



RUSTY AMMERMAN - ENTERTAINER

A Revealing Look at the Maniac behind the Magic

For most adults, the chance of realizing a childhood fantasy is so elusive, it seems like magic.

For Rusty Ammerman, it IS magic.

The comic and magician performed this spring at The World Famous Magic Castle in Hollywood, CA, fulfilling a dream he first put on paper back in 1984 when a reporter for his hometown Indiana newspaper asked him his long-term goal in the entertainment industry.

“My answer was quick and unequivocal,” he says. “I said I want to be on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, and I want to perform at The Magic Castle in Hollywood.”

Carson’s Tonight Show is long gone, but The Magic Castle remains a Mecca for magicians. It is to magic, Rusty says, what the Grand Ole Opry is to country music.

“It is the epicenter of magic in the known universe,” Rusty, not given to hyperbole, stresses.

So how did he get there?

It’s magic, Rusty-style.

Over a quarter-century and thousands of performances, Rusty has developed his “Dimension of Illusion,” creating a personal mix of mystery and maniacal mayhem that has delighted audiences in 43 states and nine countries, including two overseas military tours.

By its nature, magic is a mystical craft, its secrets zealously guarded by its prestidigitators. Rusty, with a face as open and honest as a golden retriever, seems at first to be an awkward fit with the dark art. Happy magician seems like an oxymoron after all.

Rusty shows the two can coexist quite well.

“Magic has nothing to do with fooling people, it’s all about entertainment,” he explains. “You can make the Eiffel Tower disappear in front of 10 priests, all swearing on their rosaries that it’s gone, only to have it reappear on the moon, verified by NASA, and people will still know it’s a trick ...You can’t fool anyone ever, not really.”

Instead, he says, the trick is in making the audience enjoy the illusion, and suspend their disbelief.

“I remember the first time I did a trick and people went ‘Wow!’” Rusty says. “It was like a drug. I was hooked.”

Rusty cut his entertainment teeth in front of his bedroom mirror, acting out scenes from classic television - The Twilight Zone, Carol Burnett, Gilligan’s Island, Jack Benny, Steve Martin, and the like.

At age 16 he spent a summer vacation working at one of those old-time Wild West amusement parks, doing everything from staging gun fights and stunts to playing comic characters in the can-can show. There was already a magician on staff, but Rusty thought he could do better.

“I remember thinking that the tricks were good but he didn’t bring a lot of personality to the magic,” he says. “Like most 16 year olds, I thought I could do better...That was the start of everything.”

He dug around in old magic kits, melding the best tricks into one show, and soon hit the birthday party circuit at 10 bucks a pop. Still too young to have a driver’s license, his girlfriend took the wheel instead.

“Now THAT was embarrassing,” he says.

But not embarrassing enough to make him quit. Soon Rusty transitioned from kids’ birthday parties to adult dinner theater, with only a few detours into other entertainment venues such as deejaying, along the way.

Then, his epiphany.

“At some point, I stopped doing tricks and started doing shows,” he says. “I realized that the ability to do a magic trick doesn’t make you a magician, and being a magician certainly doesn’t make you an entertainer. It’s all about how you make your audience feel.”

Rusty currently hones his legerdemain at dinner theaters, amusement parks, casinos, universities and trade shows across the United States. He has presented thousands of elementary, middle and high school programs, most recently completing a 22,500 mile cross-country tour that took him through 14 states.

The Magic Castle has already promised a return date.

A genuinely nice guy, hard work and talent allow him to do exactly what he wanted as a youngster standing in front of that mirror - perform and entertain.

Nothing magic about it.