

# INTERVAL MAGIC

## Magical Interval: Franklin Park teen mastering tricks of trade

Ed Blazina, *The Pittsburgh Press*

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Donald J. Stetzer/The Pittsburgh Press

Tom Interval has a burning desire to be a successful magician

## Magical Interval

### Franklin Park teen mastering tricks of trade

By Ed Blazina

The Pittsburgh Press

Tom Interval's thick, brown hair hanging over dark, bushy eyebrows creates an air of mystery.

Interval, 18, has mastered more than the look of a magician. The Franklin Park resident was recently named magician of the year by the Pittsburgh chapter of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Interval said his fascination with magic began when he received a magic kit on his sixth birthday. He started performing in front of audiences when he was 14 and plans to spend the next year building his reputation as a sleight-of-hand artist before attending college.

His career will get a boost Dec. 2 when he becomes a wandering magician at North Hills Village Mall in Ross to promote the shopping center's holiday theme, "The Magic of Christmas." Interval will work five days a week through Christmas Eve.

**"Most people think it's a hobby... The public doesn't put a great magician in the same class as a great violinist."**

— Tom Interval

Interval specializes in close-up magic — the now-you-see-it, now-you-don't art that produces coins behind ears and changes the face of a playing card before a person's eyes. His ability to fool the most wary observer was nurtured by six hours of daily practice during the past 10 years.

"Anyone can go in a magic shop, buy a magic instrument and perform," Interval said while shuffling a deck of cards at the dining-room table in his

home.

"I think it's important to be able to do a close-up trick. It's more challenging because the audience is right there watching everything you do."

Interval said working at the shopping center will give him a chance to test new tricks in front of an audience before putting them in his act.

Interval's version of a magic shop is his bedroom, where bird cages with doves line one wall opposite two sets of shelves filled with books on magic and magicians. The walls are covered with posters proclaiming the mystical feats of "Carter the Mysterious," "The Great Dante" and "Chung Ling Soo."

On his desk is a small mirror, the tool that has helped him perfect his craft. Interval has spent numerous hours in front of the mirror, checking to make sure his hands are in the right position so he doesn't give away the secret to a trick.

"There's a little natural ability involved in magic, but it's also a lot of long, tedious hours. You try to get

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as many ways to perform an illusion as you can.

"I've stayed up all night working on something, but if you enjoy what you're doing, it's not as much work as it seems."

Interval's father, Jerry, knows his son is working long hours by the snap of a deck of cards. "Sometimes we wake up at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and we hear that. The only way you can get him to stop is to take away the cards. I still don't know how he does those tricks."

Most tricks are done through misdirection — using the audience's attention to the obvious to divert it away from the source of the trick.

"Misdirection is the basis of magic," said Interval, who graduated this year from North Allegheny High School. "You can do a lot of different things to divert the audience's attention."

Most of Interval's performances are at birthday parties, banquets and private parties. He said it is easier to perform for adults because they have preconceived ideas that the magician can use to his advantage.

"Since adults are more intelligent, they try to figure out more difficult methods to perform the trick and ignore the simplest things. You can fool a scientist easier than you can fool your next-door neighbor because the scientist tries to find a scientific reason why something happens."

Although audiences enjoy magic acts and it is a universal form of entertainment, Interval said the public doesn't consider it a form of art.

"I don't think magic gets as much attention as it deserves. Most people think it's a hobby and many people practice it that way. The public doesn't put a great magician in the same class as a great violinist."

Interval won the magician of the year title over 44 other members of the local International Brotherhood of Magicians. The chapter meets monthly and holds a quarterly competition among members. To qualify for the yearly competition, members must win one quarterly title and appear in at least one other contest.

Interval said his showing in the competition represents the progress he has made since joining the organization four years ago.

"I felt out of place when I joined because I was the youngest member. The more I performed, the more comfortable I got."

"Performing before an audience of magicians is a nerve-racking experience. If you can perform in front of your peers, you can perform anywhere."

Interval would like to perform elaborate stage shows and become as famous as David Copperfield or Doug Henning, but he realizes he hasn't reached their level yet.

"You have to look at it objectively. You have to realize you have a long, long way to go."

*Guide to*