

## **RING'S HISTORY AND HISTORIANS**

As a Ring matures it is natural for the membership to reflect upon the past and wish to remember a Ring's successes and highlights. Individual members too want to acknowledge those who have contributed to the Ring's success and impacted upon their personal enjoyment of magic as well as their development in the magical arts. Also they wish to preserve the historical materials of their magic life and of Ring members, who may have preceded them, and who contributed significantly to the enrichment of the magical arts in their home city or perhaps on regional, national or even international level.

This is what the Ring's history and the role of its Historian are about. They record and recognize the significant Ring events and contributions of individuals of the Ring for the enjoyment of the current and future membership. They also preserve key documents that may be critical to activities and function of the Ring.

Obviously newer and/or smaller Rings have less information to record than older and/or larger ones. However, absolutely every Ring will have events and activities of people that they will wish to record. There are also documents that should be carefully preserved for both administrative and historical purposes. The question is not should a Ring have a Historian, but how can it achieve the best historical files and documentation no matter its size or age.

### **GETTING STARTED**

One critical element to recording the Ring's history is to find a Ring Historian who truly is interested in preserving the memorabilia of the Ring and documenting and logging key events and materials. However, the Ring membership and its leadership should also be committed to maintaining the Ring's history and actively assist the Historians in their role. Most importantly

everyone must recognize that recording of the Ring's history is most easily done at the time the key events are occurring and not months or years later. **Save, record and collect now!**

## **THE ROLE OF THE HISTORIAN**

The Historian should be proactive in developing, maintaining, inventorying and safeguarding the historical archives and critical permanent records of the Ring. This material will include copies of the newsletters, show and banquet information, scrapbook(s) and other memorabilia that record the Ring activities, leadership and member recognition. The Historian's office will be the repository of such items as: the Ring charter; articles of incorporation; tax information; Constitution and By-laws; Policy Manual; Ring logos and other artwork; other material deemed desirable either as a matter of historical interest or that which may be useful long term in administration of the Ring activities. On appropriate occasions (Ring anniversaries, banquets, etc.) the Historian should display the Ring's historical information and memorabilia to illustrate and share the magical heritage of the Ring. Also the Historian can keep the Ring's history alive by publishing articles in the newsletter.

## **WHERE TO FIND MATERIAL**

Most magicians have their own magic scrapbooks and these serve as an excellent source for the Historian to accumulate pictures and articles of these magicians and the Ring's activities. They often have programs of Ring shows, banquets and other activities with which they have been involved. They will also have their publicity materials. If extra original articles, programs, etc. are available use these. If they are not, photocopies can be made at low cost and used for the Ring's records and scrapbook. For Rings in metropolitan areas, the city newspaper files may be accessible for both photos and news items of magicians and magical events.

The Ring's newsletters, flyers and *The Linking Ring*, particularly the Ring Reports section are valuable sources of when things happened, who officers or the winners of Ring contests were, etc. For nationally or internationally known Ring magicians check other magic magazines as well. Call on more senior members for information and audio or video tape their recollections of activities and of Ring members. The Ring's minutes, if preserved, also are a treasury of material but usually it takes some effort to find the important historical material in them.

Once the history of the Ring is started to be recorded, it becomes easier. Then the Ring's magicians will want to be in it and automatically, with maybe only an infrequent reminder, will send their promotional and publicity information to the Historian.

### **IMPORTANT ITEMS TO SAVE AND RECORDING METHODS**

The list of memorabilia and files that can be saved is quite extensive. There are also critical documents such as the Ring Charter and government articles of incorporation that should be carefully maintained (back up copies of these should also be held by Secretary). The limit on material is usually that of storage space, and time and effort, which the Historian has to devote to the recording of the Ring's history. The tables that follow list the most important items to be preserved.

A Ring scrapbook is the most obvious method of saving many of the historical files and lends itself well to being reviewed and enjoyed by the Ring members, their families and friends. Oversize ones work well when dealing with publicity materials and newspaper articles but are sometimes difficult to find. Encasing the materials in plastic sleeves and covers will help protect them from deterioration. Some Rings have small books and brochures documenting their history. Retain both the originals and updated versions.

Rings can also use audio and video taping as the way to capture their history. Videotapes of members performing in personal and club shows add much to its historical profile. Don't forget to search for member performances on older home, eight and sixteen millimeter movies. Video taped interviews of senior members describing the development of the Ring, and/or their experiences in magic, contribute much to helping personalize the magical arts and the Ring's history.

With today's use of personal computers as both databases and vehicles of communication, don't neglect the collection of materials that might be only stored or conveyed electronically. For example, hard copy and/or disk storage of web pages of the Ring or members will be of historical interest. Compact Disc (CDs) recording will be an increasingly favored method for storing Ring records, photographs and other information. It affords a way of storing large amounts of material at multiple and secure sites.

Further, more communications such as newsletters may be stored and/or distributed only electronically. The full direction of this type of distribution is not completely clear; however, it is clear that this material will be an interesting and also an increasingly important part of a Ring's history that needs to be preserved. Each Ring will have to decide how best to do this.

