This book is dedicated to
our dear friends,
Mick and Shar Palmer,
with appreciation for your
inspiration and encouragement

Your "Forever Friends",
Duane and Mary
"ASSISTING THE GOSPEL MAGICIAN"

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"Assisting The Gospel Magician"

INTRODUCTION: HOW TO BE A GOSPEL MAGICIAN'S ASSISTANT
(WITHOUT BEING MISERABLE)

She didn't know what to do. She had been asked to help with a Gospel Magic program.
She didn't know where to stand.
She wasn't sure what to wear.
She didn't know if she should look at the audience or look at the magician.
She didn't know how to hold his props.
She didn't know how to respond to applause.
She didn't know if she should smile or act serious.
She wasn't sure when she was supposed to walk out on stage or to wait off stage.
Frankly, she wasn't even sure how to walk out. Walking is something she never thought about...until she knew everyone would be watching. When she started thinking about it she got worried. Did she walk fast or slow? Did she look weird when she walked or did she not?
She didn't know what to do.
She felt awkward, nervous, self-conscious, and embarrassed.

He misinterpreted her feelings. He assumed her uneasiness was because she didn't support what he was doing. He thought she thought he was an inept performer and was embarrassed to be seen on stage with him. He decided she wasn't in favor of his ministry and she didn't trust him.
The result of these feelings was an argument. Harsh things were said that produced bitterness. They never did work together on stage.
A sad thing about this situation is she did support
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his ministry and she did trust him. She would have loved for them to be a team in sharing the Gospel by way of illusions and object lessons. From the very beginning she wanted to help. She just didn't know what to do.

This book is written to wives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters, and daughters as well as to husbands, boyfriends, fathers, brothers, and sons who may be called upon to help with a Gospel Magic presentation.

Since the two most likely to be called upon are wives and girlfriends the book will primarily speak in such terms. However it is for all who now and then have the opportunity to play the role of "assistant".

The book is written in response to a need my wife and I have often heard expressed. "HOW DO YOU ENJOY BEING AN ASSISTANT? WHAT IS AN ASSISTANT SUPPOSED TO DO? HOW DO YOU OVERCOME FEAR AND NERVOUSNESS? HOW CAN YOU GIVE COMPETENT HELP?"

Much is available to give the magician or primary minister and performer instruction and direction. Little if anything is available for the one, who by way of assisting, is a big part of a program even though she or he is not the center of attention.

With this book our desire is to contribute information and encouragement to this area that is often neglected. We will try to answer the questions often asked. Our aim is to give direction and ideas that will take the pain out of helping with a program and make it a matter of joy and increased effectiveness instead (Ecclesiastes 4:9).
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PERSONAL NOTE

Mary and I delight in working together. I have come to the point in life where I am disappointed if she cannot be part of a program I do. We enjoy each other. As a team we find added strength in ministry.

This is not something that instantly or automatically happened. Our involvement in Gospel Magic has spanned 18 years. In the early years Mary was busy with the children. To put it simply; her hands were already full. There wasn't room for holding magic props. Once the children were older she began to assist me. Having an assistant was not something I understood. No one had ever told me that an assistant is a partner in the presentation. All I knew to do was have Mary serve as a "walking table". At that time our programs were not much fun for her.

As the years went by we discovered that just as we need each other in real life we also need each other in ministry. She adds something to the programs that I cannot have alone. Certainly her physical presence is a blessing for me. Carrying items, folding silks, helping with crowd control, stealing loads that I later produce, and sometimes actually doing the tricks that the audience thinks I am doing is all wonderful. Much more than that and better is her personality. She is somebody special on platform and stage. She is in no way just a "walking table".

