



GOOD WILL MAGIC

BY JOANIE SPINA

Magic can oftentimes serve as a goodwill ambassador, creating bonds between the magician and his or her audience and spreading harmonious energy. Those who donate time visiting hospitals and nursing homes and performing at charitable events share a common notion that it is important to give something back to this world we share. Contributing to making the world more pleasant for those who live in it, not for publicity but for the sheer joy of giving, is truly a noble gesture.

Allow me to introduce you to 31-year-old Chief Warrant Officer William Scott Anderson, who goes by his middle name, Scott. When not deployed, he lives with his wife Stephanie and son Anthony in Canby, Oregon. Upon graduation from high school in 1996, Scott enlisted for five years of active duty in the army, then joined the National Guard immediately following his honorable discharge in 2001. During his fourteen years in the service, he has held three jobs, most recently as a Medevac Pilot operating a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter with Task Force 38's Medevac unit, Company C, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment. He has served numerous tours of duty, including three overseas: Korea (1996–97), Afghanistan (2002–03), and Iraq (2009–10).

Scott wasn't always a magician. Back in 1999, he suffered an injury during a training exercise at Fort Lewis in Washington and was assigned to light duty. It was during this time that Anderson worked as a DARE Officer. DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance

Education) is a highly acclaimed program that gives kids the skills they need to avoid involvement in drugs, gangs, and violence. Scott thought magic would be a good way of connecting with the kids, to engage their interest and earn their trust. He started with a simple rubber band trick and a Svengali deck. Once he got a taste of performing magic, he knew it was a path he wanted to pursue. Under the tutelage of mentor Steve Dobson, a magician and magic inventor from Washington, Scott learned close-up magic over a three-year period.

After seeing a performance by Rick Thomas, Scott was inspired to perform large-scale illusions and went on to build a full stage show featuring Origami, a levitation, Metamorphosis, Mini Kub Zag, and Snowstorm.

Deployed to Iraq in March of 2009, Scott spent the past year at the Joint Base Balad in Iraq. He worked 48-hour shifts with 24 hours off in between. The soldiers in his unit had to be ready to fly the helicopters as soon as missions were called in.

The lives of wounded soldiers and civilians depended on them. Since the mem-

bers of Scott's unit have downtime as they wait to be called into action, they opened their own "coffee shop" on the Medevac compound. There, Scott practiced his magic on all who visited. Not a day went by when he didn't perform some kind of magic, usually doing an actual show once a week, sometimes working for adult audiences, sometimes for children. Scott loves entertaining people, and his impromptu card tricks, as well as his scheduled shows, were a huge morale boost for the soldiers and civilian contractors. In

October, Scott won the base talent show, fondly referred to as "Iraq's Got Talent."

Through his magic, Scott had the ability to communicate with and touch the hearts of Iraqi and Afghani children and their parents. He was able to create a bond, a healing of sorts, which softened the tension and

misunderstanding that can exist between peoples and countries. And that is *true* magic.

"I don't think anything could have prepared us for the innocent children who found themselves caught in the middle



of these conflicts,” Scott explains. “After the attacks on 9/11, my unit and I were ready to fly into Afghanistan and help take care of business. Little did we know that 75 percent of our business would be taking care of the wounded Afghan children who had fallen victim to the landmines planted over the course of twenty years of warfare.” To help cope with what he had seen and experienced, Anderson would follow the progress of these children as they were nursed back to health, volunteering his time in the hospital and performing magic shows for them. “Even though we were unable to understand each other’s words, magic broke that language barrier and allowed us to communicate.”

Having recently arrived safely back on American soil, Scott has another six years of service before he can retire with a military pension. Meanwhile, he fancies himself an adult Peter Pan who has been putting off the inevitable. Though he would like to chase his dreams and pursue magic fulltime, he feels he must do the responsible thing and take a more secure profession, assuring his wife and son a good home and steady income. “I will never stop performing magic, though. Even if it only is a part-time job, it is the ‘funnest’ job I have ever done. Who knows, maybe someday somebody will come along with that big contract and lure me away — Peter Pan can always dream!”

Scott has already booked nine shows in the next few months in the Oregon/Washington area, entertaining at corporate events, private parties, and charity events. Through performing *The Magic of Patriotism* at school shows, Scott will continue his work with children.

He dreams of honing his stage show, *The Magician’s Expeditions*, to a topnotch level. He has yet to perform it in its entirety, but he plans to complete it now that he has returned home. The show features Metamorphosis, The Lemon Game, Origami, Levitation, Nest of Boxes, Master Prediction System, Thin-Model Sawing, and a Guillotine. These illusions may be familiar to you, but Anderson’s presentation will be unique. His show is based on his experiences traveling the world as an American soldier, an inspiring story well worth sharing. “I tell my audience that by being a soldier and traveling extensively throughout Europe, Asia, the US, and the Middle East, I have uncovered many of the secrets of magic from all over the world. Each routine is based on a story or experience that I have had while at these locations. The stories and events are all true.” Scott narrates as video and photo montages set to music are projected on a screen. He sets up his finale, Kevin James’ Snow illusion, with a letter from a twelve-



Scott creating snow for Iraqi kids last December; performing for a child in an Afghanistan hospital in 2002; and doing a Headchopper with a fellow National Guardsman for a Task Force Halloween party. Swindling the highest-ranking officer in the audience, Scott’s comedy magic took first place out of 57 different acts at Joint Base Balad’s Got Talent show last October.

year-old Iraqi girl who was severely injured by a roadside bomb:

Mr. SaHar [Arabic for “magician”], Thank you so much for visiting me and performing your magic tricks. I don’t know why I was hurt this way, and I don’t understand why there is so much fighting in my country. I asked my father, who is a wise and great man, if the people in my country will ever stop fighting. He laughed and told me that the only time they stop fighting here in the desert is when it snows. Unfortunately, Mr. SaHar, I have never seen it snow. You showed me that you can do impossible things with

your hands. Can you make please it snow?”

Well, you can imagine the impact on the audience when “Mr. SaHar” makes it snow.

Scott Anderson is a shining example of how magic works its wonder in so many ways, not just in mystifying, but also in building bridges and friendships. He not only lays his life on the line to protect his country, but he also performs his magic, spreading good will wherever he goes. What audience wouldn’t be behind him?

Scott, being the brave soldier he is, has volunteered to be the subject of this month’s “Directions” column on page 74. [WS]