



# **Gregory Wilson's** **3 To Get** **Ready**

**3 Hand-Picked Routines That Will Make YOU**  
**The Coolest Person In The Room!**

# SWEET NOTHINGS

The magician opens a packet of sugar and pours it into his closed fist. A wrapped straw is then waved like a wand over the closed fist, and every last grain vanishes. The straw paper is then torn open at one end, and the missing sugar is poured onto the stunned spectator's helping hand.

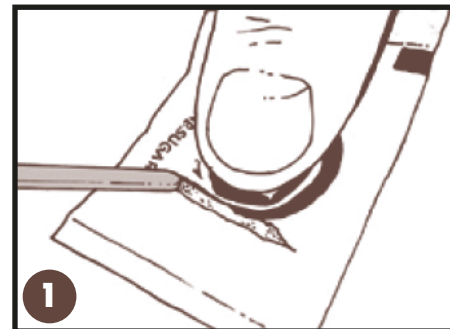
**REQUIREMENTS:** You need three packets of sugar, a straw, a wooden stir stick, and a modicum of chutzpa.

**PREPARATION:** Take the wrapped straw and hold it vertically in your left hand. You do not want to tear open lower end of the wrapper. Instead, using your right hand, gently slide the thin paper casing downward so that the straw gingerly pushes through the seal at the top. It's even easier if you squeeze the end of the straw to form a wedge to work its way through the end of the paper in one thin area.

Again, do not let the straw puncture the opposite end. Take your time. After a bit of experimentation, you will figure out how to quickly and efficiently execute this preparation. It can be done at the prep bar in just a few moments time.

Pour the contents of one of the sugar packets into

the open end of the straw. Then take the other sugar packet and shake all of the sugar to one end. Using one end of the stir stick as a probe, gently rip a slit across one side of the packet (Figure 1).



## ...3 To Get Ready

If you bunch up the sugar to one end first, it will act as a cushion or backstop to prevent the stir stick from penetrating the opposite side of the packet. Do not worry about making the slit knife-like; it should be ragged anyway.

Afterwards, use the stir stick to widen the slit-opening and then pour this second packet of granules, except for a scant few, into the straw until it's full.

Finally, carefully reseal the straw with a slight fold so that it looks normal and unprepared. All that remains is to bring the prepared straw and sugar packet to the table with another, unprepared, sugar packet. If you're at a restaurant or diner that has sugar at the table, you can even sneak the prepared packet into the middle of the sugar bowl at an opportune moment.

**PERFORMANCE:** Gather the appropriate props and place the prepared straw on the table.

Pick up the two sugar packets, one full and the other empty, with the empty one toward yourself. Shake them both together, as if settling the granules to one end of the packet, while you say, "Here, do as I do. Take one and give it a good shake." Hand the full packet to the spectator.

When he shakes the full packet, you shake your empty packet close enough to his so it's impossible to discern that the sound of one packet is covering for both.

Next, you seem to change your mind in midstream. You say, "It's easier to follow just one of these, so let's focus on this one." Ask him to place his packet on the table.

## Sweet Nothings

Hold your prepared packet with the "clean" side facing the spectator. Like opening a LePaul-gaffed envelope, rip the packet so the track of the tearing aligns with the secret tear at the back end. "Watch closely. Don't look away. Don't get distracted. I repeat, don't look away."

Take a quick moment to squeeze and bow the sides of the remaining packet with your left thumb and fingers to make it look more plump and full. Hold the packet in your right hand, in preparation to pour its apparent contents into your other hand. Make a loose fist with your left hand. "Are you watching closely? Do not look away."

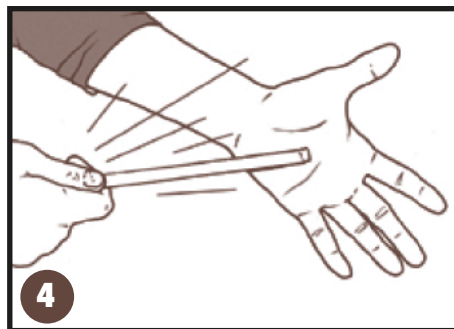
Invert the sugar packet and place the opening into the top of your fist (Figure 2). If you like, and I think you will, have the spectator hold an upturned hand below your fist to preclude the notion that you simply and secretly dropped the granules on the floor.