We've learned through experience. At times we have learned the hard way. Our aim now, through sharing what we have learned, is to make the experience of others easier. We also want to inspire others to grow in the joy of teamwork in ministry.
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OUTLINE OF BOOK

We have divided the matter of assisting a Gospel Magician into 6 major areas:

I. COMMITMENT
   A. THE DECISION
   B. THE WITNESS

II. CHARACTER
   A. CHEERLEADER?
   B. COMEDY?
   C. CLEVER?
   D. CLASSY?
   E. COMMITTED?
   F. WALKING TABLE?
   G. THE SECRET TO FINDING YOUR BEST STAGE PERSONALITY

III. CONFIDENCE
   A. INFORMATION
   B. PLANNING
   C. PRACTICE
   D. EXPERIENCE
   E. HANDLING MISTAKES

IV. CARRIAGE
   A. PACE
   B. POSING
   C. POSTURE
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D. ACKNOWLEDGING THE AUDIENCE

V. CLOTHES

A. CLEAN  
B. COMFORT  
C. CLOSEUP VERSUS STAGE  
D. COSTUME  
E. COSMETICS

VI. COMPETENT

A. KNOWING THE PROGRAM  
B. BACKSTAGE  
C. KEEP BUSY  
D. HANDLING THE SOUND AND LIGHT PEOPLE  
E. CUE UP THE TAPES

CONCLUSION

Is it worth it? Yes!
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CHAPTER ONE: COMMITMENT

Someone has said that maintaining positive direction in life is the result of riding a three part train.

The engine is FACTS
The coal car is FAITH
The caboose is FEELINGS

Facts are the true source of strength and provide the ability to accomplish proper goals.

Faith in facts is what keeps a person moving forward. By faith people follow where the facts lead.
Feelings eventually move to where facts and faith first have been. When we know the truth and do the truth we will in time come to appreciate the truth.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to reverse the three parts of that train? When such is done a person moves in a negative direction.

We listen to feelings first, then we put faith in feelings assuming what they tell us must be right. Finally we assume that facts will eventually prove what we feel.

People with low self-esteem often do this. They feel like a failure. Since they feel it they begin to believe they are a failure. Then they quickly latch on to any discouraging experience and see it as "proof" of being a failure.

People who don't feel attractive do it too. They feel their appearance is unpleasant to others. They begin to believe they are better off not being seen by others. Eventually they become so sensitive that even a compliment can be taken as a criticism or "proof" that their appearance is bad. (Someone
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comments about her lovely smile. She thinks, "The only nice
thing they can think of to say about me is I have a nice smile.
Nothing else is worth noticing").

What does this have to do with assisting a Gospel Magician?
One of the first hurdles a new assistant must get over is
learning to look at things realistically instead of emotionally.

You may not feel attractive enough to be on stage. What are
the facts?
First of all; in the context of ministry, physical attraction
has nothing to do with the purpose of being on stage.
Secondly; you do not go on stage so people can look at you,
you are on stage to help point people to Christ.
Thirdly; you probably are basically a normal looking person.
Cannot normal looking people serve God? Isn't there a place
for showing by way of example that ordinary people can make
exciting presentations of the Gospel?
Fourth: with the help of proper clothes, cleanliness, and makeup
you probably are just as pleasant in appearance as anyone else.
(If you get a chance notice the difference between how someone
else looks on stage and off stage. Many of the people who seem
beautiful or exceptionally gifted on stage are only average
when you meet them on the personal level).

So face the facts first. Don't let feelings of inadequacy
keep you from serving God. MAKE A DECISION TO DO WHAT GOD IS
GIVING YOU OPPORTUNITY TO DO! Put your faith in the facts.
God can use you! God will use you! Start serving Him and watch
how confidence will develop and you will become more comfortable
with yourself. Sooner or later your emotions will "catch up
with your will".

So you don't feel particularly talented? Does what you are


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being asked to do require that much talent? Or does it only require a willingness to try something? Again ask, what are the facts?

How do you know you aren't talented? Maybe you've never really been given a fair chance to discover your gifts. Whatever your gifts may or may not be, you likely are able to do what needs to be done. Do you believe that when God calls He also equips?

So once more it all boils down to the matter of decision. The messages feelings send to you may not always be true. Don't let foolish fears keep you from spiritual service. Don't have an opinion about your abilities that is lower than God's. Understand that it is almost always a bit scary to attempt something new. But as the saying goes, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained". Another saying is, "It may be risky to go out on a limb, but on the limb is where you find the fruit. You can starve to death hanging on to a trunk".

