlelight with added light from that wonderful, huge fireplace, certainly sets a mood for exploring the unknown. Isn't that Wagner in the background. You must have a great sound system!

D. The use of music for the storyteller is as important as the use of background music in the films or in television. The ability to evoke emotion and set ambiance mood makes music a most valuable tool. The better the quality of reproduction the more that can be done in that respect.

As to the décor, my tastes are eclectic and different parts of the keep reflect what some may consider my eccentricities. For instance here in the library and the study, we have heavy drapes and candlelight. My private parlor is more gothic and my workshop would to some, appear to be much like Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory. Storage space becomes more and more of a problem and exhibits are stacking up again. I suppose that is the case with many collectors of the odd and unusual.

O. Many of your friends are magicians. Do you like magic? You know, like coin tricks and card tricks?

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D. Magicians do make up a large percentage on my circle of friends. I enjoy good slight of hand, and coins are fascinating props with which to build stories. As to card tricks, there are some who entertain well with playing cards, but for the most part, in my own work, I would rather watch paint dry. I'm sorry if that sounds harsh, but you did ask.



O. Do you consider yourself a storyteller?

D. First and foremost a storyteller and subsequently, a magician. Punx once said that the story should be able to stand alone without any magic. Many of the stories that I use fall into that category. I told someone once that I lie

O. From what we have learned, you love stories of all kinds. Ed told me of a presentation you made to the gathering using one of Grimm's Fairy Tales.

D. I'm not really quite sure as to which presentation you refer. The collection of the Grimm's Fairy Tales is a compendium of some of the most brutal things in the storytellers arsenal. However, brutality and mean spirited activity is to be found in many stories. Fairy tales and folk lore from eastern Europe to the shores of the far east provide me with ample story material. In addition, ghost stories and legends are easily adapted to the work of the storyteller. Research of world folk literature and even religious texts finds dozens of references to these mysterious tales.

for a living. I exaggerate, prevaricate, fabricate, distort, equivocate and declare that which is unsubstantial so by almost any definition, I am a storyteller.

O. We understand that you occasionally attend storytelling conventions. Is this as a presenter or just as an attendee?

D. In some local and regional storytelling I am a presenter. In national and international fests I am but an attendee. Seldom do I find any of the storytelling conventions producing magical presentations. There the magic is in the words, but the spell of enchantment or divination or magical productions are not a part of these activities.

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Bizarre samples from the arcane collection of DeNomolos. Of particular note are the relic box above, the mummy's hand above, right, and the metal box at right. As one can see from the other photos, there is much more.

O. We understand that your friend Ed Solomon is something of a storyteller himself. Just between us, is he any good?

D. I have seen him work and he can hold his own. Unfortunately, sometimes his material is a little jaded. I would hope that my presentations have inspired him to step out of his roll of simply talking about performances and actually do more storytelling on his own.

O. Members of the Oracle Inner Chamber have come to know you



through the chronicles written by Ed Solomon. Some have likened you and him to Sherlock Holmes and Watson. But the fact is, he is not always flattering. He has referred to you as pedantic and long-winded. How do you respond to that?

D. Even the best of friends and the closest of associates will sometimes disagree. So it is with him and others in our immediate circle of friends. When you are right, you're right. When you are wrong, you're wrong. He thinks he is right and I know that I am right. Often it is a matter of opinion and I have some pretty strong opinions, I must admit. While we scold and harangue each other we usually come to an agreement after the smoke clears. Is he often accurate, more

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than likely, but as the old saying goes, "It takes one to know one."



a disturbance with vanish of the bishop's ring and consequently was kicked out of the

O. Regardless of what he might say parenthetically, the accounts have provided us with wonderful sampling of the rich breadth of your interests. We hope that these will continue for years to come.

order. Somehow the robe conveys the bittersweet touch to the mysterious disappearance of the valuable and most revered ring. Besides, the robe is rather comfortable.

D. As long as there are people to listen, I will keep collecting artifacts and telling stories about them. I hope no one is expecting card tricks.



Before we take our leave, I have to ask... You are dressed in what appears to be a Monk's habit, or a Druid's robe. Is this your normal attire, and whether it is or not, why are you wearing it?

