

# Genii

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LIVIN' ON JACKS & QUEENS  
*Richard*  
**Turner**





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**By Jason England**



## Introduction by Steve Forte



I was first exposed to Richard Turner's exemplary sleight of hand many years ago on television's *That's Incredible*. Richard performed a number of gambling moves and stunts, but there were two items in particular that made an indelible impression on me. First was

his handling of the Second Deal. He used a Push-Off method, although extremely fine, combined with a sweeping action of the dealing thumb to create the perfect illusion of dealing the top card. Next was his presentation of "Weighing the Cards." From a shuffled deck he would separate the cards from weight alone—as he claimed—by distinguishing the additional paint on court cards. The following day I received numerous phone calls about this demonstration, as it absolutely blew people away! Richard's moxie, showmanship, and raw technical skill framed the effect and made such a powerful impact.

Some years later I was able to see Richard both perform and lecture at The Magic Castle. As anticipated, he was terrific and I gained further respect for his card handling talents as his entire show encompassed some of the most difficult gambling sleights possible. On the following day I stayed for his lecture and, again, his work was superlative. What I remember most, however, is his response to a few questions posed by an audience of magicians who were anxiously waiting for Richard to tip some of his finest work. When asked specifically about the workings of his effects, he surprised many knowledgeable cardmen that day and flatly denied using the methods he employed. For whatever reason, Richard refused to tip various techniques, yet they were the cornerstone of his show and his reputation. It was an awkward moment, but he stuck to his guns and refused to back down. I learned another thing about Richard Turner that day; he's very serious about protecting his years of practice and his specialized work.

Aside from *That's Incredible* and his show and lecture at The Magic Castle, the greatest opportunity for me to study and appreciate his card work was from his gambling videos. I have watched them many times and have always marveled at the level of his technical skill. Richard Turner is one of the finest technicians I have ever seen. He does moves I have never seen other cardmen perform well—moves that are off the scale in terms of degree of difficulty ... and he does them flawlessly! For example, how many cardmen have you seen do a false shuffle with a strip-out ... all with only one hand? And if you ever take the time to study his handlings of many classic gambling techniques, such as the Push-Through, Second Deal, and Interlace, to name a few, you will also find that he possesses a style all his own. Put it all together and you end up with an extraordinary talent and truly one of a kind! My hat goes off to Mr. Richard Turner.

A few months after writing this short piece I finally had the pleasure of meeting Richard. In contrast to the "careful" personality I witnessed at The Castle, I found him to be a regular Joe. He is warm and caring, willing to share, has a wonderful sense of humor, and after just five minutes I felt like I had known him all of my life. We had a blast. Although we spent many hours together shuffling cards and swapping moves, I quickly began to realize—and appreciate—that Richard's card work is just one small chapter in his amazing story-filled life. What quickly transcended card technique and continued to touch my heart was an awareness of the uncanny way he manages his life, his accomplishments without a deck of cards, and his passion and love for his family. Talented cardmen are a dime a dozen, but how many can impact your life? Richard Turner is one such person, and he proved to be much more than one-handed Center Deals and record-breaking coin rolls. He was truly an inspiration.

Until recently ago, few magicians outside of Southern California or Texas had heard of Richard Turner. Although his name was well-known to the hard-core card guys and, despite the fact he had won the Golden Lion award from Siegfried and Roy in 1982, mainstream magicians had somehow overlooked him. One reason he was so little-known is that he's spent the better part of 30 years making a fine living with nothing but a deck of cards—but without interacting through the usual magic channels. Until recently he'd virtually never lectured for magicians, never performed at a magic convention, and he'd only released one product to the magic fraternity, his 1990 videotape series on gambling sleight-of-hand moves entitled, *The Cheat*.

Two things have enabled magicians to come to better know Richard's work in recent years. The first is his semi-retirement from constant performing, which has allowed him to pursue a few more lectures, magic convention appearances, and DVD projects. The other is the internet, which has allowed word to spread on Richard's products, history, and future appearances with a speed unlike anything that existed in the past.

To borrow a line from Richard's act, the “down and dirty” version of his life is that he's spent the past four decades with a deck of cards in his hands, and he's become one of the finest masters of gambling sleight of hand anywhere in the world. I hope this article helps shed a little light on Richard Turner, the man, the student, the master, and “The Cheat.”

Richard was born in San Diego, California on June 16, 1954. He claims to have had a fairly normal childhood until the age of seven. While sitting in the living room playing, Richard heard the closing theme song to the television show *Maverick* starring James Garner and Jack Kelly:

*Who is the tall, dark stranger there?*

*Maverick is the name.*

*Ridin' the trail to who knows where,*

*Luck is his companion,*

*Gamblin' is his game.*

*Luck is the lady that he loves the best.*

*Natchez to New Orleans*

*Livin' on jacks and queens*

One line from the theme grabbed his attention, and has never let go: “Livin’ on Jacks and Queens.” Richard had no idea what living on Jacks and Queens meant, but somehow he knew he was going to live on Jacks and Queens for the rest of his life. He was right. He immediately began to practice with a deck of cards, his sessions eventually increasing in length to upwards of 16 hours a day. Over 40 years later, he's still at it.

