



The GULL LAKE

# ADVANCE



\$1.00 GST Incl.

## Magic Man

Metamorphosis and the grand Tradition of Magic on display in Gull Lake last week

BY TIM KALINOWSKI

Local residents were treated to an entertaining display of magic and illusion at the Kinettes sponsored Abraca-DAZZLE magic evening at the Gull Lake Community Hall last Wednesday evening. Seasoned magician John Kaplan engrossed the 400 person audience, most of whom were families with young children, with a show that had upbeat music, dance, bright costumes, colourful lights and nice comedic touches. Part of the proceeds from the magical evening stayed in the community to support the local Kinettes. The Advance had an opportunity to speak with magician John Kaplan, who has been touring and entertaining audiences for over 40 years, prior to the show. He told us that since the age of 9 he has wanted to be a magician.

"Magic was a hobby throughout my growing up years, and I was determined to make it a career," Kaplan told the Advance. "I served an apprenticeship with a magician from 1975-80. Right after I graduated from high school I went right into a five year apprenticeship program; it was with a magician named Mickey, no joke. Mickey Hades — so I'm actually a sorcerer's apprentice! (laughs)."

Kaplan also attributes two magicians with being a driving inspiration for his love of magic today: The great Harry Houdini of course; but also arguably Canada's strangest and greatest magician, Doug Henning, who was world famous in the 1970s. Henning's "Metamorphosis" illusion, (where the magician switches places with his assistant chained within a locked box in a matter of seconds before the very eye), was considered amongst the best ever performed since Houdini himself invented and performed it. It was no coincidence that Kaplan chose to end his performance with that same illusion — paying homage to both Houdini and Henning simultaneously.

"Doug Henning was a major influence on me. Before Doug Henning burst on to the magic scene magic wasn't cool. The only magician anyone could have named at that time would have been Houdini, who had already been dead for 50 years ... So as a young teen being a magician wasn't cool until Doug Henning showed up and all of a sudden it was cool."

From watching the magic show it was obvious that Kaplan's love of performance is absolutely genuine, and his face lit up noticeably when the local kids arrayed in front of the stage on the floor began to laugh and shout during the lighter moments of the show. One could also tell he has 40 years in the business; the tricks and illusions he uti-

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Magician John Kaplan gave a light-hearted, family friendly performance on behalf of the Gull Lake Kinettes on May 18. PHOTO BY TIM KALINOWSKI

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## Dazzling display

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lized were tried and true classics done seemingly effortlessly with great professional detail and polish. The mark of a true adept at any craft.

Kaplan told the Advance that he gets nearly equal measures of satisfaction from earning his living by doing magic and giving back to the communities he performs in. He told us that local community service and charity groups have a need for the kind of show he offers, and he realized this very early on in his career.

"I was wise enough early on in my career," said Kaplan, "to realize that there was a market out there that had a need for what I did ... What I did was approach that market and made my show not just as good as the show can be, family friendly and all that, but also something that could be successful for any group as long as they followed the (marketing) plan ... It's a rewarding feeling after doing a show to know that not only have we put smiles on kids' faces, but we have left tangible results in the community as well."

However in the end Abraca-DAZZLE is all about Kaplan's enduring love of magic; and he confessed that he is really, in many ways, still that 9 year old boy he was when the desire to do magic first came calling in his life those oh so many years ago.

"In some ways I'm still that 9 year old kid. I just refuse to grow up (laughs)... There's something raw about experiencing that sense of wonder when you see something absolutely impossible... You know in your logical mind that it's totally impossible and yet there it is happening in front of you. We experience that as kids a lot. I mean the first time it shows it's amazing to a kid right? But you lose that as time goes on and you become an adult. So I think it's great to rekindle that same feeling of wonder. I love watching magicians perform myself; it's a total kick for me."

And judging by the audience response last Wednesday night, Kaplan certainly succeeded in conveying that child-like sense of wonder and fun to the many Gull Lake area residents who came out to enjoy his show.

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### This Week's



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