There are two ways to really sell the illusion that you have indeed poured sugar into your first. Audio: If you slightly scrape, with an up and down motion, the sides of the packet against the inside of your closed fist, it really sounds like sugar pouring. Visual: Allow the scant number of granules to openly fall onto the top of your fist; then casually brush them away.

## ...3 To Get Ready

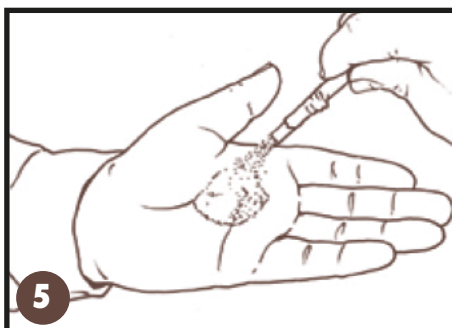
Toss the empty packet onto the spectator's outstretched hand, which is still below your clenched fist.



Pick up and pinch the straw at the prepared end and wave it over your fist as though you were waving a wand. To reveal the vanish, simultaneously open your hand as you lightly strike your flattened

palm with the straw – à la Williamson's Striking Vanish (Figure 3).

All that remains is to tear open the end of the straw you had previously unsealed and pour the missing sugar into the spectator's happy hand (Figure 4).



**THE LAST DROP:** This empty sugar-packet stunt is the brainchild of Greg's long-time friend Brad Stine. Greg originally published it as Vanish 5,000 in two other places, without this final straw business. First, in *The Art of Astonishment* (1996) and *Magic for Dummies* (1998). Also, a similar trick using paper matches instead of sugar was devised and published by Joel Givens. It was released after the Stine-Wilson version was established.

Each and every Coffeehouse Conjuring effect was co-created with the Greg's "Brews Brother", David Gripenwaldt.

## Sweet Nothings

Finally, it's worth noting that this plays much bigger than it might seem from its simplicity. You are so far ahead of the audience when you begin that any laypeople will find it impossible to reconstruct the solution. And magicians, for that matter, are badly fooled by the opening Vanish 5,000 sequence.

Another vanish can be of a scientific nature by swaying the audience to think that the sugar was absorbed through the sides of the straw and its sleeve, instead of instantly with the magic wand method. After "pouring the sugar" into your fist, pick up and place the middle of the straw onto the apparent pile of sugar in your now partially opened fist. Rub your fingers around in a massage-like motion, open your hand to show that the sugar is gone. Give some kind of false explanation, open the prepared end, pour the contents onto their hand and say something pseudo-scientifically smart.

Since people have no idea where you are going, the disappearance and reappearance comes as a total surprise. And the reaction is way out of proportion to how easy it is to accomplish.

We like.







In terms of dollars per second, it costs more to produce a big budget thirty-second TV commercial than it does an average priced feature-length film. And that's just the production costs! For actual airtime during primetime (7–9 p.m.), the average cost for a thirty-second commercial is about \$127,000. Wednesday night on NBC is \$64,000 and \$503,000 on FOX! That's the equivalent of Charlie Sheen's monthly bar tab and the Kardashians' weekly Botox treatments!

The point of this mathematical extrapolation is to impress upon you the importance of time. In the case of Fox, it's worth about \$16,766 per second! If we were to think of our presentations with equal time value and monetary significance, we would become master editors and measure our words more carefully and critically.

A film has about 90–120 minutes to entertain and move you. But a commercial only has 30–60 seconds to entertain and influence you. Every second counts. And because they can't afford to waste words, they had better choose the right and relevant ones.

A television or radio commercial must cut through the clutter, seize your attention, describe a product, inspire your interest, and push your hot buttons for a desired consumer reaction – all in a very limited span of time. If you think thirty seconds is not enough time to accomplish that, I recommend reading *How to Get Your Point Across in 30 Seconds or Less*. Reading the book will obviously take longer than thirty seconds, but it's definitely worth the effort.

Media research has revealed that thirty seconds is the attention span of the average audience.

## ...3 To Get Ready

## Defaced

Our listening and viewing lives are measured in microwave time frames. When it comes to selling or conveying something, this duration is obviously just a guideline. It doesn't matter if you have three minutes or three hours to get your point across, the heart of the matter should take no more than thirty seconds. The rest is preparation or follow-through.