So much for preaching. We want you to understand that being an assistant to a Gospel Magician does not begin with you having proud feelings about being worthy to go on stage. In fact, if such is the case, such feelings would disqualify you from spiritual work. Being an assistant to a Gospel Magician begins with a commitment to honoring God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him". It may be that saying yes to the role of assistant, in spite of your doubts about yourself, is a way you are being called to please God.

Here is another matter to consider. In our time we are witnessing the disintegration of the family and family values. Divorces occur at a rate of more than one million a year in America. Two out of every five children live in a single parent home or blended home. Many are suggesting that living together is a better option than marriage because the risk is so great that marriage won't work out.
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How does this relate to assisting a Gospel Magician? If you are a wife...isn't there a need for the world to see that husbands and wives can work together and enjoy it? Isn't there a need to get a family witness in front of people? There certainly is!

As Christians we have the opportunity and responsibility to show others that people can be committed to each other, laboring side by side in ministry, and enjoying it. Whether it is husband and wife or parent and child doing the program we can be giving a positive witness for the family. If it is only a matter of being friends and sharing in a presentation we can be demonstrating the love of God through our combination of individual gifts to achieve a common purpose.

Mary and I hope our love for each other is evident on stage. We hope that along with the direct message of our ministry we are also indirectly encouraging people about the value of the Christian home. This is a message that needs to be given and received.

Look at your role of assisting a Gospel Magician as a place for giving double testimony. Your words will explain the Christian faith, your actions will reinforce the importance and value of the family.

Assisting the Gospel Magician is spiritual work before it is stagecraft or personality work. That is why the whole matter must start with and be continually guided by a commitment to serve God. MAKE THE DECISION TO DO WHAT GOD IS CALLING YOU TO DO...BE EXCITED ABOUT THE WITNESS YOU CAN SHARE IN THE PROCESS!
CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTER

Once a person has made a commitment to taking on the challenge of being a Gospel Magician's assistant the next thing to deal with is the matter of identity. What role will be played and what personality will be portrayed on stage? Having a clear picture of the character one is presenting makes the entire matter of assisting much easier. Frankly, until one knows who he or she is in front of a crowd there never will be confidence or even understanding of what is to be done. Actions cannot be separated from personality.

Here is a list and brief description of roles an assistant might play:

A. CHEERLEADER

A cheerleader is enthusiastic about the magician's performance. She is impressed and excited about everything that happens. She moves across the platform with a smile and bouncy step. She may even clap her own hands about something and lead the audience in applause. There is a sense in which she is assisting the audience in its response to the magician even while she is helping with his effects.

*Caution: The cheerleader is a wonderful role to play, but it can be overdone. Smile, clap, and laugh at appropriate times. Lead the crowd with your enthusiasm, but don't embarrass the crowd by silly reaction to every little thing that happens. If you get too carried away the crowd will be paying more attention to you than to the primary performer. You will become a clown rather than an assistant.
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B. COMEDY

This role has many possibilities. Here are some to think about:

1. You may be the klutz who in a humorous way foils the attempts of the magician to be "sophisticated".

2. You may be the sophisticated one who is not particularly impressed by what the magician is doing. The crowd will find it funny that you are not in awe of what the magician seems to think are his "great feats".

3. You may be good with words and clever remarks. At proper times you react to the magician with a statement that is basically a pun, joke, or light-hearted sarcasm

4. You may be compensating for the magicians apparent failures. Possibly you secretly turn his "Hippity Hop Rabbits" the last time after the crowd has caught on to his turn around move earlier. Maybe you pick up a silk and put it in your pocket when he is not looking. When he notices it missing he assumes it actually has vanished.

5. You may bring comedy to the program by displays of affection for the magician. A well timed wink or tossed kiss can get a good laugh. Especially if such a thing appears to temporarily distract the magician. When properly done, "flirting on stage", can be funny.

If you do take the comedy approach it would be good to study comedy techniques. Making people laugh is an art. Read books on the subject, watch famous comedians and analyze why people like them, think about what makes you laugh and why. Most of all think of comedy in the context of "joy". Don't go for cheap laughs and don't be ridiculous. Have fun and find ways to make things fun. The comedy role means you are bringing delight to the audience. As a Christian the humor must be uplifting. Not crude or demeaning.
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*Caution: The comedy approach can also be overdone. As an assistant your task is to add to the program, but not be the program. The humor you add is like a seasoning to a meal, it is a pleasant addition but not the main course.