O. DeNomolos, thank you for your time and hospitality. This has been a rare pleasure and privilege.

D. In one feature presentation I tell a story in the guise of a defrocked monk, Brother Nomolos. As a part of the mission of the mage, Nomolos created

Above, left, is DeNomolos favorite box, filled, no doubt, with rare, arcane treasures. Beside it another of the hundreds of boxes in his collection. Each with a story, each with a curse? Only if you steal it!

ED SOLOMON

An Interview with Ed Solomon

Ed Solomon on DeNomolos



O. Ed, you are, of course, well known to members of the Oracle Inner Chamber. Your accounts of DeNomolos's mysterious happenings have appeared in many magic magazines, including your own column in *The Linking Ring*, in your own books, in the pages of *Oracle*, and on the *Shadow Digest*. We have all been delighted at the creative methods you have devised to duplicate the DeNomolos mysteries. In addition, however, you occasionally offer your own stories, often accompanied by magic effects. I am thinking specifically of a routine you call "Folding Money," where you talk about all the symbols on a dollar bill and in conclusion the bill folds up as you explain how the dollar has devalued over the years. You wrote about that effect, "DeNomolos doesn't do this. This is mine." Why would you write that?

E. "Folding Money" was my humble offering at a Spellbinder's meeting. On those rare occasions when DeNomolos has an abbreviated dissertation we sometimes actually get present something of our own. This was MY offering. It doesn't happen very often.

O. You have known DeNomolos a long time. Some have even commented that the two of you look somewhat alike. Tell us about the Ed Solomon - DeNomolos relationship. When did you first meet and how did your friendship develop?

E. As strange as it may sound we were classmates in school back in the forties. We shared similar backgrounds and interests and traveled in the same social circles. We have laughed over the years concerning the lyrics to an old song about belonging to a mutual admiration society. Kindred spirits tend to cluster in some dark and mysterious ways.

Like begets like and split personalities are symptomatic of... lets not go there.

O. And yet your parenthetical comments are not always flattering. Let me quote you and have you respond as to the meaning of what you said: "DeNomolos tends to be a bit stuffy and perhaps even pompous with his usual somber, self-sacrificing demeanor."

E. Within most friendships, or so psychologists would suggest, there often develops a love/ hate relationship. Our personalities are such that envy and one-up-manship have often had us at sword points, but because ours is symbiotic, he needs me to chronicle his exploits, and I, recognizing the fact that without him and his antics, I would not have traveled this path. If my words and descriptors seem harsh it is probably from trying to get a word in edgewise.

O. And this one. It is a bit long, but it is choice. You said, "You may call him curmudgeon, charlatan, scalawag, scoundrel, and neer-do-well. You may call him a cranky, cantankerous old coot, fossil, reprobate, relic from a by-gone age, flim-flam man, phony and fake. No matter what you call him, I have called him worse to his face, mind you, and any of the above would be an apt

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description of the strange personality of DeNomolos... (and here you add two strange accolades in light of what you just said) Sage, Mage, etc.

E. Through it all I have admiration for his storytelling skills and magical knowledge. It is that recognition that prompts the definition Sage as well and Mage. But sometimes he can be pretty obnoxious.

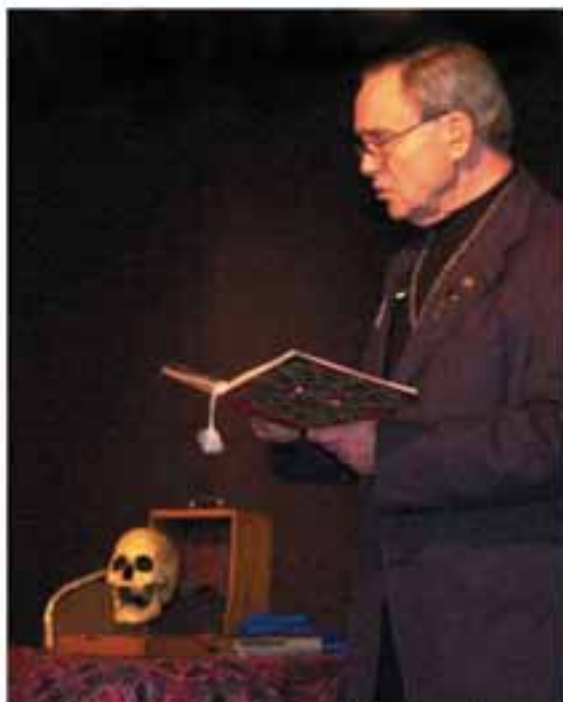
O. And why would you use the terms "flim-flam man, phony and fake"?