If you think about it, a magic presentation is just like a sales pitch. Our job is to sell the unbelievable, and we often do that in multiple phases, like a late-night TV commercial: "The card comes to the top — but wait, there's more! The coin goes across — but that's just the beginning! And if you think that's amazing, check this out..."

Respecting and applying the thirty-second rule works remarkably well in sales and in magic: a good salesman/performer knows his customer/audience before he begins his pitch/performance. He also knows the benefits/phases of his product/trick and how to work his angle/magic before he asks for the sale/applause.

So, the opening moments of an advertisement or astonishment are crucial. Those first five seconds inform the viewer or listener whether or not you're worth a further investment of time. That's why we have to know exactly what we're going to do and say in those precious prefatory seconds. If we fumble with our hands or stumble with our words, we'll lose momentum and diminish the dynamic effect on the audience. And once we've gained people's full attention, we must keep their interest all the way through to the big finish.

Speaking of which, this currency quickie has all the components of a good sales pitch: an intrigu-

ing beginning, an attention-sustaining middle, and a surprising finale — all wrapped in a fast and fun storyline. Plus, it's impromptu! The effect and method belong to Rick Johnsson, who called the routine Dining On Dollars. What I've added is a new handling and playful presentation.

And best of all, it's yours today, absolutely free! While supplies last. Limited time offer. Operators are standing by.

**EFFECT:** You borrow a \$1 bill, fold it in half, and clearly tear Washington from the center. With a snap of the bill, this gaping hole is fully restored, and the bill is returned to the suitably stunned spectator.

**SETUP:** You need a single US \$1 bill in fairly good shape — not new and crisp, but also not dirty and wilted. Simply fold it into eighths and place it into a convenient pocket before you start. This is the duplicate that gets switched in at the end of the routine.

**PERFORMANCE:** Borrow a one-dollar bill that fairly matches the pre-folded one in your pocket. Start by holding it horizontally positioned, with the portrait side of the bill facing you, and the opposite side facing the spectator.

"You look at bills all day, every day, but how closely do you really look? I'm going to put you to the test, so take a mental snapshot!" Turn the bill around so the spectator can momentarily look at the portrait side (Figure 1). Hold the bill in this position for a few seconds.

"Got it? Okay." Flip the bill around to its original position.



"I'm going to ask you three questions. If you get at least one of them correct, I'll give you back your bill. Does that sound fair?" When they inevitably balk, you playfully explain: "That's the only deal on the table right now; I'd play along."

After glancing down at the front of the bill, look at the spectator and say, "The first question is, without looking, who is the president?" The patter line here is important. Most spectators will assume that you want them to name the president on the bill, especially when you emphasize "without looking." When they say "Washington," you immediately reply, "Oh, I'm sorry. It's actually Obama! What were you thinking? Where have you been the last few years? Read the paper much? You need to get out more often. But don't feel bad; you were only off by 43 presidents." I don't use all of those lines. I'm just giving you a menu of choices.

Permit the spectator to recover and then say, "Here's the second question. This one is easier." Turn the bill around again for another momentary glimpse and say, "Take another look."

Turn the bill back to the original position and then ask, "On this side of the bill, how many times does Washington appear?" Most people will say "Once," to which you reply: "Actually, it's three. Once in portrait and twice in print. Turn over the bill so you can point out the three Washingtons. "The obvious one here." Point to his face. "Plus it says "Washington" under his picture, so he knows who he is. And "Washington DC" to the side, so he knows where he lives."

Or, after you ask "How many times does Washington appear on the bill?"...You can be consistently smart-alecky by responding succinctly, "Every time!"

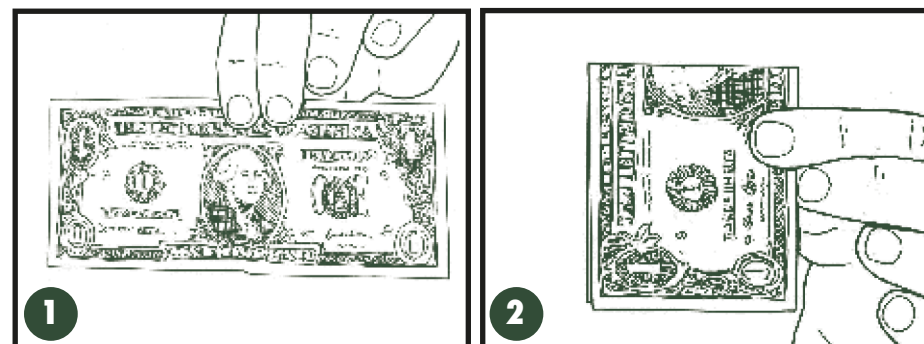
At this moment, everyone realizes that you're a bona fide wise guy, but they don't mind because:

1) They're having fun, and 2) They're already thinking of someone they can fool with these same trick questions.