In high school Richard was involved in drama and theater, subjects that would serve him well over the next 35 years. Richard played Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and toured with The Lamb's Players, a non-profit theater group based in San Diego, from 1972 to 1978. During these years he continued his constant practice with playing cards, and he also met his first “real” magicians, Mike Stillwell and J.C. Wagner. Through Mike and J.C., Richard learned of The Magic Castle. He decided to make the trip north to Hollywood.

The Magic Castle then, as now, was the center of the magic universe. In the mid to late 1970s some of the finest close-up, parlor, and stage magicians in the world made Southern California their home in order to live around and work in The Magic Castle. Larry Jennings, Bruce Cervon, Tony Giorgio, Earl Nelson, Ricky Jay, and Michael Skinner were

regular performers and visitors. And of course, the legend himself, Dai Vernon was to be found there nearly every night, holding court at his corner couch.

Richard says his first visit to The Castle almost didn't happen. He was told the day before his visit about The Castle's strict dress code. You needed a suit to get in and Richard didn't have one. So, he did what any self-respecting card mechanic would do in his situation, he cheated someone. He went to a men's clothing store and found a jacket that he liked. The sales clerk approached and, seeing Richard's cards, asked him if he'd like to cut high card for the jacket. When Richard immediately agreed, the clerk backed down. Thinking fast, Richard removed three cards and said, "How about this, if you find the Queen I'll pay double, otherwise I get the coat for free." After some hesitation, the clerk agreed and, before you could say "swindled," Richard was asking him to go double or nothing for the pants! Richard walked out of the store in a brand new suit and hadn't paid a dime.

Richard began making regular visits to The Magic Castle, and in 1975 his friend J.C. Wagner introduced him to the Professor. That meeting in the library of The Castle was the beginning of a relationship that would last for the remaining 17 years of Vernon's life. Richard says the Professor was like a second father to him, and he misses him dearly. Bill Bowers tells a great story of Richard's wedding day that perfectly captures the effect Richard and Vernon had on one another. According to Bill, the people were seated, the bride was ready to walk down the aisle, and the music had begun. The only problem,... no Richard, and no Professor. Bill went looking for them. He found them, near the rear of the church, sitting at a table huddled over a deck of cards. Richard was showing the latest to his mentor, and time had slipped away from them. Bill called out to them, "So there you are. You're late, the wedding has started! The Professor, in that way that only he could get away with, shouted back, "Don't bother us, he's doing something beautiful!"

It was at The Castle that Richard also met Tony Giorgio and Larry Jennings. He credits these two very gifted men with giving him "tough love" and encouragement over the years. He especially remembers Tony saying "It won't get the money ... won't get the money" over and over again as Richard was demonstrating moves he was working on. He says it only made him work harder to perfect his technique. Years later Richard would finally get approval from Giorgio. While performing in the close-up room of The Castle in 2001, Tony watched Richard perform a number of moves and after each one said to some bystanders, "That'll get the money, that'll get the money!"

Through Vernon, Richard also met Charlie Miller. Charlie was, in the estimation of many experts, the best magician/mechanic that ever lived. His Second Deal is said to have been phenomenal, and he knew a tremendous amount about gamblers, cheaters, and the methods that both groups used to make their living. Richard heard about Charlie's expertise from many Castle members during those days. Larry Jennings in particular used to torment Richard by telling him "Charlie can do it" whenever an especially difficult move came up in conversation. When Richard and Charlie finally met, it was at Johnny Thompson's house in Los Angeles. Charlie sat Richard at one end of a long, King Henry-style table that was over 250 years old. They spoke, and discovered that they had other things in common besides the obvious card connection. Discussions about fencing and their disdain for the word "magician" as a self-description broke the ice. When the cards finally came out, for the next six hours Richard demonstrated his various moves and techniques under the watchful eye of the master. As Richard did the moves, Charlie would periodically interrupt by saying, "Let me watch from over here" as he marched around to get behind Turner's chair. "Do it again, from this angle," Miller would bark. At one point he went and retrieved a deck that was slightly larger than a normal poker sized deck, and said "Do it

with this deck.” Occasionally Charlie would see a familiar technique or touch and ask, “Where’d you learn that? I never even showed Vernon that!” In the end, Charlie passed judgment on Richard’s technique with the words, “Kid, they call me Eagle-eyed Charlie. ‘Charlie sees everything’ kid, they say. Well kid, I can’t see it. I can’t see it!”

Richard credits these men with being his mentors and inspiration over the years. But not all of his inspiration came from the West Coast. There was another man, 1700 miles to the East, Ed Marlo.