C. CLEVER

With the clever assistant the roles of the preceding section (B. COMEDY) are reversed. The magician is the comedian. He is the klutz and you are the one who picks up the pieces and makes things work. He is the one who tosses the kisses and makes the winks. You are the one who is in control. His mishaps don't bother you a bit. Instead you compensate for his incompetency.

Another possibility with CLEVER is that as an assistant you are a magician in your own right. Some famous magic acts in the secular world have spots where the assistant presents an effect while the primary performer moves off stage (Bob and Brenda or Victor and Diamond are good examples). With this approach the primary performer is given opportunity to rest and reset things. It also makes for more variety in the program.

If this approach is adopted the conduct of the assistant will be much like that of the magician. They will be a performing duo rather than performer and assistant.

One more variation on CLEVER is that of the assistant carrying on a private dialog with the audience by way of body language. She may nod, or raise an eyebrow, or shake her head. This works well when the magician pretends to be taking himself too seriously. In response to his efforts to be impressive she is communicating in a fun way that she knows the truth of the situation better than he.

D. CLASSY
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The classy assistant is sharp, well-dressed, and poised. She moves across the stage with grace. She is not interested in saying much or even in being noticed. Her every movement, gesture, and pose is to emphasize what the magician is doing. There is definitely a place for this kind of assistant in Gospel Magic. This does not mean an attitude of pride or attention to vain beauty is encouraged. It does mean a testimony of elegance and excellence can be very effective. Confidence and dignity combine for a powerful witness.

*Comment: At times Christians are accused of having a sloppy approach to life. Often the criticism is undeserved, but on occasion it is warranted.

If your personality is such that you can do it; the giving of a humble yet classy presentation may be a good tool for letting the world know that Christians are not a "bunch of losers".

E. COMMITTED

For some people the best approach in helping with a Gospel Magic program is to simply let your concern for spiritual things to show through. You may not be comfortable with comedy, it is not easy for you to act clever or classy, and your personality is not that of a cheerleader. But you do love the Lord and you want others to love Him too.

You are on stage because you are needed and you are willing to serve. Whether or not you enjoy being in front of people you do enjoy serving God. That is your testimony and witness. You want the program to be a success and you are doing your best to make it a success because you care about the ministry.

*Caution: You are not a martyr. Please do not communicate to the audience that assisting is a matter of sacrifice that you
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only endure because there is no one else to do it. If your attitude isn't good seek God about it. The joy of the Lord needs to be in you and people need to see it. Someone has said that "Life is God's gift to us. What we do with life is our gift to Him". Let's be cheerful givers. When God calls us to do something that is not natural or easy for us we should view it as a special opportunity.

F. WALKING TABLE

This is not a desirable role. It means you just walk on or off stage carrying things. When you are standing still you are holding something. Other than that you are expressionless.

Although undesirable this is one of the more common roles for assistants. Being unwilling to take the risk of letting personality shine through the attempt is made to be there without "being there". Movement on stage takes place in a robot like fashion. It is almost as if the assistant believes that by pretending not to notice the audience...the audience then will not notice him or her.

One of the quickest ways to become conspicuous is to ignore both the audience and your own individuality. People who pretend like they don't exist are strange. Such behavior draws attention in a negative manner.

Since you are somebody, be somebody! Trying to hide behind a slouch or blank expression is foolish. Even if you are a true introvert you can smile politely, walk briskly, and occasionally acknowledge applause. You are not a prop that moves. You are a person. You will be happier and the overall program will be much stronger if you exhibit personality and character.

G. THE SECRET TO FINDING YOUR BEST STAGE PERSONALITY

Normally the best character for a person on stage or platform
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is a magnification of what he or she is in real life. The best character for an assistant is usually a magnification of the everyday relationship he or she has with the performer.

There will be exceptions to the rule. However, most of the time if someone is not at least slightly funny in personal conversation it won't be easy to play a comedy role before an audience. If a person is not "classy" about life in general it will not come across well for them to be classy in front of a group.

This actually is good news. It means there is no need to try to be what you aren't. Instead figure out who you are and accentuate features of your identity that an audience will relate to.

