



# I LEFT MY CARDS AT HOME by STEVE MARSHALL



## Alan Fisher

Born and raised in a small town in southwestern Pennsylvania, Alan was celebrating his sixth birthday when his Dad's cousin, part-time magician Melvin Bane, showed up and pulled a rabbit out of his hat at the party. Alan remembers thinking, "Well, how about that?"

That's what I'm going to do someday." Although he never worked with livestock, he did start performing shows for pay when he was just nine years old. Saving the money he made from his shows and paper route, he was able to buy a new effect every other month or so. "In no time, I was booking two or three weekend shows a month by hitting all the local fraternal and civic clubs within a thirty-mile radius of my house. I think my folks were relieved when I finally got a driver's license so they didn't have to schlep me around anymore."

Growing up in a small rural area in the 1960s didn't give him much exposure to magic except the occasional Sunday night appearances of magicians on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. "In the very beginning all I really had was Melvin and my imagination," Alan said. "All I wanted to do was recreate in others that feeling I had when Melvin performed at my birthday party. I was always a bit of a smart-aleck and a clown, so I naturally gravitated to that type of material." His non-magic idols were the great comedy minds of the day: Sid Caesar, Jackie Gleason, Steve Allen, Red Skelton, Carol Burnett, Carl Reiner & Mel Brooks, along with so many more. He also loved *Mark Wilson's Magic Circus* and, in the '70s, it was Doug Henning that he watched with interest. He even got to travel to New York to see *The Magic Show* on Broadway. "I still have the program with Henning's autograph as well as those of the rest of the cast." Henning's TV specials were incredible to Alan, as well as David Copperfield's, and they became a big influence in shaping the way he looked at magic. "I loved the theatricality of their presentations."

By this point (the late '70s), Alan was enrolled at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he would go on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in musical theater.

After graduating from Point Park, Alan worked for four years at the Pittsburgh Playhouse, and then toured for six years with an off-Broadway show called *Big Bad Burlesque*; he worked his way up from the "Juvenile" role all the way to the "Top Banana."

He also worked comedy clubs for eight years, and in between tours he did shows for the largest producer of live corporate entertainment in that region. This producer was Don Brockett. If you grew up watching *Mr. Rogers's Neighborhood*, you will know Don Brockett as "Chef Brockett" on that show. "It was always surreal when I had to go see Don when he was filming

the show; I would walk right on to the 'land of make believe' set and Fred Rogers would come and greet me and take me right over to the craft services table, urging me to eat whatever I wanted. Fred would also come to my shows sometimes, which sent other cast members running backstage to say, 'Mr. Rogers is in the audience! Do you know him?'"

In the early '90s, Alan and his wife Margie, who is an actress and singer, decided to move to Nashville, Tennessee, so Margie could pursue her career in the country music industry. "When we got to Nashville we did as many shows together as we could, but we didn't always work together. When our daughter was born in the mid '90s with multiple medical challenges, Margie became a full-time stay-at-home mom/caregiver and I got a day job for the first time in my life. The performing careers went on the back burner. I do what local shows I can now and am heavily involved with my magic club. Our daughter's health has improved greatly, she even assists now in shows, but I don't know if it's in the cards for us to ever get back to full-time performing."

These days Alan works full time as a graphic designer for Cigna Healthcare and is very active in his local magic club, The Middle Tennessee Magic Club in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. This is where I met Alan when I presented my lecture at this club last year.

Alan still performs shows whenever he can and keeps very active in the magic and performing communities. If you're ever in the Nashville area, look him up; he's a great guy with a lot of knowledge about the performing arts.

## The Truly Impromptu Book Test

By Alan Fisher

**Effect:** With the help of two volunteers, the magician is able to determine the exact word on a page in one of three borrowed books that one of the volunteers is looking at. All the props are borrowed; nothing is supplied by the magician. None of the books is gimmicked and there are no stooges or confederates involved.

(Note: This routine is best performed at a private party or other social function in someone's home when magic is requested, and not as part of a show where it could look like gimmicked books are being supplied by the magician.)

**Props:** Three borrowed paperback books, a pencil or pen (it can be borrowed), and a piece of paper or notepad (it can be borrowed).