Although he rarely left Chicago, dozens of card men made the trip to the Windy City to meet Ed Marlo. 14 years after his passing, the name Marlo is still synonymous with Chicago card magic. Richard remembers a particular move that Vernon had shown him that Ed just couldn’t do. The move was a Bottom Deal done with a very relaxed and open grip. Ed wasn’t getting it and, as far as Richard knows, he never got it. At one point Marlo suspected that Vernon was pulling his leg and had made up the technique, but Richard insists it was real and that the Professor did it flawlessly.

Although Richard thinks Marlo was a fine magician, and doesn’t dispute his enormous creative output, he feels Marlo’s techniques weren’t the best for gambling work. It’s no secret that Richard isn’t a fan of the Strike Second Deal, and he is sometimes critical of Marlo’s false dealing techniques. Richard has even used Marlo’s methods to demonstrate what “bad” technique looks like in a gaming situation. From Marlo, Richard learned what *not* to do with regard to gambling sleight of hand.

Performances at The Magic Castle were responsible for Richard getting his first extended job, working the Reuben E. Lee—a restaurant built to look like an old Mississippi riverboat—in San Diego. He worked there from 1979 to 1985. During his run on the boat, he logged a staggering 2,190 days in a row, taking time off only to perform abroad or on television, and always with the restaurant’s approval. In fact, Richard continued to draw his salary from the Reuben E. Lee even when performing somewhere else. It was a strategy he would use over and over. Years later, during an appearance on the Paul Daniels’ Show in the U.K., Richard was introduced with the words, “Live from Fiesta Texas Theme Park in San Antonio, Richard Turner.” It was this sort of constant selling of both himself and his current employers that allowed Richard to be paid by two clients at the same time.

Richard left the Reuben E. Lee in 1985 to move to Texas. The owners of the world’s largest nightclub, “Billy Bob’s” hired him to perform for their VIPs inside the 127,000 square foot facility. Richard worked there from 1985 until 1988, when he returned to the Reuben E. Lee for two more years.

1990 saw Richard once again packing his bags for Texas. Fiesta Texas is a theme park located 15 minutes from downtown San Antonio. Although now a Premiere Parks property, at the time Fiesta Texas was owned by the national insurance giant, USAA. They hired Richard to perform in 37 shows every week, at \$100 per show. He maintained this schedule for seven years.

In 1997 Richard left Fiesta Texas and began working at the Buckhorn Saloon in downtown San Antonio. The Buckhorn is owned by friends of Richard’s, and although he’s officially retired from performing, he occasionally works special events for them. In addition to these infrequent performances, Richard can still be found from time to time at The Magic Castle, the place that sort of started it all for him over 30 years ago.

Throughout his full-time performing years, Richard has appeared on dozens of television shows, including *That’s Incredible*, *Ripley’s Believe It Or Not*, *The 700 Club*, *World Geniuses* (a Japanese television show that featured Richard in five episodes), *The Paul*

*Daniels' Show*, and many other national and international programs. Clips from some of these shows are included as special features in his new DVDs. In addition to his television appearances, Richard has been featured in dozens of newspaper and magazine articles. His extensive corporate resume includes performances for USAA, SBC, ARCO Chemical, Southwest Airlines, and the Defense Intelligence Agency to name but a few. Finally, he's performed privately for the biggest celebrities in the world, including Bob Hope, Muhammad Ali, Gene Kelly, and Johnny Carson.

In 1990, Richard filmed his first set of videotapes called *The Cheat*, primarily to document his work for posterity. Simply put, *The Cheat* videotapes contain some of the finest examples of gambling sleight of hand ever recorded. Although not structured as teaching tapes, many modern card experts have praised these original tapes as being the definitive work on dozens of moves and sleights. The tapes show various false shuffles, false cuts, false deals which include Seconds, Thirds, Bottoms and Centers, along with multiple methods of palming and switching cards. Many of these techniques were shot from under a glass table, from table level, and even from behind the performer. Professional voice-over artist Jack White provides the professional narration. For the recent DVD release, everything's been labeled and is accessible directly through a main menu.

Today Richard's act is largely unchanged from his early performances on *That's Incredible* or onboard the Reuben E. Lee. His character "The Cheat" is that of a 19th century riverboat gambler. Dressed in a white shirt, string-ribbon tie and black cowboy hat, Richard demonstrates the classic moves of the Old West-era card mechanic. Yet he does this in such a way that it doesn't appear as though you're watching a simple demonstration. His background in theater definitely shows, and he manages to engage his audience, entertain, and educate all at the same time.

He usually begins his act with an impressive demonstration of false shuffling. With a deck held in each hand, he casually shuffles each deck one-handed, bridging the decks and allowing them to cascade together, while talking to the audience and making jokes about the dangers of shuffling in this manner during an actual game. Both shuffles, by the way, are completely false: he does simultaneous one-handed false shuffles, with bridges and cascades, that he manages to strip-out and reassemble without a single card getting out of place. René Lavand has been doing this for many years as well, but with a different technique (and of course, with only one hand). Then Richard gets into the hard stuff.

