



## **Anthony Darkstone Brook In Conversation With Mark Weidhaas**

Mark is an outgoing friendly person with that amazing ability that makes you feel that you are special. In common with many other S.A.M members, I am looking forward to seeing him become President of our wonderful Society at this year's S.A.M Convention. The Convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia (home to several good magicians and especially Past President & good friend Dan Garrett)

I met Mark a couple of years ago at The SAM 2007 Convention in Dallas, Texas. He and I touched base several times during the Convention both formally at the National Council meeting and then informally at other times. One such occasion was at the Dealers Room where we had a fun time together and chatted about various topics and ideas.

Mark truly loves Magic and has very good organizational skills. For a goodly while, he was RVP for the North West and when I lectured and performed in Oregon, he took the time to send me a thank you note.

He is trying to manufacture 25 hour days to fit around his busy schedule but I managed to catch up with him to chat a while.

<http://www.inspectormagic.com/>



**ADB:** Hello Mark. Thanks for taking the time to chat. As I mentioned in my intro you haven't become President yet but as President –Elect you have a hectic schedule because you are not

only preparing yourself personally for the Convention in July but you have another role closely connected with the Convention .....tell us about that and how it came about ...

**MW:** Hi Tony. Thanks for the opportunity to take five and converse a while. I am both honored and thrilled to be the President-Elect and I am really looking forward to my inauguration in July. Becoming S.A.M President at the Atlanta Convention is something that is on my mind 24/7. It is a mixture of elation and also concern. Concern in the sense that I want to do my very best for The S.A.M.

My other role that you referred to is that of the Convention Registrar. Without going into long details that in itself although enjoyable is also a demanding task. I want this Convention to be talked about as the Friendliest Convention. We have top-class talent – a cutting edge young magician show - you may not recognize some of the names, but once they have performed at the S.A.M Convention, they will be highly sought after for other conventions. See them first in Atlanta where "You have a friend in 2010."

**ADB:** That's what I keep hearing ...the emphasis is on friendship. Tell us a bit more about, "You have a friend in 2010".

**MW:** I'm glad you brought that up. It was an idea that I had brewing for a while . Basically, "You have a friend in the SAM" began with a collectable Harry Houdini pin that we were giving to new members. Houdini was SAM President from 1917 to 1926. This year, I made a new pin with Harry Kellar. According to the SAM website, <http://www.magicsam.com/> 100 years ago in 1910, Kellar became the Dean of American Magicians. I have been giving this pin to S.A.M members I meet to celebrate this centennial celebration. Then I found a copy of a letter written by Kellar thanking Houdini and the Council for officially bestowing the title upon him. That letter is dated March 29, 1921.

I did some more research and found records and convention bills that referred to him as Dean back to 1907. Apparently, in July 1907, he received the first honorary member in the SAM and the title Dean. So the website was incorrect, and so are my pins!!! – that will teach me to investigate and research thoroughly !!!!

**ADB:** Well, in my opinion it is a good thing you did ...these historical accuracies are important. It also goes to show that your are meticulous and that, in my view, is a good quality for a S.A.M President. In fact, your performing persona is an investigator/inspector type ... share some of that background ....

**MW:** Like a lot of good things my character of Inspector Magic sort of fell into place. I am a professional structural engineer and I spent my free time as a volunteer fireman. When my job took me to another state (Cape Cod, Massachusetts), I discovered they had paid full time firemen - I needed a new hobby. I began presenting educational safety programs in my fireman's uniform. A magician is like a spy, sworn to secrecy. The character in my kid show bumbles along and it is the kids that are empowered, yet everything comes to a happy conclusion. Like Maxwell Smart from "Get Smart" or Inspector Clouseau from the "Pink Panther" series.

Interestingly, Don Adams played Maxwell Smart and he was also the voice of Inspector Gadget, a favorite cartoon of my kids. So, as I mentioned earlier, Inspector Magic just fell into place. I had an Axtell bird puppet named Brain the Birdbrain; Brain was the dog's name from the cartoon series. I would deliberately make a "mistake" call the birthday girl "my niece Penny" - another character from the series. The birthday girl would say "I'm not Penny, my name is Jennifer." And I'd reply "Oh, that's right, your my niece Jennifer...wait a minute, I don't have a niece named Jennifer." My goal was to entertain with magic but also get the kids to slap their face out of frustration with me - I usually achieved my goal.

**ADB:** What a great idea! It really takes "audience involvement" to another level. I know you also perform Magic for adults but I think it is the persona of Inspector Magic that allows you to express yourself in a more creative way ...

