

The Gazette, Thursday May 22, 2008

**Noland Montgomery: It's no trick — he's the magic man
Beltville resident wins Magician of the Year**

By Jonah Schuman, Staff Writer

Beltville resident Noland Montgomery appeared trapped. His hands and knees were tied together and there were two men flanking him to make sure the ropes were sturdy and tied properly.

As the two men outstretched a towel in front of him, Montgomery looked up at them and said, "It took Houdini three hours to do this one. Hopefully, it won't take me that long."

Montgomery, ever the showman, wanted to ensure the knots were all tied properly by reaching his right hand, which was supposed to be tied, out from behind the towel and patting it down.

Amongst laughter from the Bishop Ireton High School audience, he acknowledged the knots were okay and his hand disappeared back behind the towel.

The two men then removed the towel to reveal Montgomery's right hand was once again bound by the rope.

It continued back and forth like that for a few minutes, Montgomery inciting laughter from the Arlington school students the whole time.

"Magic by itself is not enough to hold peoples' interest," Montgomery said. "As a professional magician, you're more interested in presentation. You can be the most extraordinary sleight of hand, but you can bore your audience to death. You need something in your personality that adds an emotional dimension."

Montgomery, 56, has found and perfected that something, as he won the International Brotherhood of Magicians Ring 50 (National Capital Ring) Magician of the Year award for the fourth time in five years.

The award is given annually to the winner of the Dan Lacey Memorial Magic Contest, which was started in 2003 to honor deceased magician Lacey. There are 100 members in IBM.

Montgomery beat out six other magicians in the 2008 contest on May 7, with two classic tricks that have been in his routines for years. "One is called Miser's Dream," he said. "It's where you produce silver dollars from the air, from your clothing and spectators' clothing. I followed it with another classic called the Chinese linking rings."

Larry Lipman, president of the Washington, D.C. assembly of the Society of American Magicians and past president of IBM Ring 50, has known Montgomery for 10 years, and said a tireless work ethic is what sets him apart from his colleagues.

"Noland is a perfectionist," he said. "I don't know anybody who works at his magic as well as Noland does. He does an extensive amount of preparation. He's never satisfied with a performance. He's always looking for a way to make it better."

Lipman said the award was a testament to Montgomery's professionalism. Lipman has been a magician for 10 years and performs almost every weekend at children's parties. He credited Montgomery for taking him under his wing at the beginning of his career.

"Noland was one of the first people I met when I joined IBM Ring 50," he said. "He's always telling me to practice more. He's helped me with ideas and presentations."

Montgomery first discovered magic at age 12 while growing up in Europe. His father was in the Foreign Service and he would often find himself stuck in hotel rooms with nothing to do for hours on end. He came across a book called "Classic Secrets of Magic" and said it "lit a fire under him."

Montgomery started performing professionally in 1996 and in 2002 turned to magic full-time after quitting his job as a legal assistant.

"As an adult, I realized that if I wanted to get better, I had to do it professionally," he said. "The amateur's problem is that you run out of people to perform for. You never get to perform it enough to really perfect it. As a professional you get a fresh audience every time you perform."

Over his career, Montgomery has performed at children's birthday parties, private parties, restaurants, corporate events, fundraisers and has also performed for cabinet members from the Bush Administration, as well as the Easter Egg Roll at the White House.

Despite four Magician of the Year awards and performing for some very prestigious audiences, Montgomery continues to look for and find new ways to build on what he has already accomplished. "I'm still in the early part of my career," he said. "I guess the main thing is it's a steady progression in the things I achieved."



Greg Dohler/The Gazette

Magician Noland Montgomery of Beltville is a four-time winner of the Magician of the Year from the International Magician Brotherhood.