Richard's act continues with demonstrations of expert SECOND, BOTTOM, and Center Dealing. All the deals are performed flawlessly and beautifully. He then demonstrates that, just by having audience members call out a number, his amazing ability to pluck off exactly that number of cards by touch alone. Many magicians will be familiar with the basic concept here, but there are still parts of this demonstration that they won't completely understand. It's a great piece that he does to perfection.

Next Richard proceeds to crush his audiences, magicians and laymen alike, by allowing spectators to thoroughly shuffle and cut the deck. Richard then retrieves the deck and immediately deals out a six or seven handed game of blackjack. He gets blackjack. Another round is dealt, and another blackjack appears. There isn't a single funny-looking move in the entire thing. The cards are simply where he needs them to be. He follows this by taking another thoroughly shuffled deck and dealing a game of seven-card stud. He offers to give the spectator the best hand. He succeeds. A set, a full-house, or a four of a kind appears like magic. Only it isn't magic, it's training. Instantly locating the four Aces in a shuffled deck with his wonderful twirl flourish follows the poker demonstration. The closer for the show

is an extended “Three-Card Monte” employing some classic dodges as well as a surprise ending. The act runs about 30 minutes, and even though he’s using some of the most difficult sleight-of-hand possible, he rarely makes mistakes.

There is an additional element to Richard’s act and indeed to his entire career that needs to be addressed. If you’ve heard of Richard before, you may be aware that he has a problem with his vision. If you’ve never heard of Richard before, then this may come as a bit of a shock to you. He’s blind, and has been for most of his life.

When Richard was nine years old, he began having trouble seeing the blackboard in school. Tests showed that he had a condition known as “Birdshot Retinoblastoma.” His sister has the same condition and like Richard, she hasn’t let it slow her down a bit. Today it can be cured if diagnosed and treated early enough. In the early 1960s, there was nothing that could be done.

Though the condition was incurable, Richard didn’t lose his sight all at once: it deteriorated slowly. By his middle teens, Richard’s vision was approximately 20/400. That means he had to be 20 feet away from something that a person with normal vision could have seen from 400 feet away. This is double what is generally considered the threshold for legal blindness. Still, he didn’t completely lose the ability to see playing cards, at least to some degree. Even into his late 30s Richard could place a card a few inches or so from his eye and still discern face-up cards from face-down, picture cards from number cards, and could tell Aces apart from other cards because they looked like a “big white blur.” Today, his vision has reached the point where he can see virtually nothing, except the occasional light and shadow. He can no longer determine face-up cards from face-down cards by sight, though he can usually do it by touch.

Although Richard has had to deal with what most people would consider a serious obstacle to success in a primarily visual art, he’s managed to develop a character and structure his act to work with what he can do, versus what he can’t do. Richard doesn’t think of his vision problem as a handicap. In fact, he despises the notion. He says it’s the best thing that ever happened to him. Without it, he may never have developed the sense of touch that uses to such fantastic effect in his act.

Anyone who has seen Richard perform knows that he never mentions his lack of vision before, during, or after his act. In fact, he’s gone to great lengths to structure his act in such a way that he doesn’t need to be able to see the values of the cards. If the audience is wrapped up in the performance (which is precisely what you want as a performer), Richard has found that they often have no idea that he can’t see, and are surprised if they find out later. Richard explains his desire to keep his blindness a non-issue. “Rene Lavand doesn’t come out and announce to his audience that he only has one arm, why should I mention my vision? I don’t want anyone to ever say, ‘He’s pretty good for a blind man.’”

Although Richard doesn’t bring up his vision to his audiences, in private he’s shared a number of stories that one would inevitably collect having lived without sight for so long. He tells the story of the day his friend took him to the driving range to hit a few golf balls. His friend got him all set up in his spot on the range, and Richard busied himself whacking away. At one point his friend left for a moment to help out another golfer and left Richard alone. Unknown to Richard, as he replaced each ball and lined up for another drive, he was slightly adjusting his stance a tiny bit counter-clockwise each time. Within a half-dozen strokes, he was launching his golf balls directly at the clubhouse. His friend returned just in time to save Richard from the wrath of the club manager.

Another story, perhaps the funniest, involves Richard singing a made-up song to his young

son Asa, while they were standing at adjacent urinals in the restroom of a restaurant. As he sang, Richard was looking over and down at where he assumed his son's head would have been. However, his son had already finished, and was standing behind him at the sink. Unknown to Richard, he was singing a song to a guy who had stepped up in Asa's place. Asa rescued him by saying, "Uh, Dad ... I'm over here. You're singing to a stranger."

In one of the scariest, Richard is looking out the window of an airplane that has just taken off. He can just barely make out a strange, yellowish glow coming from what appears to him to be the engine under the wing. At first he believes it to be a reflection from inside the cabin, or a perhaps a reflection from one of the landing or running lights of the aircraft. After trying for several minutes to determine what the light source is, and without having told anyone about what he's seeing, he hears the pilot come on the loudspeaker with this announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, we're sorry, but we have to turn around and go in for an emergency landing ... our number two engine is on fire!"