The focus so far has been on verbal hocus-pocus, so your participant is not on the lookout for any physical sleight of hand. This takes the heat off the following move and makes it virtually undetectable.

Hold the bill with the portrait side facing the spectator, crease it in half (mountain fold) and rotate it 90 degrees, so the crease is at the top and the loose ends are lowermost, with the green seal facing you (Figure 2).

These next ripping actions should be casual and inconspicuous, with an almost absentminded matter-of-fact attitude. "I've got one last question for you, so pay close attention..." You are focused on what you are saying to the spectator rather than



## ...3 To Get Ready

what you are doing with the bill. Don't worry. The spectator will notice that you are wilfully destroying real currency!

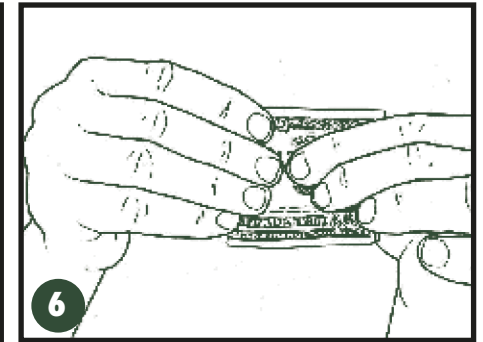
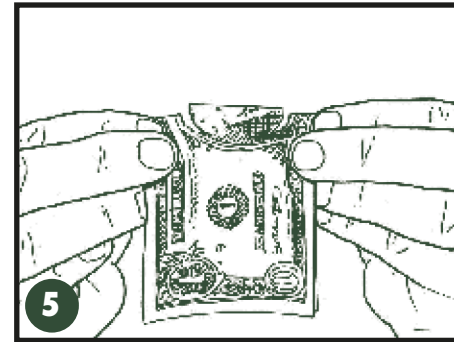
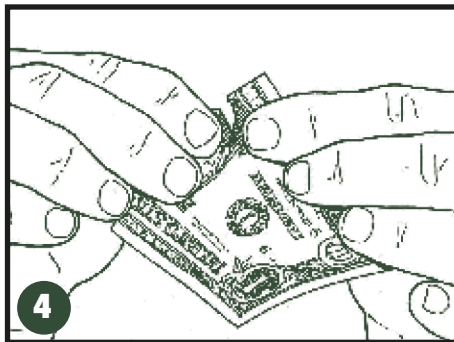
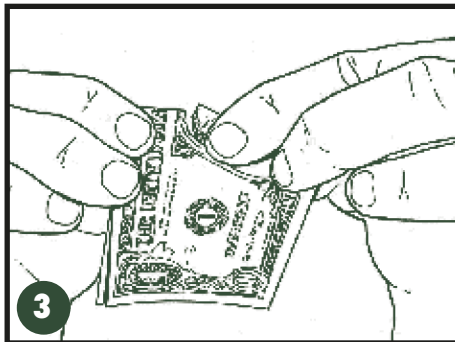
The first downward tear you make is at the top of Washington's head (to your right), as shown in Figure 3. The second downward tear is at the bottom of the portrait (to your left), as shown in Figure 4.

At this point, you have made two tears that are parallel to each other. Figure 5 is not part of your performance. It's only included here as a teaching tool to illustrate the angle and length of the tears. Again, you don't accentuate this action as your hands are actually covering as you're tearing.

It appears as though your next step will be to rip out the center of the bill – the entire portrait of George Washington. All that is required is one more tear. The final tear, however, will be faked.

Rotate the folded bill 90 degrees to the right, so the crease is to your right. Your right fingers cover the exposed half of the portrait as you ostensibly prepare for the final rip (Figure 6).