For example: (This is revealing some family secrets) On the everyday level I (Duane) am a confident, well-organized, disciplined person. In most matters I assume I know what I am doing and when issues come up I conclude I have the right answers. In spite of my positive attitude I am far from perfect. On occasion I am wrong and especially on the domestic level I get confused and make mistakes. I can't find my shirt even though it is in plain view in the closet, I don't know how to cook, I get all mixed up handling orders for our mail order business, few people can read my handwriting, and when I try to make something that requires artistic talent it looks like a first grader constructed it.

On the other hand, Mary, who is not nearly as intimidating of a person as I tend to be, is very competent in the areas where I mess up. She is lots of fun, but also a very strong person. Of the two of us, I have the tendency to be most childish. She is efficient, energetic, and talented.

How does this translate to stage? We have found that the audience responds well when I play the role of the primary performer who is capable, confident, but not superior. Mary plays the role of an assistant who is not the least bit
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...intimidated by me. Occasionally she seems to know more about making my tricks work than I do. She is enthusiastic and resourceful. When I seem to be a bit confused, she knows exactly what to do.

In other words, what we are on stage isn't much different than what we are at home.

Someone has said that the key to good showmanship is to be yourself. But when being yourself, be the best self you can be. Focus on the positive aspects of your character. Squelch the negative aspects. Be honest. The world doesn't need to know all your faults. You don't need to pretend like you don't have any. Take that which you fundamentally are and build it up for the sake of communicating to large numbers of people at once.

Your best stage personality is the best and most interesting version of who you already are.
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CHAPTER THREE: CONFIDENCE

There will likely always be some nervousness when getting ready to perform or minister. Nervousness can be controlled and, to a large degree, conquered by attending to several practical matters.

A. INFORMATION

You will be much more at ease about a program if you know what you are supposed to do and when it is supposed to be done. Get a copy of the script. If there is no script either ask the main performer to write one or talk through the program so you can write down your own list of effects and their order.

*Note: If you are working with someone who is disorganized and unsure himself of what will happen...insist that he gets organized. You simply must know the order of the program ahead of time. If he can't tell it to you you can't work with him.

Performers who "fly by the seat of their pants" when it comes to making presentations almost always have to be a one person show. You are an assistant, not a mind reader. If you are forced to guess at what is next you will be miserable.

We normally post a script of the show several places on stage. We have one by the sound booth, one or two pinned to the back of the backdrops, as well as a prompting board out front. For small programs Mary keeps a copy of the program with her back stage besides the prompting board I use out front.

It is also wise to know where a clock is or have a watch handy. You will feel better seeing and knowing the time rather than having to ask about it or guess at it.
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Learn how the props work. Even though you may never do the trick it is good to understand its operation. That way if something does go wrong you may be able to help. If you realize at the last minute something wasn't properly set you can take care of it. If something breaks or doesn't work you will know how to carry it off stage without revealing the secret.

Talk through the program with the magician. Make sure you understand his expectations. Don't let him assume you already know what to do. If you have questions, ask them.

What this boils down to is taking an interest in the program and being just as concerned about its success as the magician is.

B. PLANNING

Along with having a written list it is also important to think things through. Mary and I do a large flag production in one of our routines. Each time Mary must look at the room or stage and determine how she will exit. If the ceiling is low the flag must be carried in a special way. If the room is crowded she must know which aisle she will go down.

Anticipate problems and be ready for them. If the platform is small and you are helping produce silks from a prop... where will you stand? How will you get around the choir loft? Are there any chairs or microphone stands in the way?

Think about your own job. For instance: the magician produces the rabbit, but you load it into the box ahead of time. When will you load it? Where will you load it?

If you are organized well enough to do so you may put together a check list of things you need to consider relating to each program.

It is also good to plan on working together in setting up and putting things away. For our program Mary connects wires
on the sound system while I set the speakers. She folds silks for our "Big Band Music Routine" while I get my magic stand in place. During the program she folds things or puts them away after they are used. When it is time to pack up she often has already done a lot of it while I was performing out front.