E. While it may sound like sour grapes; he is a natural born prevaricator and a skilful distorter of facts, which are a part of his mystique and possibly his charm. He probably could have been a great salesman as he could easily sell ice cubes to the Eskimos. I irritated him once by asking the gathering if they would buy a used car from this man.

O. Interestingly enough, you often point out another side of DeNomolos. You write, "DeNomolos can sometimes be very kind and loving. I know that is hard to believe after some of the things I have reported about him, but now and again he will tell us a story that will simply pull the rug out from under the emotions..."

E. I have seen DeNomolos actually choke up and cry at some of his own sentimental outpourings. It is honest emotion and in many ways is quite contagious. Often I have thought that these were crocodile tears shed primarily to evoke a similar response, but that is not the case.

O. Finally, in writing of his faults you go on to say that you, "...have forgiven him his trespasses, and I must continue to chronicle his presentations." Why must you?



Ed performing at the ICBM convention.

E. Very simply – that's what friends do.

O. One final question. We asked DeNomolos to comment on his friendship with you. Now, just between us chickens. What do you really think about DeNomolos?

E. In a friendship, real or imagined, it is not seemly to turn your back and over the years we have been good friends.

Thank you Ed Solomon, for your insights on this wonderful, bizarre, character. Let us move on to another topic.



Ed Solomon on Story Telling Magic

O. Ed, you have written that "finding the right story is the task of the teller of tales. Assigning some bit of magical emphasis is the challenge of the bizarrist." That really involves two different kinds of creativity, doesn't it?

ED SOLOMON



DeNomolos is not the only packrat, as these photos of Ed Solomon's collection will testify.



E. Actually, I like to think of it as parallel creativity. It is a blending of ingredients and just enough spices to make it palatable and interesting.

O. Naturally, the number one question asked of storytellers and storytelling magicians is, "Where do you find your material?"

E. As a storyteller, one's repertoire must be eclectic. The immense wealth of folklore, myth, and legend presents us with many wide vistas from which to choose. The world of gothic literature allows us to pick and choose our venues of horror. The most innocent of the morality plays and motivational stories can become a vital part of our palette as we paint with words, our magical art.

O. Obviously the emotional range is infinite.

E. Yes. Take DeNomolos, for example. He uses wide brush strokes to define his craft. In his imagination there are things possible nowhere else. With his disarming charm he will surprise you with his attempt at wit and in his next story have you crying over some insignificant little detail that has struck

him as crucial to his plot. He will exhibit ugly signs of morbidity one moment and senility the next.

At the very heart of storytelling is the ability to reach out and touch someone. To elicit some emotion, whether it be group or individual, and in the process, gently nudge those deep feelings that we all recognize but often fail to acknowledge.



If humor is the basis for the story, well and good, try to be funny. Often times, stories are too serious in some cases, and levity helps break the tension to relieve the stress. If the story evokes sadness or melancholy care must be taken not to end up with feelings of depression.

O. In your wonderful story "Grandma's Garden," you wrote that it was based on a story by Sophy Williams and was from



A skull on a cord, an old key, and a story!

a book of children's stories called *The Big Night Night Book* that you found in Border's children's department. Did you just happen on it while looking for something for your grandchildren or do you make it a point to look for such things.

E. That is a bit hard to explain and somewhat embarrassing. It is a good example of how imagination is stimulated by something that touches the emotions. You see it was a bedtime story that my grandchildren focused upon for a long time. It was one that they wanted to hear every night but they could not comprehend why it made their grandfather tear up and actually weep when it was read. If such emotion can be conveyed by the spoken word it can move an audience even if they are a bunch of die-hard cynics or magicians.

O. What, then, is Storytelling Magic?

E. As I see it, the storyteller is really a teacher who sometimes preaches a mini-sermon. Sometimes it is but a gentle lesson that is needed, but with a bit of magical emphasis. It is not really gospel magic as such but the lessons taught are just as valuable.

