

# AND MIRRORS

still visits Diaz's 7th Avenue store, where he moved the business last year. "I've turned a lot of kids onto magic since I've been here," Diaz says. "It's kind of neat to see them get better and better."

Another local magician, Kip Pascal, took on a similar philosophy while teaching Spanish at Churchill High School in Eugene from 1995 to 2000. Pascal, the author of *Coin Snatching: The Reputation Builder*, used magic tricks to impress his students and hold their attention. There was one particularly uninterested student who, in 1996, was forever changed by one simple demonstration. "He starts doing magic one day and I'm like 'What the fuck's going on here?'" says Keene, who was in Pascal's class as a sophomore at Churchill. "He started doing some crazy card trick and I'm like, 'Man, I have to learn that.'"

Pascal made a deal with Keene, his student: If Keene improved his grade in Pascal's Spanish class, Pascal would train Keene in his magic club. Then, in a Miagiesque display of education trickery, Pascal trained his magic students, including Keene and Jaques, to be successful magicians in the long run by learning the building blocks of magic first. "I wanted to give them tools so they wouldn't just get the move on page 56," he says. "I would teach them a move and then a trick and then combine moves for a bigger trick."

Keene complied, improving his Spanish grade in exchange for the opportunity to immerse himself in the world of magic.

## KEENE ON THE JOB

One of the first things that patrons notice when walking into Wyatt's Eatery in Albany is the 40-foot-high ceiling covered with playing cards. For the last five years, Wyatt's has employed a magician for weekly shows, and the "Card on Ceiling" trick has become somewhat of a trademark.

Keene, who took over the gig about two years ago, has a volunteer choose one card and write his or her name on it. He slides the card in the middle of the deck, puts a rubber band around it and hurls the whole deck against the ceiling. The signed card sticks while the deck falls back down. "It's entertainment that first-time customers cannot believe we have here in Albany, Oregon," says Wyatt's owner Mike Tudor.

During his shift, Keene strolls from table to table and performs while patrons wait for their food. He spends a few minutes with each table, reeling off three or four tricks. "People want to come out and celebrate a special occasion, so they say, 'Let's go here because they have a magician,'" he says.

Thursdays, the night Keene works, have gone from one of the slower nights to one of the most anticipated since Tudor hired magicians. Regulars travel from as far as



Hart Keene

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Portland to catch the show. Tudor says the entire restaurant staff eagerly awaits Keene's shifts. "In the restaurant you're kind of a superstar," Keene says. "Everyone wants to see you. People cheer for you and it makes you feel good. It's nice to be a superhuman for a little while."

## GETTING YOUR BRAIN TRICKED

Jerry Andrus, an 87-year-old man with fluffy white hair and thin-rimmed gold glasses, opens the back door to his three-bedroom Victorian home. The house has been deemed the Castle of Chaos out of respect for the masterful illusions he produces within it. Andrus' cramped kitchen is packed with old mechanical parts, electrical equipment, stacks of books and a wood-burning stove. A treadmill with a computer monitor at the top blocks the doorway to the next room. He steps onto the treadmill,

straps himself in and wraps a metal wire around his arm. Now he can write free-verse poetry while getting his daily exercise. "I have to ground myself or the friction shorts out the computer," he explains.

Andrus, a former electrician and consummate tinkerer, houses his keyboard in a metal casing that holds additional switches, buttons and movable palm holders that he added to increase efficiency. "To hit backspace you have to reach way over here. So I moved it here," he says, pointing to a metal wire bent from the backspace key toward the enter key.

Andrus' keyboard is one of many day-to-day modifications that the sleight-of-hand expert and internationally renowned illusionist has made in his home for more than 70 years. He says it's not difficult for him to invent things.

One of his most famous inventions is an illusion called Box Impossible, a large wooden box frame that looks like two of the verti-

cal two-by-fours are behind perpendicular boards that they should be in front of. Your brain cannot distinguish the difference between Box Impossible and an ordinary box frame, so Andrus stands inside the box only to walk casually "through" the side and out.

"We all live in a very wonderful, real world among our manufactured images of it," he wrote in the October 1989 issue of *Genii: The International Conjurers Magazine*, which featured Box Impossible on the cover. "These manufactured images become our reality, and that is one reason magic works ... That's what permits us to survive!"

Andrus frequently attends International Brotherhood of Magicians meetings, which take place the third Sunday of every month in Albany. His interest in illusions is somewhat philosophical, and he believes that by knowing how the brain can misinterpret information, people can be more skeptical of things they see in the world around them. "I don't think illusions are important to magic itself," he says. "They're important to human beings — to realize that they can hold something in their own hand that they know what it is and their mind beneath the conscious level will overpower what they think it is."

Dr. Ray Hyman, a 77-year-old UO psychology professor, magician and friend of Andrus', agrees that performing illusions is a masterful way of studying the human brain. But there's a flip side, one that advertisers and politicians understand quite well. Both Dr. Hyman and Andrus recognize the possibilities for fraud and scams because of our natural tendency to believe our brains. "The key component is just being human," Hyman says. "The brain cannot be absolutely perfect. It works very well in situations to which it's adapted, and works automatically most of the time. But put in the situation in which it's not adept, then it can misfire."

Dr. Hyman spent time during the 1970s disproving popular psychics and mentalists who started making big bucks off people who believed their powers were real. Mind tricks were as simple as the famous Uri Geller asking volunteers to think of two geometric shapes, one inside the other, but not to think of a square. Nine times out of 10 the person would choose a triangle inside a circle.

"These are the easiest geometric designs people can think of anyway," Hyman says.

Hyman and Andrus began "The Mysticians" meetings for magic enthusiasts during the 1960s and continue to meet in the community room of the EWEB building the final Monday of every month.

## X-ELENCE

Asher and Stone's waitress-terrorizing dinner transpired during the final stage of last year's X-ellent Lecture Series — a bi-monthly, eight-city lecture tour organized by Asher, which has attracted some of the best magicians in the world to the Pacific Northwest