**Presentation:** Have a volunteer select any three paperback books from any shelf on the bookcase. It is a free choice. Paperback novels are the best to use; they are easy to hold and flip through. Also, they usually don't have any pictures or drawings in them. Borrow a pen or pencil and something to write on (a piece of paper or a notepad). When the volunteer returns with the books, ask her to select another volunteer from the group and have both join you at the table with the books. Have both of them stand or sit to one side of you. Have the three books placed on the

table along with the pen and paper.

Pick up the first book and begin thumbing through it as you ask the owner about the book. *"What genre is it? Who wrote it? Is it any good? Would you recommend it?"* These are examples of questions to ask. Put the first book down and repeat the same steps with the two remaining books. Now ask the first volunteer to select one book; have her pick it up. Have the second volunteer choose a book. Have one of the volunteers take the pen and paper. He will write down page numbers and do some simple math with those numbers. He can either give you his book or he can place it on the table.

Taking one of the books, you begin to quickly flip through the pages of it, asking someone at the party to stop you whenever he or she wants. When she calls "stop," look in the book and announce the page number she stopped you on. Have the volunteer with the pen write this page number down. Ask the other volunteer to quickly flip through the pages of the book she is holding; you call "stop" at some point. Ask her to show the page number to the volunteer with the pen and paper, but caution her not to say it out loud. That volunteer writes the page number down directly under the first page number. These two numbers are added together. Now ask him to circle the last two digits of that total and to subtract that circled number from the first volunteer's page number, again not saying the answer out loud. This becomes the random number. Have her pick up the third book from the table and turn to the page that corresponds to the random number that has been arrived at. Then tell her to concentrate on the first word printed in the body of the text on that page. After a few moments, you announce the exact word that she is looking at.

**Method:** Three numbers are in play here. R = revelation page number; M = magician's page number; and V = volunteer's page number. The numbers are related by this formula:  $M = 100 - R$ . V must also be larger than R and V must be less than  $R + 99$ .

The two mathematical equations above are done in the magician's head as he thumbs through one of the books. It doesn't matter which book is used. The magician secretly picks a page from that book (the page number must be between 1 and 99); that book then becomes the revelation book. He memorizes the first word on the first line on that page. For example, the magician secretly selects page 20 (which is now the revelation page) and memorizes the first word on that page, which is "elephant."

Continuing with this example, if the revelation page (R in our formula) is 20, then the magician's page (M in our formula) is 80. ( $M = 100 - R$ , or  $80 = 100 - 20$ ). Repeat the same physical movements of thumbing through the other two books and asking questions, so it appears you are handling each book in the same casual manner.

Now you do a magician's force to get the revelation book to be left on the table. Since you don't tell the volunteers anything other than "pick a book," you are not committed to their final use. Based on which books they choose, proceed in one of the following ways.

**The first volunteer picks the revelation book:** After second volunteer picks a book, state that the remaining one will be yours. Ask the first volunteer to be the one to write down the page numbers. Pick up the pen and paper and hand them to this volunteer, telling her to put her book back on the table.

**The second volunteer picks the revelation book:** After second volunteer picks this book, state that the remaining one will be yours. Ask the second volunteer to be the one to write down page numbers. Pick up the pen and paper and hand them to this volunteer, telling him to put his book back on the table.

**No one picks the revelation book:** As you pick up the pen and paper, state that one of the two volunteers is going to need to use those objects to write down page numbers and do some simple math. Let them decide which one of them will do this task. Once the person is identified, trade the pen and paper you are holding for the book they are holding.

Whichever method is used, you end up holding a non-revelation book; one volunteer also holds a non-revelation book; the other volunteer has the pen and paper, and the revelation book is on the table.

When you flip through the book you are holding and the volunteer stops you, miscall the page as M (the magician's page number – in the example, it would be page 80). Have the second volunteer write this number down and close your book. As the other volunteer flips through her book, you must stop her at a page number that is greater than the revelation page (in the example, greater than 20), but less than the revelation page number plus 99 (in the example, less than  $20 + 99 = 119$ ). You can stop them on any page within that range. That page becomes the volunteer's page number (or V). Stress that she should not announce the page number; she should just silently show it to the other volunteer. Turn your back if you want to further prove you are not seeing what the volunteer's page number is.