C. PRACTICE

If anything is the key to confidence this is it. Even though it seems a pain to take time for it, in the long run it is a great blessing to learn to rehearse. A good rehearsal involves three things: 1. The talk through
2. The walk through
3. The walk and talk through

First of all you talk together about what is going to happen and how you want it to look. Then you go through the motions without the patter and music. This is the walk through. You are looking for problem areas, examining angles, thinking about where to stand, and making sure you can easily make your entrance and exit.

The walk and talk through is when you actually rehearse the entire program. You play the music, say the patter, and go through every motion.

Once you are familiar with a program you probably won't need to do a walk and talk through very often. However it is almost always necessary to talk through a program and do a simple walk through if possible. It is amazing how often a possible difficulty becomes apparent as you go through the motions of a program. You realize something isn't properly set or you discover there isn't room to do a move, or you find that the audience would see something you don't want them to see.

As a magician, I prepare for every program by talking it through. Even if I have done the program hundreds of times before. I may not say every word and do the complete patter,
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but I at least run it through my mind. I then always try to
walk through things as well. If something keeps me from walking
it through I mentally picture what will happen. I am convinced
this makes me a better performer. I know it puts me at ease
to know that all is ready and in place.

D. EXPERIENCE

The longer you do things the more comfortable you will become.
Doing does seem to be the best way to promote learning. Don't
be hard on yourself if things are difficult and confused at
the start. You will improve.

Take advantage of opportunities for experience. Before you
do a big church program, go to a rest home or do something for
a children's Sunday School class.

It is good to test new routines and work out the "bugs" in
somewhat casual situations. If you wait until a large show
to do your first program or to try out a new trick you are asking
for problems.

Let your ministry grow. Volunteer to share with AWANA groups,
children's ministries, junior church, youth groups, etc. Build
your confidence and competence while "on the job".

E. HANDLING MISTAKES

Concerning mistakes remember these things:

1. If you don't make a big deal out of the mistake the audience
may not ever know it was made. Getting shook up calls attention
to what went wrong. Simply going on with the program diverts
attention from it.

2. If the mistake is obvious and cannot be covered up, grin
about it and press on. If it doesn't seem to bother you it won't
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bother the audience. If your attitude is "on with the show" theirs will be too.

3. Remember you are a Christian. On the platform or stage is not the place for venting frustration with your partner if the problem was his fault. Stifle the dirty looks. Resist the tendency to place blame. Don't let your pride quench the work of the spirit. God can and will use us in spite of imperfections in presentation. God may not use us if we display sinful attitudes.

4. Remember that even when the secret of a trick seems to have been openly revealed to an audience through some mishap, many in the audience still won't realize it. They will know something was seen that wasn't supposed to be, but they may not connect that something with the secret to the trick.

The only way everyone is likely to know it is the secret is by your reaction to the problem confirming it. So keep a positive attitude. Keep them guessing even if something definitely has gone wrong.
CHAPTER FOUR: CARRIAGE

Walking is one of the most natural things in the world to do...until you stop and think about it. Or worse yet one realizes others are watching him or her walk. Walking quickly becomes awkward and weird when one begins to wonder, "What do I look like...from the back...when I walk".

It is normal for an assistant to become self-conscious about movement in front of people. Here are some basic matters to consider that should relieve some of the self-consciousness.

A. PACE

Even if you don't feel it, act confident. Don't shuffle or slowly amble out on the stage. A hesitant and unsure assistant causes much more distraction than one who moves straight out to the place where she needs to be, does what she needs to do, and moves straight away.

Illustration: Suppose you were in a meeting and a person with a message for the main speaker came into the room. The person couldn't decide whether or not to interrupt the speaker so first he stood in the doorway. Then he walked up a few rows hoping the speaker would notice him. Then he walked up a few more rows. Then he started to interrupt the speaker but thought better of it and stopped himself. Then he began to fidget. Finally the speaker noticed him and said, "May I help you?". At that point he says, "I have a message for you".

Such a situation is a long distraction. The audience watches the messenger wondering what he is up to. For five minutes or more the audience is more curious about what the man will do that it is interested in what the speaker is saying. When the
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man says, "I have a message", everyone in the room wonders what the message is and continues to wonder about it even after the speaker receives the message and goes back to what he or she was saying.