In another averted disaster, Richard walked up to a table at the Rueben E. Lee and casually moved a lit oil-lamp to a different part of the table. The only problem was, there was no table there. He nonchalantly said, "We'll just set this right here" and promptly dropped the burning lamp onto the floor. Thankfully a quick-thinking waiter scooped up the lamp and Richard went on with his show letting everyone at the table think it was simply part of the act.

The combined elements of his vision problem and the fact that he's chosen a particularly difficult branch of technique to specialize in has given Richard some interesting insights into how moves and sleights should be practiced. He's a firm believer in breaking a move down into its component parts. He believes that one should practice very slowly at first and analyze a move critically to find out exactly how it works before diving in.

Richard also suggests specializing, i.e., learning only a core move, or group of moves extremely well, before moving on to other sleights. For instance, instead of getting his tapes and trying to learn everything at once, choose something like the Bottom Deal and really spend some serious time with it. It's certainly okay to experiment with the myriad grips and pressures before settling in on a particular deal, but once you're past this initial point, break the deal down and examine it thoroughly. Constant practice, analysis, adjustment, and more practice is the key from then on. A word of caution, though: Richard is quick to point out that merely logging hours isn't enough. "Does practice make perfect?" he asks. "No! Perfect practice makes perfect. If you practice it wrong, it will be perfectly wrong. You have to analyze the move or effect until you understand it completely (even if you can't do it yet) and then work on it constantly until you can do it competently. Then continue to refine and improve forever." It is truly a continual process. To this day Richard still practices, still analyzes, still discovers, and still creates with exactly this sort of attention to detail and determination.

Richard's claims of up to 16 hour practice sessions may seem outlandish, until you look a little deeper at exactly what he's claiming and why he can practice for so long. First and foremost, Richard is a passionate person. He doesn't do anything halfway. Secondly, his vision limitations prevent him from being distracted by television, what's going on outside the car when he's traveling, or anything else that captures the visual attention of people like you and me. Consequently, he's *always* practicing. If he rides in a vehicle, he has a laptop practice board that is essentially a rigid close-up pad. He shuffles and stacks as he rides and talks. If he's walking or standing somewhere, he practices in the hands. Over and over again he deals Seconds and immediately replaces them in the middle of the deck.

Richard insists that the little ledge at the supermarket checkout line where most people sign their checks was actually designed for shuffle work. I'm inclined to agree.

Richard has even undergone two surgeries that involved him being completely unconscious during the procedure. Both times he asked the surgeons performing the operations if he could keep the cards with him while they put him under. They agreed. He only dropped a few cards during one of the procedures, the other time he didn't drop any, and they were still in his hand when he woke up in the recovery room. He's had plenty of practice sleeping with the cards. Richard says it isn't uncommon at all for him to fall asleep either in bed or in the car with cards in hand. His wife Kim reports that he'll sometimes be falling asleep with the cards in his hand yet he continues to occasionally cut and deal to himself while only half-awake.

It got to the point where Richard was even practicing in church, something that attracted strange looks from nearby worshippers. Now he refrains from overt cardwork in the pews, but says he can't resist practicing a few mucks now and again with the donation envelopes.

His philosophy on how to practice and his advocacy of attention to detail reflects the stance taken by S. W. Erdnase, the mysterious author of *The Expert at the Card Table*. *Expert*, and Marlo's *Seconds, Centers and Bottoms*, are the only books on card technique Richard has ever read. More specifically, he had someone read them to him. It's difficult to say how much these books influenced him. While noting a couple of exceptions when someone like Vernon or Miller would show him something, it's worth mentioning that all of his techniques, all of his touches, all of his insight into the dozens of moves and sleights that he knows have been born of his constant practice and experimentation. Of course, in 40 years of tinkering he's inadvertently *reinvented* other people's moves and ideas from time to time, but for the most part his ideas and moves are original with him.

Particularly interesting is a variation of Erdnase's Diagonal Palm Shift that Richard does to perfection. He wasn't really even aware of the stir he created one night at The Castle by performing it in front of a group of cardmen at Vernon's couch until it was pointed out to him that half-a-dozen guys were immediately attempting it after seeing him explain it. Richard's version is reminiscent of the method contributed by Dr. Daley in the added pages of the third edition of *Expert Card Technique*, but it is different enough to warrant inclusion in the magical record.

With all this practicing comes plenty of worn out playing cards. Richard has footage on one of his recent DVDs of boxes and boxes of discarded playing cards. At one point Kim told him he should open a used card lot, or build a house out of them. Having too many to merely build a house of cards, Richard decided to build his very own card castle. Richard's Castle weighs in at 825 lbs, breaks down into 8 sections, and took him four months to build, sometimes logging 12 to 16 hours a day on the project. At one point during the painting process, Richard inadvertently knocked over a can of black paint in his driveway, and stepped in it. He didn't realize this until Kim came out and said, "Richard, by any chance did you come into the house, go through the living room up to our bedroom, back down the hallway and out again?" Richard replied, "Yes, I did. Why?" "Oh, just wondering." Kim said, as she went off to clean the footprints out of the carpet.