**MW:** Well..yes Tony ..you are right ..I've never thought about it that way, but if I was only ever allowed to perform as just one character that is the one I would choose. Don't get me wrong I enjoy all the facets of my performances for both children and adults...but yes ...I have a special fondness for Inspector Magic.

**ADB:** I love the character and especially the Promo photo. The Sherlock Holmes Deerstalker hat, the "giant " eye in the magnifying glass and telephone banana..just great fun and very creative ...how did you come up with that look ?

**MW:** I had the large telephone banana prop made special from a clown friend of mine – it looks great and I had to get it in the photo. In the show, I use it to get a chuckle when I answer it, and the caller thinks my act has "a peel." I thank him a "bunch" and then "split." You know, I really do perform magic in my shows somewhere between the one-liners. I've been using the magnifying glass for years. It is part of my logo that Ed Harris made for me. It also acts as a magicians' wand when I want to subtly show my hand is empty.

Anyway, I'm glad you enjoyed the photo. It was an SAM Assembly program – we have two very good photographers in our club, and they offered to have a photo-shoot night. Many of the members took advantage. I had the large telephone banana prop made special from a clown friend of mine – it looks great and I had to get it in the photo. In the show, I use it to get a chuckle when I answer it, and the caller thinks my act has "a peel." I thank him a "bunch" and then "split." You know, I really do perform magic in my shows somewhere between the one-liners. I've been using the magnifying glass for years. It is part of my logo that Ed Harris made for me. It also acts as a magicians' wand when I want to subtly show my hand is empty.

**ADB:** Interesting. I agree. It is important to portray the character, to play the part, to get into the role so that we can be better Entertainers. You live in Colorado Springs, Colorado and you won The Best of Colorado Springs" Award in 2008 and 2009. Share with us some of the background on that ....

**MW:** I love Colorado Springs, nestled up against "America's Peak," Pikes Peak. If you or any of your readers are in the area, please do look me up. The awards were a very pleasant surprise to me, voted by the local citizens through our local paper. But the award I have that is dearest to me is the Presidential Recognition award signed by both IBM President Joan Caesar and SAM President Bruce Kalver for the work I did as Logistics Manager for the 2008 Joint IBM/SAM Convention in Louisville. It was a lot of work – I have holes in the soles of two pairs of shoes due to that convention, but it got me hooked (and my wife, Anne hooked too).

**ADB:** Richly deserved. As we have mentioned before, you will soon be President of the oldest magic Club in the world and be following in the footsteps of such greats as Harry Houdini. Before I ask you about your thoughts and ideas for the future of The S.A.M please share with us some of your thoughts on Magic Clubs in general ....

**MW:** I've always been a staunch supporter of Magic Clubs. Currently, I belong to 4 clubs in Colorado - each is at a different stage, the infant small club where everything is new (what is a magic lecture?), the adolescent medium size club with its growing pains and the elder large club that is filled with wisdom. I enjoy each, participate with each and I grow from each sharing experience. Besides the S.A.M., I am also a member of the I.B.M. and The Magic Circle (A.I.M.C. with Silver Star). I helped create an IBM Ring and eventually became Ring President. I have always seen how a magic club can offer so much in this society of secrets. It gives opportunities to practice and grow, and to move forward. The club is a give-and-take sharing that you cannot have with the internet. I am disappointed when I hear of a magician who purposely shuns the magic clubs due to fear of theft of ideas, and go it alone. The club is alive and needs to be nurtured with positive participation among friends to grow.

**ADB:** I'm happy that you referred to the friendship in Magic. From personal experience I am very pleased with the great many friends that I have made, quite literally, all over the world ..thanks to Magic. My own empirical experiences of Life have been made richer because of my magical friends. I know this is also very important to you and we've touched on "You have a

friend in 2010” and the pin ..but in practical terms how do you see your future role as President and the friendship of Magic ?

**MW:** That is what it is all about – friendships. I have made wonderful friendships due to this silly hobby. It is because of these friendships that I have learned and grown to become a confident performer and taken the hobby to a point where I now earn a living with it. My best friend, mentor, and original S.A.M. sponsor when I joined was Alan Shuman, an investment broker and magician near Boston. He was the most giving and sharing member – you did not want to disappoint him by missing a single club meeting. He passed away doing what he loved – performing magic. I am at that point where I can give back to others and help them grow. We have some extraordinary new benefits for S.A.M. members that are about to be revealed. By doing my best to keep this organization great is the best way I can say “Thank You” to all those friends who helped me, and particularly my friend, Alan Shuman.

**ADB:** You and I have chatted informally about the International aspects of The S.A.M. The letterhead says “ A Worldwide Organization” and we have Ambassadors of magic namely David Copperfield and Brad Jacobs and several International Deputies like myself in Europe and Alan Watson in New Zealand, others in Israel and Japan, etc ... ..please share your thoughts on that .....

