

MofO Knows
4132 S. Rainbow Blvd., Suite 377
Las Vegas, NV 89146

Change of Address Requested

I've been told that an NPR guy, when talking about Monica Lewinsky's hair, said he thought she was trying "to look like Penn Jillette." That made me laugh enough that I'll be very happy to have me and Monica both forgotten in 30 years. —Penn.



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MOFO GOES HOME

MOFO SEES

Thursday, May 13 -
Wednesday, May 26

LAS VEGAS, NV
Hollywood Theater
MGM Grand Hotel / Casino
9 p.m.



HIS TRANSMOGRIFICATION

You hold in your hands the last issue of *MofO Knows*.

Or, rather, you hold in your hands the last issue of *MofO Knows* a U. S. P. S. mail carrier will deliver to you.

Someday this issue might be worth something on Ebay.

In the meanwhile, *MofO Knows* is moving to cyberspace.

Soon, you'll have access to *MofO Knows* stories and illustrations simply by clicking on the link you'll find at Penn & Teller's web site, www.sincity.com.

But, if you're not Internet savvy, don't despair. We'll happily send you Penn & Teller's tour schedule and maybe a story or two every few months if you'll just send your request to:

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You might also want to use this opportunity to let Glenn Alai know how much you've appreciated having him stick postage and address labels on zillions of copies of *MofO Knows*, and how much you've appreciated having Dan Maizner and his crew at alphagraphics print zillions of copies of *MofO Knows*. Of course, all their efforts would have been futile if not for you, so, THANK YOU! See you on the 'Net! —T. Gene Hatcher





COPS, CATS AND CANUCKS



On a snowy day in Washington, D. C., five smiling cops came to Penn's and my dressing rooms at the Warner Theater. The lone female officer told us that firearms cannot be possessed in D. C. Even though Penn and I have Federal Firearms Dealers' licenses, the officers said that—without asking our secrets—they needed to ascertain that the weapons we use are not, in fact, real.

We informed them that the weapons we use are, in fact, real.

In that case, they said, they had to deal with the D. C. laws about firearms possession, and here is what they proposed: The weapons would be continually under their supervision while Penn

and I were in town. They would bring them to the theater before the show. An officer would remain throughout the show, and take them away and lock them up after we were done with each show.

Given the unreasonable gun laws, this seemed a very generous and sane plan.

One officer of the group stayed after the larger committee had left. He took me aside and asked me for a little information—very, very deferential to our secrets—about our ammunition. I gave it to him very frankly and he seemed astonished at my frankness.

Then he said, "Here's my card. Give me a call if you need to.... I mean, if you get into any difficult situations...." I thanked

him, but assured him I had no plans to commit crimes while I was a guest in my nation's capital.

During the shows, Penn thanked the officer who had delivered the guns for that particular performance. (It was the least Penn could do with the officer stuck backstage, unable to see the show, and waiting to take the weapons back to the secure storage area where—as they told us—ours were the least expensive firearms. Come to think of it, maybe next time I'll ask for a tour of that area.)

When we packed up to leave Washington, an officer stuck beside our crew, and a police escorted our truck all the way to the border of D. C. John, our truck driver, felt like a visiting dignitary. —*Teller.*

My wife and I have a new kitten. I don't like cats, but I do have a wife, and hence we have a new cat. Not just any cat, though. That would be too easy. What my wife tracked down was a deformed cat, a little stray thing that was supposedly born without eyelids. We went down to the vet's office to look at it. Ugh. My wife picked it up and snuggled it, and it purred playfully, and my wife went all saccharine on me. Not a good

sign, but I still had one deal-breaker question: Can this little pest actually SEE, or is this a blind deformed cat? So I tested it. I put the cat on the vet's table, rolled up a little ball of paper, and tossed it from behind him. He played cutely with the little paper wad. Okay, he can see. I flicked the ball back toward him; he lashed out with one polydactylous paw and picked the ball up; then he jammed it into his mouth and sat there chewing on it.

But, when I tried to retrieve it from his tiny kitten's throat, I discovered that the little trickster didn't have it in his mouth: he was sitting on the paper ball. It had to have been the neatest palm, fake, and ditch any cat has ever done. That eyelidless son of a gun with no thumbs fooled me as if he'd been doing the Cups and Balls all his life—or all six weeks of his life, anyway. We named him Teller. —*Dale Holmes.*

ONE night after Teller and I did a show in Detroit, I headed over to Canada. The Canadian border guard looked at my Nevada driver's license and said, "Are you a Newfoundlander? I mean, you look big and dumb. Are you even dumber than most Canadians?" It was really amazing. I just couldn't figure it out. He said, "How was your show tonight? I guess it went okay, I don't see any bullet holes in your head. I loved you on the radio the other day, talking about your ancestors being Newfoundlanders and you being even stupider. You're just great. Have fun." —*Penn.*

A DESICCATED BEAVER

Some time ago, I met a Canadian television journalist and producer named Patrick Watson. I like veterans, and this guy has been around the block more than a couple of times. He sent me some videotapes of a show he's been doing in Canada for twenty years. It's called *Witness to Yesterday*. It's a setup in which Patrick interviews historical figures (Lenin, Madame Curie, etc.). This was the program that inspired Steve Allen's *A Meeting of Minds*.