Richard likes to make the point that while he's constantly practicing with cards, he rarely lets his practice devolve into mere "playing." His practice sessions are in fact quite structured. If seated where he can do shuffle work, he'll work on false deals for a pre-determined number of deals, then switch to working on tabled riffle shuffles. If he can only stand, he'll work solely on the false deals or palms for the most part.

Richard names the Second Deal as the move he's worked at the most, and it shows. Not only is his Second done with an unbelievably fine push-off, he does it better than perhaps anyone in the world. Also, his Second has an action that is unlike anything in print. How much new work can he have on a move that's well over 100 years old? The answer is plenty. Richard's Push-Off Second Deal has a smoothness and rhythm to it that gives it a superbly illusive quality. There's simply nothing else like it. There is a peculiar, but very effective sweeping action with the right (taking) thumb that really makes the deal work. Richard estimates he's dealt over 40 million Seconds in his life. Anyone interested in seeing a master at the Second Deal is advised to pick up a copy of *The Cheat* on DVD.

Richard is also an expert in the Bottom Deal. He deals primarily from mechanics' grip and uses an almost imperceptible loosening action with the left fingers (moving as a unit). This allows for a smoother extraction of the bottom card by the right fingers. His take is between the first and second fingers of the left hand, and his contacting finger is the second finger of his right hand. However, like most great bottom dealers, Richard can make adjustments to this if required. He can hold the deck a little bit higher, or a little bit deeper in the left hand. He can take from between the left second and third fingers if need be, and he can perform the actual extraction by making contact with any of his right fingers, even the little finger. Don't misunderstand; Richard doesn't change his regular Bottom Deal on a whim. These examples of grip and take variations have been included simply to show the ease with which he can get the card out of the cellar. It is the hallmark of a true expert to not be constrained by overly rigid technique.

Another deal Richard does to perfection is the Center Deal. While the debate will continue as to whether or not anyone has ever really used the Center under fire, Richard uses the move in his act every single time he performs. His technique is his own, but there are only so many ways to access a card in the middle of the deck and it appears to an educated observer of such things to be a Kennedy-esque deal. The fingers of the left hand squeeze the lower packet and the fingertips help to push the lower card of the upper packet out as the right fingers approach for the take. The key factors that separate the men from the boys here are the ability to minimize the disturbance to the front of the deck during the squeezing action (a quarter-inch gap opening then closing up front is to be avoided), and the speed and fluidity with which the left fingers establish, open/close, and maintain the break along the right edge of the deck. Richard incidentally, is one of the men.

While primarily known as an expert false dealer, Richard has also mastered dozens of varieties of false table shuffles. *The Cheat* shows about two dozen varieties of Push-Through and false cut combinations, all of them done wonderfully. A highlight of the DVD is an incredible false shuffle that allow the performer to bridge, and genuinely cascade the halves into each other, while still retaining enough of a brief to strip the packets out and reassemble the deck without a single card getting out of order. The bridging and cascading action may seem impossible to control when you first try it, but stick with the technique and it'll slowly begin to work for you.

Of all the techniques that Richard is conversant with, he says the Tabled Faro Shuffle is the one that's given him the most trouble over the years. For him, the difficulty doesn't lie in hitting the weave per se, but in verifying that every card is perfectly interlaced before the squaring action. He's structured a few of his false shuffles to utilize the Faro action, but without the need to hit a perfect weave every time.

Because of his unique abilities with playing cards, Richard has an agreement with the United States Playing Card Company, the largest manufacturer of playing cards in the

world. The Research and Development branch of USPCC sends Richard several dozen decks of cards every year and asks him to analyze the paper stock, finish, and cut. The head of R&D for USPCC says that he's even tried to fool Richard a few times by sending him several decks of old stock mixed in with a few new decks. Richard always manages to locate the newer cards, then provides his analysis and opinion of the new product.

Richard says the best paper, cut, and finish combination he's ever found in all the years he's been working with USPCC was in the Bee Q1104 run. This particular run of cards was produced for the 100th anniversary of the Bee brand, and was released in 1992. Although in most respects to the casual observer they appear to be nothing more than an ordinary deck of Bee cards, they have a certain intangible element to them that allows Richard to identify them almost instantly. You can open a deck of Q1104s alongside a deck from a year or two earlier or later than 1992, and Richard can tell them apart within moments, naturally *without* looking. Richard has asked USPCC what they changed for that run that makes them so ideal for card work, but they are unable to determine what they did differently. For now anyway, the secret to the Q1104 deck is a mystery.