**MW:** Sure ..I'd be happy too ...Today, we have Assemblies and Members all over the world - 45 different countries have members. We are still an American Organization with American programs such as our Veterans Program, National Magic Week in October, our National Conference and our insurance program, but we have a worldwide membership and many programs that benefit all magicians. Yes, you can be a member of the Society of American Magicians no matter where you live. It's the oldest and most prestigious magic organization in the world. You too can join the likes of Kellar, Houdini, Thurston, Cardini, Tarbell, Guest, and Christopher.

**ADB:** Absolutely. You and I , and I'm sure, many others too, are on the same page on this one .... There are some new ideas that have been launched and a few more are in preparation ...

**MW:** Yes. You are right Tony. There are a number of S.A.M Member ideas: For our worldwide members, we have begun a new membership option. It seems the magazine, M-U-M (one of, if not the, best magic periodical, edited by Michael Close) can be delayed or even lost being shipped over seas. In addition, the extra cost of shipping has to be paid by the international member. Now, we have a less expensive member option that will deliver the magazine directly to your computer on time. It is the paperless option and it is included in the annual subscription of only \$45.

It takes a little getting used to, but is very intuitive and easy to use - flipping pages on your computer! We have links on our ads that take you right to the advertisers' website. You can print a page if you like, or if you want the entire issue, you can order it. By the way, we also have a trial membership - a 4-month membership that includes the M-U-M, and the other benefits of membership for \$25. All of this can be found in detail on: <http://www.magicsam.com/>

**ADB:** Just great. I am a huge fan of M-U-M for many reasons. As you know, I was honored to be featured in January 2001 and for three years had the honor of being Co-Host with Dan Garrett on World Class Magic. A few articles of mine have appeared there since. However, to be totally honest, I enjoy it because of the interesting articles and indeed ideas, effects and knowledge that it always contains. I have no problem with publicly admitting that some of my best performance ideas were sparked by something I read in M-U-M. Our magazine reflects the fellowship of The S.A.M. Now this is what you mean isn't it about the friendship ?

**MW:** Yes Tony. I cannot stress and emphasize that point strongly enough. M-U-M the magazine stands for our motto: Magic-Unity-Might. The June issue will mark the occasion of Volume 100, Number 1! That is a long history of members sharing stories, tricks, reviews, and news. I've heard some Assemblies and magicians are planning to buy ads in this issue to offer their congratulations!

**ADB:** Great idea! Mark, you also told me that you are willing to lecture for the silly fee of just \$1. You trying to put us other lecturers out of business?

**MW:** No Tony, of course not ...I know you are kidding ...but it's not that kind of lecture .... It is more a kind of get together and sharing ...I call it a lecture but it is, as I said, a tool that helps Magicians to learn to develop. Since I will be traveling to Assemblies as President, I will be providing information about the new and old SAM programs. If they're also interested, while I am there, I can also provide this program based on my experiences performing for families. It's called "Anatomy of a Kids Show," and I will show how to get your foot in the door, how to get a leg up on the competition, how to get a hand from the adults, use your head when picking material, transplant effects into other shows and perform from the heart. And by the way, it's not a Dollar. It Free.

**ADB:** Mark, you're right. I was kidding. I phrased it that way so I could let everyone see the merit in what you are doing and that you will, schedules permitting, be available to give this lecture to any Assembly. You will be drawing from your own vast experience in these areas .....

**MW:** Yes Tony. They are from mainly my Inspector Magic shows: My favorite venue to perform is educational school programs. I have about 25 different theme magic shows, and my forte is developing these programs that are entertaining for the children (and the teachers) yet provide quality educational curriculum. My shows are multi-faceted. For example, I have a geography program that has a different magic effect for each continent. But it also has another tie-in to each continent with a different Dr. Seuss book, so now the show is also a literacy program. But Dr. Seuss stories often deal with diversity and acceptance of others, so it is also an anti-bully program. I'll have to put some of the shows on hold, as I am looking forward to traveling for the S.A.M. Besides the US, I hope to travel to England and The Magic Circle and to the S.A.M Assembly in Japan.

**ADB:** It's not long now , just a few months and you will be President of The S.A.M. I would like to take this opportunity, to personally and indeed on behalf of all S.A.M. members worldwide, to wish you good fortune and much success. Thank you Mark for taking the time to share. It has wonderful conversing with you.

**MW:** Thank you Tony. It has been a pleasure. And I am glad that I can call you my friend in 2010, and always! Please let your readers know I look forward to greeting them and become friends with them in Atlanta, June 30 - July 3.

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