When the center section is covered by your fingers, your right thumb immediately folds the portrait section inward, to your left. This is done secretly in preparation for the faked rip. Follow up your patter by saying, "Since Washington is giving you



trouble, I'll get rid of him altogether." Here, you press your right thumbnail against the folded part of the bill as you pretend to rip the portrait section to the right (Figure 7). This scraping sound is a very convincing audio illusion. Immediately put the apparent "piece" in the same pocket as the prepared/folded bill, as you say, "get rid of him altogether."

(Note: Your left-hand grip on the bill is important. Do not hold it as shown in Figure 7. The correct way is to hold it with your left forefinger partially extended over the oval tear-out as in Figure 8. This finger position hides the telltale fold or crease from the hyper-observant.)

After you apparently pocket the portrait, say "The last question is – and it's a trick question: When is a hole not a hole?"

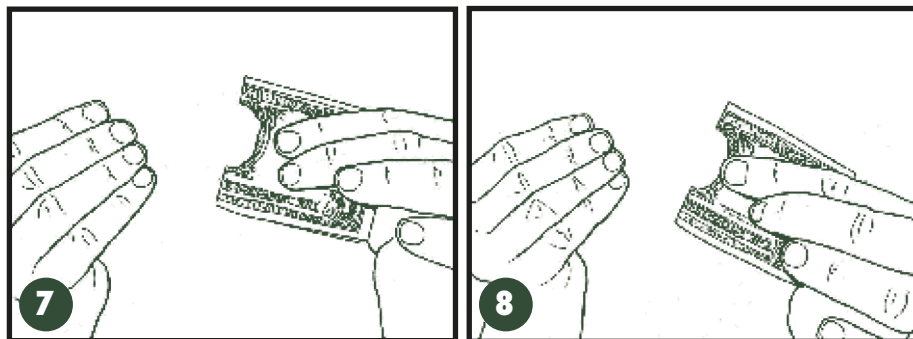
You're now going to turn over the bill in preparation for the "snap restoration," while hiding the folded portrait of Washington with your right fingers (Figures 9, 10, and 11).

Move your right hand to the back of the bill, covering the apparent hole with your right second, third, and fourth fingers. Turn the bill over and use your

## Defaced



## ...3 To Get Ready

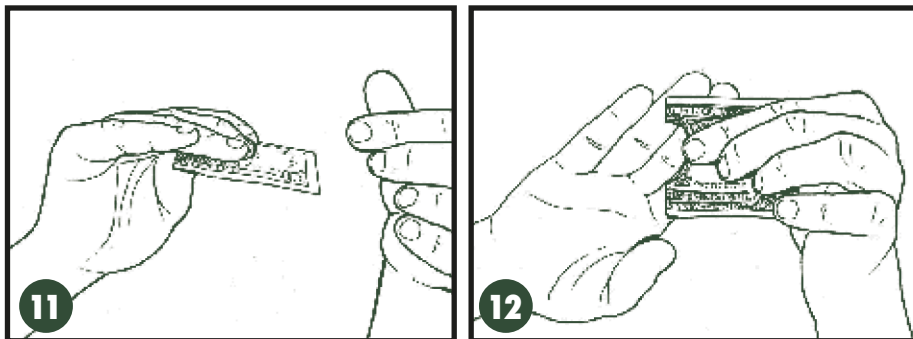


free right forefinger and thumb to pinch the innermost end of the two loose ends in preparation for the sudden restoration (Figure 11). Figure 12 is an exposed view of the secretly folded portrait.

After you ask, "When is a hole not a hole," most people will just stare at you blankly without an answer. If they do answer, respond accordingly. Then, put the focus back on the bill as you jerk your hands outward, snapping open the bill for a sudden and startling restoration. When doing this, match actions to words as you reveal the answer to the trick question:

