

Member Spotlight

Larry Warshaw

Facilitated by Gene Kean

Larry Warshaw's Ring 129 involvement serving as the Past President is only a small part of his life and passion for magic covering 52 years.



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by Gene Kean

IBM Order of Merlin Excalibur 56 Years Member

Larry Warshaw was born in 1960 in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up living in the suburbs of that large city. While living in Wilmette, Illinois he attended New Trier West High School. He recalls his life-long interest in magic began at about age eight when an uncle showed him and his 14-year-old brother the Magic Linking Rings trick.

“While our uncle showed my brother how to do the magic linking rings, I was deemed too young to understand and was not shown the secrets,” Larry said. “Well, that launched my interest in proving him wrong, so I started trying to learn magic from library books.”



Then, came the influence from other magicians. Larry recalled, “When I was 10 my folks sent me to a 4-week sleepover camp in Decatur, Michigan. The program director at the camp was an amateur magician who taught a magic class every week. This was just the spark I needed to start learning some simple sleight of hand like the Downs Palm and the French Drop, as well as some self-working tricks.”

"I spent three summers at that camp, but eventually started corresponding by mail with the camp director, who described various tricks in his letters and introduced me to the ability to obtain books and tricks by mail order—those catalogs and then the trains and busses that would take me to the magic stores, like Top Hat Magic in Evanston, Illinois, and Magic, Inc. really opened my magical world." Larry said, "From this, my first magic show I performed for an audience was at age 13, which was for a cousin's five or six-year-old birthday party in Chicago."

First Performing for Money as a Professional Magician at Age 16.



"Fast forward, I turned 16 and got my driver's license and promptly set out to convince some local restaurant that I should get hired to be the tableside magician. There was a Barnaby's family pizza restaurant in Arlington Heights, Illinois willing to give me a shot. I started there in 1976 at \$8 per hour for a two-hour shift. It is now 50 years later, and that Barnaby's still has a magician working there!"

While Larry was still a teenager, he started moving toward more upscale restaurants. He eventually got a job at the suburban Don's Fish Market in Chicagoland. Larry recalled, "Magician Eugene Burger was working at the downtown location. When I went off to college at the University of Illinois in Champaign, I got introduced to Andy Dallas, who owned a magic shop in town. He worked with a local restaurant to make it magic-themed, and I worked there a couple of times a week along with Don England."

Off to College and Other Activities. As Larry was honing his craft as a magical performer, he was simultaneously developing into a pretty good fencer. He received an athletic scholarship and was a four-year letterman at Illinois, where he graduated in 1982 with a B.S. in marketing while earning two Big Ten championship team rings along the way. After college, Larry continued training and competing, eventually ranking in the top 20 men's saber fencers in the U.S. He retired from active competition at age 30, whereupon he attended and graduated from the University of Iowa College of Law with a JD in 1993.

"My fencing career started to require more of my time and energy, so magic kind of faded into the background for a while. However, I continued to dabble here and there and continued going to IBM magic conventions when I could. While I was in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the early 80s I made friends with a bunch of Aussie magicians who were also

at the convention. They convinced me that I should come down to Australia to visit them and lecture to their club in Sydney, so I did in 1983.”

“Twenty years later, Ring 129 hosted the IBM convention in Kansas City, and I acted as the emcee for our Ring’s opening night show. After the show, as I was packing up my stuff backstage, those very same Aussies came up with their badges turned backwards and asked, ‘Hey, do you remember us, mate?’ It was very cool to reconnect with old friends like that!”



Performing as a Professional Magician on Mississippi Gambling River Boats. “The gambling river boats opened on the Mississippi River while I was in law school in Iowa City and I was hired as the magical entertainer aboard the “Diamond Lady” during the summer of 1991. I got to do strolling magic in the dining room and perform one parlor show on each two-hour cruise.

After graduating from Law School in 1993, Larry moved to Kansas City where he began his career as a practicing lawyer. In 1999, Larry left legal practice to pursue a career in the insurance industry, where he worked until retiring in 2025. Combining his knowledge of law and the insurance business, Larry developed some Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs for law firms that he presented all over North America.

As you can see from a photograph taken at a CLE presentation in 2014, Larry incorporated Magic into his educational syllabus. A few of these law firms’ locations include Banff, Alberta (for a Calgary, Alberta firm); Ke-



lowna, British Columbia (for an Edmonton, Alberta firm); Portland, Maine; Chicago, Illinois; Kansas City, Missouri; and Minneapolis, Minnesota.



“Once my career and family life began to settle in somewhat, I started to get much more interested in performing again. I was lucky to book enough corporate cocktail parties with a few after banquet shows to make it fun.

I then sent in an audition VHS tape to the Magic Castle just to see if they might be interested. It was truly one of the honors of my career to be one of the featured performers in the Close-Up Gallery at The Magic Castle in 2003.”



“One thing that my fencing career taught me was how to speak French—it’s the international language of the sport. This provided an opportunity for me to work at Club Med Resorts (a French-owned company), where I was able to perform in both English and French for the patrons at the resorts. Performing like that was fun but challenging. Fortunately, all the resorts are in great spots to hang out and recover for the remainder of the day,” Larry said.





"Now, I now have more time to spend with my family and grandchildren. I still enjoy challenging myself to learn new techniques in magic, even though I may never use them in performance, as I'm still proud to be a magic geek through and through. Our Ring 129 is such a wonderful group of people who share that spirit of geeking out on magic, and I am forever grateful to be able to hang out with all of you whenever I can get to a meeting."