It's almost inevitable that with his experience and abilities, Richard would eventually be propositioned to deal and cheat in private card games. It has happened more than once, and he still gets offers from time to time. He's been approached by people from all walks of life, but has never taken their offers. However, it has caused him some concern on a few occasions. He's had individuals with some pretty shady pasts offer him large sums of money to travel the world and cheat in high-stakes games. Most of these offers came when he was already financially secure, and fearing he might not return from one of those trips, he politely declined. The sums offered were enormous, but so was the potential danger. Richard relates a funny story about being told to come down to a private game and deal for the house. It was an offer to cheat of course. Richard declined, but did agree to visit the establishment and get a feel for the place. While he was there, on the very same night that he would have been dealing (and cheating) had he accepted, he heard a voice call out, "Richard! Is that you?" He turned around to find himself face to face with "Joey," a well-known mobster from the area and a man he'd performed for on several occasions at Joey's mansion. "Hey Richard, you're not dealing here are you?" the guy asked. "No ... just here to observe," Richard said, knowing he'd dodged a bullet that night.

While making it clear that he never accepted any of the offers to cheat in someone else's private game for profit, Richard admits that he has cheated at cards for money. It isn't something he's particularly proud of, but it's part of who he is and he doesn't deny it. Most of his experience comes from games for medium to moderate stakes, and involved business acquaintances, friends, and on many occasions, people that even knew him as "The Cheat!" Richard says he rarely if ever played no-limit poker, but often played pot-limit with \$500 buy-ins. In many games he would run up a strong hand, put a mild crimp in the bottom card, then pass for the cut and hope the player to his right hit the crimp. Another time, Richard was allowed to play as long as the deck remained flat on the table as he dealt. This demand came from the CEO of a massive chemical company who was convinced no one could cheat if the cards remained on the table. During the game, Richard would gather a set (three of a kind) as he discarded his hands during the other players' deals, keep them palmed during the cut, replace them after the cut, then shift the bottom six cards to the top *after* the cards were dealt. He performed this shift as he picked up the deck to deal, and then in an "Oops, excuse me" sort of moment, placed the deck back down for the draw. This allowed him to deal the draw with the first three cards, and usually left the three of a kind on top where he could utilize it for his own draw. If you're thinking this sounds like a risky

maneuver, you're right. But keep in mind these were all relatively soft games with non-professionals, and Richard was fooling around more than anything.

Considering the ridiculous number of hours he devotes to cards each week, it doesn't seem possible that Richard could have any time left over for anything other than practicing and performing. Somehow he's also found the time to become a 5th degree black belt in Wado-kai karate, and he holds multiple black belts in various other fighting styles. Richard has studied the martial arts for 35 years and has fought hundreds of full-contact fights. Footage from a few of these fights are shown on his DVD. Richard has fought against and alongside some of the biggest names in martial arts, like Chuck Norris. Richard once backed Chuck during an altercation that took place in Tijuana, Mexico in 1973. Richard was one of three fighters that came to Chuck's aid when he was confronted by five other fighters at once, all wanting a piece of him.

If you hadn't already known Richard fought in full-contact fights, then it might've just occurred to you to ask: How do you fight when you can't see? Richard's answer: "Carefully." Actually, at the time he was doing the bulk of his full-contact fighting, he couldn't see anything directly in front of him, but he still had residual vision to the left and right of his field of view. This fact, along with his ability to conceal his lack of frontal vision from his opponents until it was too late, enabled him to hold his own with some of the toughest fighters in the world. I once asked Richard how well the other fighters would have done against him if the lights had been turned out. He just smiled.

Richard had to keep himself in great shape for his fights, and he continues that to this day. He says he's almost never missed a workout for anything other than a serious injury or illness in 35 years. His workouts, like everything else he does, tend to be a bit on the extreme side. He once did 500 pushups in 12 minutes and 9 seconds, to try to equal the world record pace, which at that time was 1900 in one hour.

Richard also groups the reps and sets of his workouts like a deck of cards. Whereas most people perform sets of 8 to 10, Richard does sets of 13 until he gets to 52 before starting over. Finally, Richard often follows his workouts with a home-made post-workout shake made from protein powder, milk, and jalapeno peppers. His protocols seem to have worked; remember that suit he cheated his way into in 1975? It still fits. Richard's waist is the same size today that it was when he was 25 years old. As if we all needed another reason to envy the man.

In between the hours of martial arts practice, and the seemingly constant practice with cards, Richard also managed to set a world record for coin rolling. By rolling four sets of doubles, he gets eight coins at once racing across his knuckles. When he wants to show off, he can even get some of the coins moving forwards while others move backward over his hand. It's an unbelievable display of skill as well as a testament to the hundreds of hours he's spent practicing something that *doesn't* involve cards! One wonders how he tore himself away from the pasteboards long enough to become proficient at coin rolling, much less a world record holder.