One day, Patrick called to inquire if I would like to play Houdini on his show. I warned him that I am not an actor (he's had lots of top-flight actors on). I



pointed out also that Houdini was a jock and I'm not. Patrick persisted, pointing out that by the time Houdini was my age,

Houdini was no longer Mr. Muscle, and that his face had collapsed into something not altogether unlike mine. Well, since it would be shown mainly in Canada (it's shown on PBS in the U. S.), I felt I had nothing significant to lose.

I flew up to Toronto in early February. Patrick arrived at my hotel and we worked for the next four hours, drinking tea, and trying to improve the script so there were no embarrassingly mystical speculations to make me queasy. One of the speculative parts of the script involved Patrick asking Houdini why he tried the Buried Alive only once; in the original script, Houdini said he heard his dead mother calling him, but, as you can imagine, I'd not tolerate that. So we changed it to a more touching and plausible speculation: that part of Houdini's morale was based on knowing that Ma was watching, and when he was buried, and knew she was no longer in the crowd, he had a fit of despair, aggravated by the knowledge that he was buried in the

same earth she was. For speculation, it was pretty respectable.

Next morning, all too bright and early, they picked me up and took me to the theatre where they were shooting. The director's truck was a white, painted schoolbus. The budget was so small that the makeup artist's request for a hairpiece to match Houdini's hairline had been denied, and so she spent two and a half hours pasting black crepe hair to my forehead with spirit gum, and PAINTING (yes, painting) the rest of my hair black, while the crew and director waited. They spent an extra half hour changing the lighting to make the hair look less emphatically like taxidermy. Then we finally began shooting.

It was hard, very hard. I had had absolutely no experience reading TelePrompter and very little playing a speaking character. I had decided to make absolutely no attempt to do a "Houdini voice" or to match my looks to his, beyond what the makeup had

accomplished. I did no memorization-of-dialog homework—I had had no time and the lines were changing till the last minute, anyway. We did one full run (by which time it was 4:55) then the producer said he'd spring for another half hour if we wanted to try a second take. Well, now I was warmed up, in fact talking a good deal more naturally than I do in the real world, and improvising, too—busting out with a chorus of "Rosabel" when talking about my side-show days. And all of this with a desiccated beaver pasted to my forehead.

So, who knows? Maybe it's fine; maybe it's an embarrassment, but the avoidance of embarrassment is the least worthwhile motive in the world. All I can say with assurance is that I had a glorious time. —
Teller.



One night in the middle of the Bullet Catch in Washington, D. C., while I was showing the guns just having been loaded by the audience members, lights started flashing, a siren blew, and a pre-recorded voice announced that there was a fire and the building had to be evacuated.

Well, I'll state proudly, the whole audience thought it was a gag. I was on stage with no idea what to do. But I figured I should take the safe route, so I told people to leave by the nearest exit. Theater staff came on the p. a. and told people not to panic. I pointed out that our problem was the opposite: *no one* was excited.

I felt very strongly that if it was an emergency, then I was going to be the last one out of the building. I was not going to live



with guilt at having s p l i t ahead of anyone else. I don't get many points for that, however,

because it was very clear it was a false alarm.

Finally someone from management came on stage and said it was a false alarm, someone had pulled the box. We brought everyone back in and I did some lines about it, "You know someone pulled that box because he or she probably thought it was really funny, and— Well, I agree. I think it's way funny." I also did some jokes about misdirection and some jokes about editing out that part ("...and, poof, the Statue of Liberty is gone!"). I talked informally about where we were in the Bullet Catch, had the audience members make sure their bullets hadn't been switched in the guns, and then went back to the scripted lines and tried to be a little stilted with the patter so they would KNOW we were back on book. People seemed to love it (many thought it was part of the show). Smart money says the false alarm wasn't caused by some joker, but rather by an electronic short, or, more likely, by a staff member leaning against the wall and then being too chicken to apologize. But it was fun. It was showbiz. — Penn.



After midnight one night last November I was driving out of the parking garage of a hotel-casino with movie theaters in Las Vegas. I was deep in the garage, and the exiting cars were really lined up. It took me twenty minutes to move one car-length. I finally started moving, got to level 2, and people started getting out of their cars and running. It was amazing. Finally, a quasi-official-looking guy ran up to my area and said, "Get out of your cars and run!" I tried to ask him what was going on, but he just said, "If I were you I'd move fast!"

Everyone was running. It was like a movie scene. We were running down stairs like crazy. We finally got to the street, and there were police and police cars all over. There were fire trucks arriving. I realized the problem must be a bomb threat,

but most people were standing close to the building. I decided to walk farther away.

I ended up standing in the parking lot with a lot of stoned people (they had emptied out of the midnight show of the Sick and Twisted Animation Festival.) Rumors were spreading like crazy and I heard someone say, "Why don't they just call Mel Gibson and Danny Glover?" The funniest line was from a woman who said, very seriously, "I wish it would blow up or they would find it! I need some closure on this."

I finally walked a few blocks and got a cab to take me to my house. I went back to the hotel the next morning and got my car. I never did find out for sure what had happened, but, man, it's pretty exciting to have someone yell, "Get out of your cars and run!" —Penn.