Wouldn't it have been better if the messenger had simply come to the door, walked directly and politely to the speaker, handed the message to the speaker, and then left?

Anytime a speaker is interrupted it is a distraction, but far less distraction is caused by a quiet, confident, efficient delivery than is caused by a hesitant, awkward, fumbling delivery.

So the best assistant is the one who moves at a quiet confident pace.

Most people involved with stage and theater recommend walking faster on stage than you do in real life. Don't move at a frantic pace, do walk with a brisk step. Think of it as your "happy walk" or your "I know what I'm doing walk".

A slow show is normally a dull show. People don't want anyone to waste their time. They don't enjoy being made to wait. When you carry something on or off stage, when you walk on to be part of a routine, take a direct route and be speedy (but not reckless).

B. POSING

At times the assistant is part of a scene. She has helped with an illusion or she is standing nearby at the climax of a trick. At such times the assistant must point at the center of the action by way of a pose.

This does not mean "pose" as in a Miss America contestant modeling a swimsuit. That type of pose draws attention to the one who is posing. The pose for the assistant is one that sends
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the attention of the audience to what the magician is doing.

How is this done? First and most important by a look. People tend to look where others are looking. (Remember the old gag about standing on a street corner and looking up into the sky. Soon passers by are stopping and looking up into the sky too).

You must look where the magician wants them to be looking. Basically, other than for a brief moment when the crowd is directly acknowledged, the assistant always is gazing toward the magician. You do not look at the crowd, you do not look at your feet, you do not look off stage, you look toward the magician and the effect he is performing.

Secondly you pose by actually pointing with your body. When at the same depth of stage that the magician is you stand sideways to the audience and facing the magician. If you are back a ways you are half turned so that you are aimed toward the magician as he is out front.

Never walk in front of the magician or get out ahead of him on stage so the audience has to look around you to see him. If you must move completely across the stage make sure you step back far enough that you go behind...not in front...of the magician.

Fundamentally posing means pointing. Your look and the angle at which you stand must point the attention of the audience to where the magician would most want it to be.

Concerning facial expression: When you smile, smile easily. Smile with your eyes and your mouth. Smile like you are smiling at a friend. Do not look grim or concerned. When you are just watching things happen...watch them happen. There is no need to contort your face into a new expression every time the magician does something different. Avoid exaggerated reactions. A tendency for beginners at this kind of thing is to respond in a bigger way than necessary. Relax.
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C. POSTURE

If you are to stand still at some time during a routine...stand still! Don't fidget. Don't turn your head various directions.

What do you do with your hands? Use them when necessary. Move them only when they need to be moved. If you have nothing to do or nothing in your hands then drop your hands to your sides and let them hang loosely and easily. There is no need to fold your hands or to try to hold them stiff as if you were a statue.

There is no need for a military posture. Don't worry about standing at "attention". On the other hand, don't be sloppy. The primary thing to keep in mind when just standing is be still and at ease.

Maybe the ideal word to describe posture is be "professional". Look like you know what you are doing, but you aren't worried about what you are doing.

*Note: You say, "but I am worried about what I am doing...how can I not show that". The answer is: PRACTICE. That's right, even if you feel silly about it, pretend the show is happening in your living room. Walk to a certain spot. Stand there as if you are watching the magician. Concentrate on not wiggling around or fiddling with your hands. Remember that when nervous one usually feels the need to do something. It is part of the fear reaction we naturally have that says "FLEE". You want to move. In this case there is no reason to move. Learn to control the desire to pick at something, or sway, or tap a foot, or bob a knee. Standing still in a relaxed confident manner while in front of people is not easy. It can become easy if you practice it and tell yourself, "I look just fine. I actually look better and am less of a distraction when my hands hang at my sides and my body is not swinging back and forth".
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*Note: For some physical and psychological reason, standing on the left side of the main performer is less of a distraction than standing on the right. When at his left people are more likely to look away from you. When at his right they are more inclined to look at you.

D. ACKNOWLEDGING THE AUDIENCE

Remember: The audience is many, you are one. Therefore it takes the audience longer to see you than it does for you to see them. One person in the audience sees you as quickly as you see him. However the audience is not one person. If the audience as a whole feels like you appreciate it you must take time to entirely acknowledge it.