The good story falls into that category. I have gathered a group of powerful stories and have added some basic magical twists that make each story a bit more palatable. I once told a group that some may find such stories not to their liking and will say they could not do the material. I would suggest you to read your story aloud and ask someone to listen as you do. Or record your story. Play for the emotion of the story and forget about the magic trick at the end. Many a story will stand-alone and then let your magical expertise make each story really meaningful to your listeners, and you will be most pleased with results.

This quote is my favorite closing remark. "You may not remember my name and you may not remember the magic that I have done but I would hope that somehow you remember how I made you feel."

O. We certainly agree with that, but for some performers the magic part, while perhaps not the most important part, is certainly important.



E. For all of us the more difficult task is finding stories that go with particular effects we wish to do or finding a particular effect that will fit a particular story we wish to tell. Add to that the hundreds of strong magical effects that are so very clever and well thought out, which, for some reason, we buy and never use. I own many little things I couldn't live without that have no story,

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to know that the meat they eat could come from a water and earth-polluting farm where animals are mistreated and pumped full of chemicals, antibiotics and growth hormones. But who can resist a cow in a trench coat and sunglasses?"

That got my attention and I discovered that someone had produced a flash animation on the Web at a site called <thematrix.com>. It was based on the trilogy of movies called the MATRIX and the play on words intrigued me. I accessed it and laughed until I was sore. It was funny and yet serious with the current threat of mad cow disease in the headlines.

The thinking began and I was caught up in the title. As a magician I know several versions of the coin presentation of the same name as the movies. Derrick Dingle and Al Schneider had versions of the four-coin trick that we are all so familiar with. With the creative juices flowing and the idea fresh in my head, I set about to do a version using meat rather than coins. Yeah, I know that is stupid sounding but that is the way my mind works. Slices of bread and some lunchmeat cut outs? No, too awkward to handle. Meatrix, meatrix, meatrix, matrix. What puzzlement.

Lunch time and still no ideas. A couple of friends come by and we go out to eat at Guido's Pizza Parlor for lunch. Pizza, meatrix... pepperoni slices...make us one with everything. Then it happened. I peeled off a slice of pepperoni and held it up. I didn't say a word for fear my friends would think I was losing it, but inside, I was churning with ideas. I popped the slice in my mouth for internal discussion.

That afternoon I found a picture of a pepperoni pizza and enlarged it with the computer. I printed a color copy on

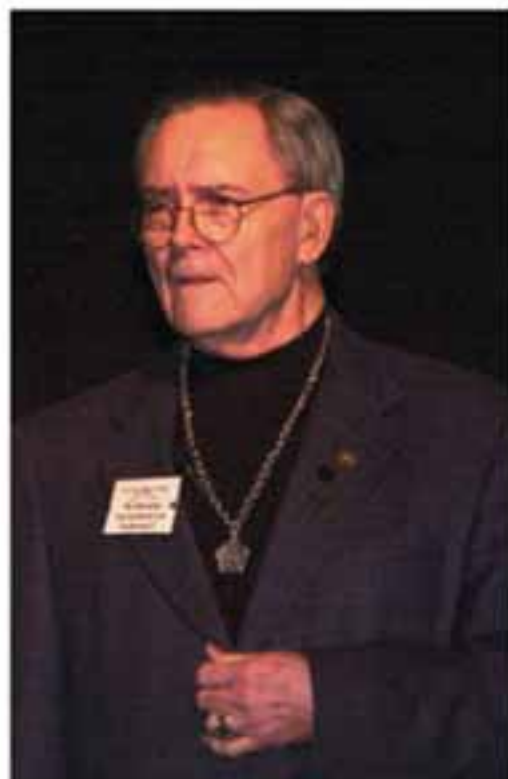


photo paper and glued it onto a piece of heavy card stock. On the back of the card stock I glued a piece of brown craft paper that had been crumbled up in my hands and smoothed out. It looked like the bottom of a pizza crust. I cut the pizza into four quarters and had my food equivalent of cards for the covering. An image search found some pictures of sliced pepperoni, which I duplicated and processed with the computer. Now I had several pieces of what looked like real pepperoni. I experimented

with the props on a close-up mat but didn't like the feel of the pickup move and needed to make some improvement. I went to the supply box and found my roll of clear, self-adhesive and laminated all the props. Now every thing worked. I am never able to just think about it as I write. I need to have the props in my hands so that it is not just another pipe dream.