Have the second volunteer write this number down directly under your page number. (For this example, we'll say you stop the volunteer on page 47). Have the first volunteer close her book. Instruct the second volunteer to add the two numbers together (in this example,  $80 + 47 = 127$ ). Tell him that if the total is a three-digit number, he should circle the last two digits because you will only be using the last two digits (in the example, the circled digits would be 27). Now ask him to subtract this circled number from the volunteer's page number (in the example,  $47 - 27 = 20$ ). Remind him not to say this new number, but he can show it to the other volunteer, if he'd like.

Bring to everyone's attention the third book on the table, which is the revelations book. Stress that this book has not been touched by anyone (even though you and possibly a volunteer touched it earlier). Asked the second volunteer to remember the new number as it is now his page number. Tell him to put down the paper and pen and pick up the third book. Instruct him to turn to his page number and look at the first word printed on that page. Act as if you are trying to read his mind. Tell him to concentrate on the word, to see it in his mind. After a few moments of hesitation, reveal to all the word you memorized earlier (in the example, announce that the word the person is looking at is "elephant"). Thank the volunteers for their assistance, take the books from them as they go back to their places, and return the books and the paper and pen to whomever they were borrowed from in the first place.

Take your bow.

Steve's Stuff:

This effect is based on The Himber Book Test by Richard Himber, published in *Tarbell Volume 4*. Alan liked the effect but found that the choice of page numbers was too limited in that method. So Alan got out a spread sheet, did some math, and came up with the mathematical formula above to make it feel more like a totally free choice.

Get out a pencil, paper, and some books and go through the math above until you are comfortable with it; you will have an impromptu mental miracle for the next time you are out at a party. Thanks Alan!★

# Truly Impromptu Book Test

by ALAN FISHER - based on Himber Book Test

| Revelation<br>Page | Magician's<br>Page | Volunteer's<br>Low Page<br>Range | Volunteer's<br>High Page<br>Range | Revelation<br>Page | Magician's<br>Page | Volunteer's<br>Low Page<br>Range | Volunteer's<br>High Page<br>Range |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1                  | 99                 | 2                                | 100                               | 27                 | 73                 | 28                               | 126                               |
| 2                  | 98                 | 3                                | 101                               | 28                 | 72                 | 29                               | 127                               |
| 3                  | 97                 | 4                                | 102                               | 29                 | 71                 | 30                               | 128                               |
| 4                  | 96                 | 5                                | 103                               | 30                 | 70                 | 31                               | 129                               |
| 5                  | 95                 | 6                                | 104                               | 31                 | 69                 | 32                               | 130                               |
| 6                  | 94                 | 7                                | 105                               | 32                 | 68                 | 33                               | 131                               |
| 7                  | 93                 | 8                                | 106                               | 33                 | 67                 | 34                               | 132                               |
| 8                  | 92                 | 9                                | 107                               | 34                 | 66                 | 35                               | 133                               |
| 9                  | 91                 | 10                               | 108                               | 35                 | 65                 | 36                               | 134                               |
| 10                 | 90                 | 11                               | 109                               | 36                 | 64                 | 37                               | 135                               |
| 11                 | 89                 | 12                               | 110                               | 37                 | 63                 | 38                               | 136                               |
| 12                 | 88                 | 13                               | 111                               | 38                 | 62                 | 39                               | 137                               |
| 13                 | 87                 | 14                               | 112                               | 39                 | 61                 | 40                               | 138                               |
| 14                 | 86                 | 15                               | 113                               | 40                 | 60                 | 41                               | 139                               |
| 15                 | 85                 | 16                               | 114                               | 41                 | 59                 | 42                               | 140                               |
| 16                 | 84                 | 17                               | 115                               | 42                 | 58                 | 43                               | 141                               |
| 17                 | 83                 | 18                               | 116                               | 43                 | 57                 | 44                               | 142                               |
| 18                 | 82                 | 19                               | 117                               | 44                 | 56                 | 45                               | 143                               |
| 19                 | 81                 | 20                               | 118                               | 45                 | 55                 | 46                               | 144                               |
| 20                 | 80                 | 21                               | 119                               | 46                 | 54                 | 47                               | 145                               |
| 21                 | 79                 | 22                               | 120                               | 47                 | 53                 | 48                               | 146                               |
| 22                 | 78                 | 23                               | 121                               | 48                 | 52                 | 49                               | 147                               |
| 23                 | 77                 | 24                               | 122                               | 49                 | 51                 | 50                               | 148                               |
| 24                 | 76                 | 25                               | 123                               | 50                 | 50                 | 51                               | 149                               |
| 25                 | 75                 | 26                               | 124                               | 51                 | 49                 | 52                               | 150                               |
| 26                 | 74                 | 27                               | 125                               | 52                 | 48                 | 53                               | 151                               |