### **KEY RING RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ring Charter</li> <li>• Constitution and Bylaws</li> <li>• Government Tax Status and Filings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles Of Incorporation</li> <li>• Policy Manual</li> <li>• Ring Board or Meeting Minutes</li> </ul>
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## ITEMS TO BE COLLECTED FOR RING'S MEMORABILIA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Newsletters</li><li>• Chronological List of Contest Winners with Photos</li><li>• Chronological List of Officers and Board Members</li><li>• Members' Articles or Articles about the Ring in <i>The Linking Ring</i> or other Magic Magazines</li><li>• Publicity Photos and Articles about Individual Members</li><li>• Biographical Sketch of Each Member with Updates on Regular Basis</li><li>• Video or Audio Tapes of Senior Member Remembrances</li><li>• Electronic Records of Membership Information, Web Pages and Publications</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership Directories</li><li>• Chronological List of Service and Achievement Winners with Photos</li><li>• Ring Show and Banquet Programs, Photos and their Publicity</li><li>• Cover Issues of Ring Members from Magic Magazines</li><li>• Convention Materials Featuring Ring Members</li><li>• Videotapes &amp; movies of member performances or Ring shows and events.</li><li>• Senior or Deceased Members scrapbooks and collections</li><li>• Hard Copy of electronic Web pages and publications</li></ul>
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## **SAVING AND STORING MEMORABILIA AND RECORDS**

Care should be given to the storage and protection of the material under the Historian's control. Extremes in heat and moisture are the enemies of photos and newspapers and other paper items that often make up the bulk of the Ring's historical files. Newspapers, programs and photos can be laminated in plastic or scanned into a computer data base as a means of preserving them and/or their information. Proper storage and moisture conditions as well as the gentle handling of fragile material are most critical to these materials' survival. When items become too fragile, retire them to being observed only and never touched (replace with photocopies as needed).

Documentation and recording of items in the Ring's historical file is important too. Sometimes in the transfer of material from one Historian to the next, items are forgotten. They may have become commingled with the Historian's personal materials or misplaced. The maintenance of a log of Ring historical material will help eliminate some of these inherent problems

## **HISTORICAL RECOGNITIONS AND DISPLAYS**

A Ring's historical material should not be hidden away; rather it should be displayed proudly on special occasions. Some Ring's display their material at the President's or the Installation Banquet. Some of the larger and older Rings hold special events that recognize their rich magical heritage. Charter anniversaries too, are an excellent time to recognize the growth of the Ring by displaying and sharing its past highlights. It also is an appropriate time to honor living and deceased members who have contributed significantly to the Ring's achievements and growth as well as enhancement of the magical arts for all.

## **ELEVEN STEPS TO RESURRECTING & PRESERVING THE PAST**

For Rings that have not documented their historical heritage, here are steps to take to initiate a program of sourcing and preserving the past:

1. Review with and gain commitment from the Ring Officers that it is important to preserve the Ring's history and commit funds for scrap books, file boxes, etc., to store and protect materials.
2. Appoint a Historian who is not only committed to preserving the past but really enjoys doing so.
3. Have the Historian develop a priority "needed list." of Ring and member materials. The primary list may include: back issues of all newsletters, banquet and show programs, articles and publicity about the Ring and its members. A second priority list might include other items from the Ring Memorabilia table.
4. Obtain copies or originals of the Ring Charter, letters of incorporation, tax basis and other administrative documents.
5. Review and build enthusiasm for the concept of recording the Rings magical heritage in the Ring's newsletter and at meetings. Ask Ring members to help fill out the Historian's "Needed list." Acknowledge individuals' contributions when they are made in the newsletter and in meetings. Publish in the newsletter member profiles and older or current photos of Ring members to keep interest high. Also use contests in the newsletter, for example, to identify senior magicians from an early photo, stage name, act characteristics, etc., to expose the membership to the Ring history and stimulate interest in it.
6. Initiate audio taping (convert to hard copy as time permits) of the members' biographies and interests in magic. The Historian or other volunteer can complete a few interviews prior to or after each meeting. At the interview ask member for duplicates and/or copies of their publicity and promotional material, Ring show and banquet

programs and other memorabilia that they might have. Follow up with members until material is received.

7. Ask senior members if they will donate their personal scrapbooks and/or some of their Ring and personal memorabilia now or posthumously. Document and confirm the donations to be given posthumously.

8. Develop chronological lists of all officers, winners of Ring contests and major recognition awards as well members who received regional, national or international awards or served as a regional or international officer of the IBM or other magic organizations.

9. Continue updating member (and add new member's) profiles on audio/video tapes; add Ring and member publicity items and achievements as they occur.

10. Develop and maintain an inventory of the Ring's historical documents and memorabilia.

11. Proudly display on appropriate occasions the Ring's magical heritage including scrapbooks, members' publicity pictures and more. Promote it too in newsletters and at meetings. Let your imagination be your guide.

## CONCLUSION

If a Ring has no Historian now is the time to appoint one and to start to collect and document its history and assure the preservation of critical Ring documents. If there already is a Historian then review items listed in the tables to see if the materials being preserved are as complete or up to date as the Ring would hope. **Acting promptly in the present, to save the past for the future, will create an excellent historical file that will be thoroughly enjoyed by current and future generations of Ring members.**