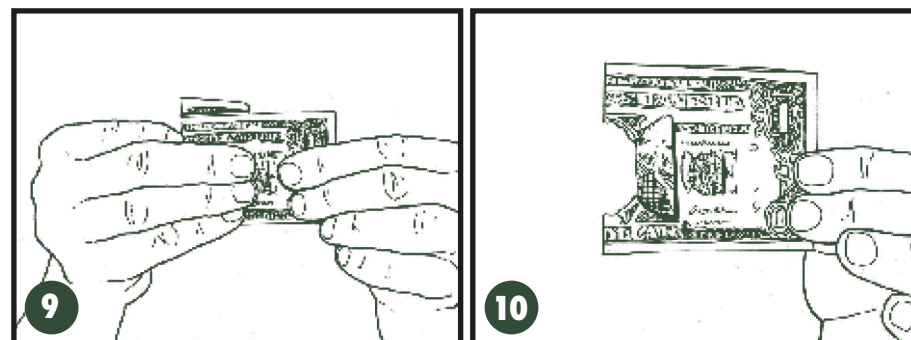
"It's simple. When it's whole — completely whole!"

Hold the ends of the bill taut for a couple of seconds to let the image register (Figure 13).



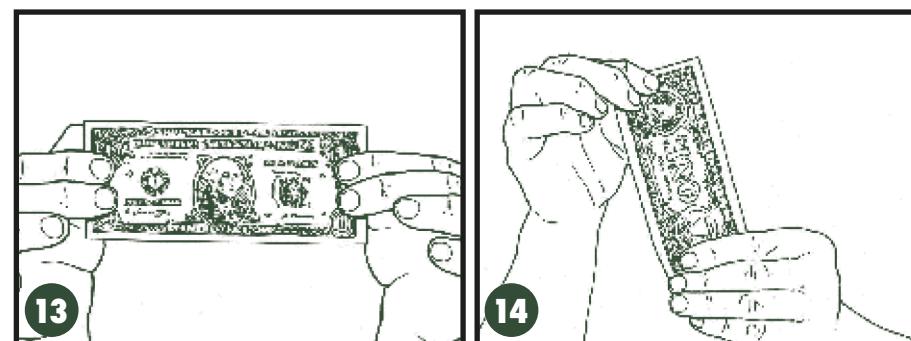
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To clean up, turn over the bill so that the green side is toward the spectator as you simultaneously rotate it vertically. Then stroke the bill from top to bottom with your left thumb and fingers in a



straightening gesture (Figure 14). This is a way to show both sides as though you are wrapping up the presentation with a final punctuation.

Fold the bill nonchalantly into eighths (Figure 15)



while hiding the tiny tears, saying "It's as simple as that." Place the folded bill in your pocket and finish by saying "You see, I didn't rip off Washington, I ripped off you!"

## ...3 To Get Ready

Defaced

Under cover of this joke, switch the torn bill for the folded duplicate in your pocket. Without hesitation, bring out the other pre-folded bill as if you had a change of heart. "But I'm going to give back your money.

Do you know why? Because, like Washington, I can never tell a lie. And the lie was that you ever had a chance to win!"

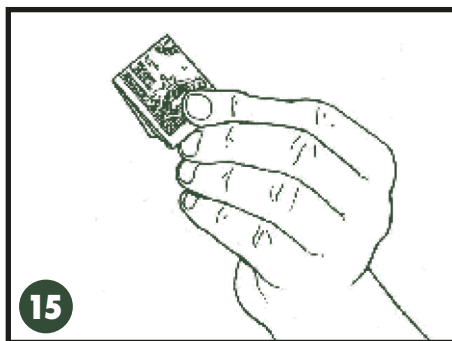
**BANK NOTES:** A big thanks to my good friend Raj Madhok for his help in framing these trick questions in an entertaining way.

If you can't borrow a bill, you can obviously use your own. The presentation, however, is much better if the bill is not yours.

Be cognizant and careful of your lighting. If you're backlit, the torn edges will be obvious after the snap restoration. Nighttime is ideal, but if you're aware of your blocking, there should be no problem with daytime lighting.

Aim for a perfect balance of the two tears. If you rip too little, the hole is not convincingly large enough and the bottom edge looks more like a fold. If you rip too much, you risk an imperfect alignment of the tears at the end.

A jacket pocket is looser and larger than a pants pocket. So, if you make the switch from your jacket, you can simply prepare the bill at the outset with only one fold. This makes the switch much easier and swifter.



If anyone is smart enough — or smart aleck enough — to jump ahead and say "Obama" in answer to your first question, simply counter with "No, it's George Washington. What were you thinking? When's the last time you looked at a bill? Let me guess — you weren't a history major." This way, you can maintain momentum and control for the next two questions.