**Magician's Page is always (100 - Revelation Page)**

**Volunteer's Page Range is always between (Revelation Page +1) and (Revelation Page + 99)**

# Truly Impromptu Book Test

by ALAN FISHER - based on Humber Book Test

| Revelation<br>Page | Magician's<br>Page | Volunteer's<br>Low Page<br>Range | Volunteer's<br>High Page<br>Range | Revelation<br>Page | Magician's<br>Page | Volunteer's<br>Low Page<br>Range | Volunteer's<br>High Page<br>Range |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 53                 | 47                 | 54                               | 152                               | 79                 | 21                 | 80                               | 178                               |
| 54                 | 46                 | 55                               | 153                               | 80                 | 20                 | 81                               | 179                               |
| 55                 | 45                 | 56                               | 154                               | 81                 | 19                 | 82                               | 180                               |
| 56                 | 44                 | 57                               | 155                               | 82                 | 18                 | 83                               | 181                               |
| 57                 | 43                 | 58                               | 156                               | 83                 | 17                 | 84                               | 182                               |
| 58                 | 42                 | 59                               | 157                               | 84                 | 16                 | 85                               | 183                               |
| 59                 | 41                 | 60                               | 158                               | 85                 | 15                 | 86                               | 184                               |
| 60                 | 40                 | 61                               | 159                               | 86                 | 14                 | 87                               | 185                               |
| 61                 | 39                 | 62                               | 160                               | 87                 | 13                 | 88                               | 186                               |
| 62                 | 38                 | 63                               | 161                               | 88                 | 12                 | 89                               | 187                               |
| 63                 | 37                 | 64                               | 162                               | 89                 | 11                 | 90                               | 188                               |
| 64                 | 36                 | 65                               | 163                               | 90                 | 10                 | 91                               | 189                               |
| 65                 | 35                 | 66                               | 164                               | 91                 | 9                  | 92                               | 190                               |
| 66                 | 34                 | 67                               | 165                               | 92                 | 8                  | 93                               | 191                               |
| 67                 | 33                 | 68                               | 166                               | 93                 | 7                  | 94                               | 192                               |
| 68                 | 32                 | 69                               | 167                               | 94                 | 6                  | 95                               | 193                               |
| 69                 | 31                 | 70                               | 168                               | 95                 | 5                  | 96                               | 194                               |
| 70                 | 30                 | 71                               | 169                               | 96                 | 4                  | 97                               | 195                               |
| 71                 | 29                 | 72                               | 170                               | 97                 | 3                  | 98                               | 196                               |
| 72                 | 28                 | 73                               | 171                               | 98                 | 2                  | 99                               | 197                               |
| 73                 | 27                 | 74                               | 172                               | 99                 | 1                  | 100                              | 198                               |
| 74                 | 26                 | 75                               | 173                               |                    |                    |                                  |                                   |
| 75                 | 25                 | 76                               | 174                               |                    |                    |                                  |                                   |
| 76                 | 24                 | 77                               | 175                               |                    |                    |                                  |                                   |
| 77                 | 23                 | 78                               | 176                               |                    |                    |                                  |                                   |
| 78                 | 22                 | 79                               | 177                               |                    |                    |                                  |                                   |

**Magician's Page is always (100 - Revelation Page)**

**Volunteer's Page Range is always between (Revelation Page +1) and (Revelation Page + 99)**