The story wouldn't be printed until I was satisfied and had performed for people to get live reaction and then I on



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Bob Neale, Ed Solomon, Mary Thomich and Larry White, creative storytellers all!

go to re-write to work out the little bugs.

The rest of the afternoon was spent playing with the props and thinking about presentation. With the material fresh on my mind from the cartoon cow in the trench coat, I came up with a basic story line, which is now undergoing transformation. I am not finished. It is a work in progress. That is the way MY mind works. It won't be the same for anyone else as creativity is such an individual thing. I think I am a creative person, others think I am crazy, but that is Ok because they know me there.

PIZZA PLEASE

Geno and Luigi were a couple of street-wise ten-year-old kids whose entire universe was an eight square block section of the city with row houses and tenement buildings. Their neighbors were kikes, micks, chinks, spicks, spades, krauts, polaks, gringos, and wops like themselves. Nobody used those names in public but everyone knew what they were and lived with it.

They went to school at Our Lady of

Perpetual Pain parochial school where the good sisters meted out harsh punishment for bad manners as well as wrong answers.

Every afternoon after school they walked over to Uncle Guido's Pizza Parlor and played hoop ball out back. Uncle Guido had nailed a barrel hoop on the back wall of the Pizza Parlor building and they would meet their friends and play one-on-one until Aunt Maria called them in for something to eat.

Aunt Maria was their mother's sister and they lived all together upstairs above the Pizza Parlor. Their mother worked as a seamstress in the shirt factory over in the garment district and Aunt Maria looked after the boys after school. She worked all day in the kitchen preparing all the special sauces and chopping the vegetables for the pizza, but kept an eye out for the boys, who always played ball when they got home.

Uncle Guido was a big man who always smelled of garlic and oregano. He made the best pizza in town and people came from all over the city to sample his special delights. At one time, a man by the name of Slydirin used to come to visit, talk business with Uncle Guido, eat pizza and drink beer. Uncle Guido was always doing magic tricks for the customers and knew quite a few of the local magicians.



Before the evening crowd came in there was a lull. Uncle Guido would make a couple of his thin crust pizzas for the boys and they would come in and talk about their school day. Uncle Guido always had something to show them. Sometimes it was a card trick done with a stained deck of cards, or a puzzle of some sort that he got from one of his friends. The boys loved Uncle Guido and he treated them like his own. He was stern and sometimes

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gruff with the customers but not with the boys. They laughed and played together like Guido was one of the boys.

Their favorite trick, if you want to call it that, was what they called the pizza trick. Uncle Guido took one of the advertising signs, one that looked like one of his great pizzas, and cut it into quarters and using slices of pepperoni, he laid out a row of four slices and covered each with a quarter of the picture of the pizza. He moved them around and when he lifted the pictures of the pizza slices, the pepperoni slices would be gone. They all would appear under one of the four sections and the boys would choose where they would reappear.

This routine was part three shell game, part cups and balls and part matrix. Uncle Guido would change the rules now and then but it was basically the same each time the game was played. Sometimes he would make the slices return as they were at the beginning. Sometimes they would all be under one of the "pizza" slices. The boys discovered early on that they could make Uncle Guido laugh if they made the slices disappear, and they would try to sneak a piece out from under a "slice."

Somehow he would make it reappear under that "slice." Their favorite method of vanishing the pepperoni was to pop it into their mouths, chew it up and swallow it.

Life was very different in those days.



The pace was slower and entertainment was where you found it. From the playground to the pizza parlor, people like Uncle Guido made up for that fact that everyone was poor and times were hard.

WORKING:

The magic is essentially a coin matrix done with pepperoni slices and pictures of pieces of pizza. The variations include a reverse matrix with the help of a gimmicked set of three slices, and the standard moves for producing a coin under a card with a turnover move suggested by Al Schneider, among others. This allows stolen slices to reappear when necessary. The telling of the story presents opportunity to do the meatrix / matrix while reminiscing about the old days. The storyteller's job is to entertain. The magic is but a means to that end.

Oh, yes... the red logo. Turn it sideways.