Just a reminder to make sure that the extra bill in your pocket is in the right condition. It shouldn't be too worn or too new. Go for average. When you borrow a bill, simply look for an average duplicate. The last thing you want is for a spectator to exclaim after the restoration, "And look, the bill even got newer!"

The way this routine was originally described, the straight-line rips produced a square-like shape. I prefer to rip in a slight curve along the oval of Washington's portrait, producing a more circular shape.

The starting point for this effect was rooted in Dining for Dollars, a routine by the late Rick Johnsson. The underlying motif, however, comes from Jack Chanin's marketed trick, Rip It, which was released in 1970. Back then it sold for \$10 — a real deal for impromptu workers. It was widely performed by magicians throughout the '70s and is mentioned in Chanin: The Man With the Magic Hands [Chanin-Haversat].

Slydini submitted a variation called Rip-It Redux to Richard's Almanac [Autumn 1985]. Johnny Hirose contributed Rip-It Revolutionized to Richard's Almanac [Winter 1985], which features a different

## ...3 To Get Ready

**Defaced**

fold and handling altogether. Michael Ammar also featured this Johnsson effect in his 1996 lecture notes and on his *Easy to Master Money Miracles*, Vol. 3.





# PACK ATTACK



This three-phase routine is a synergistic amalgam, which is just a fancy way of saying that I've combined known things into a finished routine that satisfies my obsession with converting items into three parts, three acts and three phases – hip, hip, hurray!

The “spirit” of this first phase is by my brilliant magician friend, John Kennedy, who by the way sells a great gaff to perform his Visual Broken & Restored cigarette. The second phase is a concoction by me, and the third phase I got from a stand-up comedian acquaintance many years ago named Bobby Dubeck.

The entire interlude is deliciously impromptu for close-up or stand-up. The only thing needed is a small cigarette-piece. Just cut/break off about an inch and a half from the end of a regular cigarette. Then tap each end to compact and flatten them and curl the end paper, tucking them inward. This gives integrity to the piece for repeated performances.

When you are ready to perform, secure the “piece” and finger-palm it in your left hand. The “piece” is held by only your left second finger, one end at its base and the other end at the first crease near the distal tip. In other words, parallel to your finger.

This palm permits you to hold your left hand in a relaxed, open fashion.

Say, “Anybody out there who smokes? Or, I should say, anybody out there who will admit to smoking? If so, please raise your hand... if you

## ...3 To Get Ready

can." (sometimes people ask the question, "smoke what?" That's when you can respond with, "Depends what you've got on you!")

When somebody volunteers, add: "Take a few breaths sir... What's your name? Toss me your pack, please." Pause and add, "you did that without too much wheezing." (As an aside, you can mutter: "you're also a rich man. Don't these things cost about thirty bucks a pack?").

Catch the pack with your right hand, remove a cigarette with your right thumb and fingers and transfer it to your left hand. Ask the throng: "Have you ever tried to quit smoking?" Depending on the reply, you can riff and respond to the answer. Eventually use this apt remark: "quitting? Are you kidding? Hey! Mark Twain said: quitting tobacco is easy....I've done it hundreds of times!" Meanwhile place the cigarette pack into your right side coat pocket and transfer the cigarette to your right hand. Hold it with about 2/3 of the cigarette protruding.

Say, "I'm going to show you a way that is easy, but unfortunately it is not permanent." Here you are going to move your hands together to apparently break or tear the cigarette in half. How this happens is important.

As your right hand moves toward your left hand, your left hand alters its grip on the piece. simply place your left thumb onto the piece to hold it in place as your left second finger straightens. Also, slightly push the piece closer to the distal tip without yet exposing it.

## Pack Attack

your right hand now moves closer to your left hand, aligning the exposed end of the regular cigarette with the outer end of the piece. Both hands at this stage simultaneously move until the ends of the piece and the regular cigarette meet. At this instant both cigarette ends are momentarily concealed from the front.

Also, at this instantaneous meeting of "ends," both thumbs "muss" the ends that you are going to expose in a second so that they look a bit ragged. you are also going to lightly scrap both thumb nails to simulate a "tearing" sound as you pantomime that action, twisting and then suddenly moving your hands apart. (Do not overdo the "snapping" sound.)