When Richard isn't practicing with cards, or working out, or engaged in his lengthy martial arts training sessions, he relaxes by inventing games. Excruciatingly difficult games. One of them, *Batty*, is similar in concept to the old 'Tower of Hanoi' puzzle, but is much more difficult and elaborate. Batty comes in an 11-card version which can take anywhere from 1,034 to 2,047 moves to complete, and a whopping 14-card version that could take up to 8,188 to 16,376 moves to correctly solve. Of course those numbers assume you don't make any mistakes along the way. Just to challenge himself, Richard once did a 15-card version

of *Batty* that required a sequence of 32,752 correct moves. It took him over seven hours to unscramble the puzzle. If you get a chance to see Richard, be sure to ask him to demonstrate *Batty* for you. Watching Richard run through the rules and provide a brief demo of *Batty* is one of the most interesting things I've seen in a long time.

Another of Richard's games is *Texas Showdown*. *Texas Showdown* combines elements of poker, blackjack, and monopoly to make for a fast-paced game where money and property can change hands in the blink of an eye. An address where you can reach Richard if you're interested in purchasing *Batty* or *Texas Showdown* will appear at the end of this article.

Along with the games, Richard has also recently completed work on his first novel. The story involves a father and sons who have an opportunity to play poker against some of the greatest characters and cheaters from the old West (including S.W. Erdnase) in an effort to save the family farm. The novel isn't available yet, but Richard already has a deal with a publisher, and it should be released soon. An excerpt can be found on his website: [www.richardturner52.com](http://www.richardturner52.com).

As if all the above wasn't enough, Richard has been shark hunting, has flown in several different types of military fighter aircraft including P-51 Mustangs and AT-138s, collects antiques (his home is full of wonderful furniture dating as far back as the 1600s) and even has experience training people on the trapeze. In fact, when working with Bob Yerkes, the trainer for the Circus of the Stars television show, Richard took Jamie Lee Curtis for her first trapeze flight back before anyone knew who she was.

These days, Richard has left behind the trapeze, shark-fishing, full-contact fighting, and aerial combat maneuvers. He spends the majority of his time at home with his wife Kim, and his son Asa Spades. Yes, his son's name is Asa Spades Turner. Think there's a story there? You bet. Kim was thinking about possible names for their son when she came across the name Asa, as in King Asa from the Old Testament. As a joke she suggested the name to Richard saying, "We could name him Asa Spades!" Richard sat straight up in his chair. "That's it!" he said. "I was just joking," Kim replied. Well, as the Professor might've said, "Too late!" Asa Spades Turner was born on November 26th, 1995. Often people are horrified at the names their parents chose for them. Not Asa. He loves his name, and works hard at living up to it. Richard is passing on his knowledge with the cards, and Asa is shaping up to be a top-notch cardman. Of course, with a name like Asa Spades, it won't come as much of a surprise if he has trouble finding a game when he gets older.

Kim Turner is more than just Richard's wife, she's also his performing partner. Her role is that of a well-meaning but slow-witted schoolmarm, "Miss Guided." As Miss Guided, Kim has performed alongside Richard for hundreds of schools and companies. She's interviewed and performed alongside former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and has brought several CEOs to their knees with her deadpan punch lines.

Originally from Montana, Kim was a nationally ranked debater in college. Her degrees are in Speech Communications and English Literature. She is also a black belt in karate and has been awarded Grand Champion titles in every tournament she has entered. When she isn't performing as Miss Guided, Kim Turner is the Development Services Director for Universal City, Texas. In this capacity she's coordinated weapons of mass destruction exercises with surrounding cities in the San Antonio area as well as the major military installations in the vicinity. Richard reports that even with her busy work schedule, Kim can still be convinced to step into the spotlight as Miss Guided, provided the price is right or he vacuums the floor once in a while.

Although in semi-retirement from the multiple shows that he used to perform seven days a

week, Richard manages to keep busy. He still travels and performs, but now does it only when he wants to. He tries to get in one or two weeks a year at The Magic Castle, still does the occasional private show for the Buckhorn Saloon in San Antonio, and he's also more open to doing magic conventions and lectures these days. This relaxed schedule has allowed him time to produce four new DVDs in addition his 1990 videotape *The Cheat*, which was released last year. His new DVDs focus on the Bottom Deal, fans and flourishes, his "Double-Signed Card Routine," and the latest, just released, is titled *Shifts, Hops, and Magic Passes*. All of these are available on his website. He's also in the process of producing DVDs on the Second and Center Deal, and other card table artifice techniques. These new DVDs should be available sometime later this year.

Along with the book deal, the new DVDs, the continuing performance schedule, and the never-ending practice, Richard still finds time to explore new things. Retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Doug Gorman is writing Richard's biography as an inspirational story from the slant of the business standpoint of what it takes to become world class despite the many obstacles he's encountered. He continues to meet with and learn from other cardmen, is in talks for a television show about his life story, and is constantly on the lookout for further adventures. He turns 53 this year, a number that is pretty significant to him considering his chosen profession. What will he accomplish in the next 53 years? The answer should be obvious for a guy like Richard Turner. Anything he sets his mind to.