The instant your hands move apart, both thumbs push their respective cigarette into view, exposing about an inch of each cigarette, respectively. This looks very convincing; however, keep your hands moving—not wildly but in a relaxed, gestural way.

Move your left hand suddenly up and backwards to your open mouth to ostensibly toss its "half " into your mouth. say, "Instead, try chewing tobacco..." as your left hand moves up, it retracts its "piece" into a finger-palm as your left thumbnail contacts your tongue. Move your left hand away and begin chewing.

After a bit of mild chewing, open your mouth again and move your right hand up to your open mouth with its "half-cigarette." As soon as your right hand is up to your mouth, push the cigarette outward so that it looks like the "chewed" half magically joined the "un-

## ...3 To Get Ready

chewed" half. Make sure that the cigarette does not touch the inside of your mouth, so everything stays dry. As soon as you withdraw the restored cigarette, transfer it to your left hand (which is still palming its piece).

Next, you are going to repeat the action of tearing the cigarette in two. Again, simply place your left thumb onto the piece to hold it in place as your left second finger straightens. As before, your right hand moves closer to your left hand, aligning the exposed end of the regular cigarette with the outer end of the piece. Both hands at this stage simultaneously move until the ends of the piece and the regular cigarette meet. simulate a "tearing" sound as you pantomime that action, twisting and then suddenly moving your hands apart. Again, both thumbs push their ends into view, exposing about an inch of each cigarette, respectively.

Tap the ends together in front of your body, while saying: "This is where they came together last time." Then move them apart and add, "But, I like to do it in midair!" Now, you are set to perform the same actions used in the Karate coin. That is, your left hand actually tosses its "piece" into the air and your right hand catches it as it pushes its cigarette to expose its full length. Here are the details:

Toss the "piece" in a vertical direction about a foot into the air with your left hand and catch it again with the same hand. That was a practice toss. When the half piece reaches the apex of its flight on the second toss, plunge your right hand towards it. catch the "piece"

## Pack Attack

so that it lands within your right hand as you push its cigarette into view.

Not-so-clever-Patter: "Watch. I toss this into the air and—boom!—It restores itself in midair."

Let this dramatic effect register and then add, "It's hard to break the habit if it doesn't stay broken." If you catch the "piece" properly, you can display the whole cigarette, holding it between your right thumb and forefinger, with your other fingers curled and your palm toward the audience (Ramsay subtlety).

Transfer the cigarette to your left hand for a moment and then place your right hand into your right pocket to retrieve the cigarette pack, dumping the extra "piece" in the process. say, "Like I said...That's the temporary way to stop smoking. Now for the permanent way! Watch closely."

Here you perform the standard "To Vanish a cigarette up the Nose," famously described in Tarbell course in Magic – Volume Two (1942), p. 137. This effect happens so fast and unexpectedly that audiences usually gasp or laugh.

Hold the bottom of the cigarette with your right finger-tips and place the upward-pointing end of the cigarette near your nostril; against your septum.

Do not place the end in your nostril. slide your first and second fingertips and thumb of your right hand up along the shaft of the cigarette to your nose. This gives the illusion that the cigarette is sliding up your nose.

With it completely concealed in your right



## ...3 To Get Ready

hand, momentarily move that hand away, secretly retaining the cigarette. Let this crazy effect register. Then move your right hand fingertips to your mouth and reverse the illusory action just described, only this time your lips nip the end of the cigarette as your first and second fingertips and thumb of your right hand slide down and along the shaft of the cigarette as you ostensibly remove the cigarette from your mouth.

Place this cigarette into the borrowed pack, shake it a few times, and toss it to the person who lent it to you, saying: "you now have to guess which one of those cigarettes has my essence all over it. Now that should definitely make you quit!"

This is a fitting tag line to a quick, visual, and unusual routine.

My friend T.C. Tahoe does a similar routine and ends with, "cancer no problem. But cooties is where you draw the line!"

I should also mention that this is a classic pack small, play big routine as I've done it for an audience of one and one thousand. When T.C. Tahoe does this and more than one person tosses up a pack of smokes, he says: "Good thing I wasn't doing the bowling ball trick!" He also uses this as an opener to his cigarette in coat routine.

When Loren Christopher Michaels asks who the smokers are in the audience and notices only a few raised hands, he says: "Ah, the last of a dying breed."

## Pack Attack