How is this done? First of all by pausing an extra length of time when acknowledging applause. When you are introduced you will seem to be rude if you only nod your head toward the group and then look away. If not rude you will at least seem to be unprofessional or disinterested.

You must take time to make sure the audience knows you know it consists of real people. So look directly at the center of the audience and smile. Look to one side of the crowd and then the other...pausing to smile. Don't stare at the ceiling, floor or walls. Don't be afraid to meet the gaze of someone. Don't forget that feelings don't always tell the truth. It may feel awkward to look directly at the audience when acknowledging applause or being introduced, but it does not appear awkward. To the contrary it may feel less awkward to look away from the audience, but that does appear both awkward and inconsiderate.

This may be helpful. Think of your response to applause from the audience as a way of saying "thank you". You are telling
them you appreciate the fact that they appreciate you. You do this by a smile..and allowing time for everyone to see the smile. You do this by way of a bow or nod of the head..and again you make sure everyone sees you giving this signal that says, "thank you".

Another familiar adage from show business that applies to being an assistant is "don't step on applause". When people are clapping about something, maybe simply clapping after you have been introduced, don't cut the clapping short by moving or starting your action before the clapping starts to die down. Wait and listen. Once the audience response begins to subside..then it is time to do something.

This is especially important to remember at the end of a program. If the pastor calls for a round of applause, or if you are on stage and there is a curtain call..it is courtesy (not pride or ego) on your part to let the people applaud and humbly accept their response by giving them a few moments to see that you do hear them.

Let's state it again: Acknowledging applause is your way of saying "thank you" to the audience for their "thank you". Your "thank you" is a courtesy. The audience needs to know that you heard their message.
What about the appearance of the gospel magician’s assistant?

A. CLEAN

First of all she must be clean and neat. If you can’t afford to buy any special clothes for your programs you still can do well if you wash and iron what you already own, dress as nicely as possible, and attend to personal hygiene.

Remember: People will not respect what you tell them if they cannot respect you. If you do not have enough sense to wash properly, brush your hair, and take care of your clothing they will doubt that what you have to share is worth listening to.

B. COMFORT

If you are buying some special clothes for your programs remember they must allow action. You will be carrying items, possibly getting in and out of boxes, standing for long periods of time, possibly squatting down behind things...make sure the clothes can endure such activity. Also make sure you can endure wearing the clothes during such periods of activity.

Mary especially enjoys one piece outfits for our programs. She doesn’t have to worry about the blouse becoming "untucked", everything stays in place, and with a right choice of color and style the outfit can still have an almost formal appearance.

Mary suggests that the most desirable one piece outfits are those that button or zip in the front. These allow for easy costume changes and other matters where convenience is important. Outfits that button or zip in the back can slow you up when getting dressed, they require someone to check and make sure all buttons are done, and at times take more time to get into
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than you have to spare.

*Note: For some congregations and groups it is necessary to wear a dress to keep from offending people. In these situations you might consider a new thing known as a "skort". It is a skirt-shorts combination that is modest, attractive, and allows action. The problem with the "skort" is unless it is styled right it may be too casual looking for platform or stage. Apart from that suggestion we recommend you experiment and search (shopping is fun) until you find what will work.

Possibly the most important matter relating to comfort is shoes. Why must dress shoes be uncomfortable? Beyond that, high heels, or much of any heel, on stage can be hazardous. One can easy slip and twist an ankle.

After much searching (shopping) Mary found a new style of shoe that is working wonderfully. It is basically a tennis shoe that looks like a dress shoe. The brand she likes is called, "Easy Spirit". She also often wears ballet slippers (especially for such things as getting into the sword basket).

One good place to check for comfortable yet attractive footwear is a dance studio. Basically you need an athletic shoe that looks as much as possible like formal wear. (A flat shoe is preferred over any kind of heel for safety sake and good movement).

C. CLOSEUP VERSUS STAGE

When buying clothes, (or trying on clothes you already have), with your programs in mind remember people will be seeing you from a distance. How the outfit looks up close doesn't really matter. People will not see you up close. How do you look from ten feet away? From 20 feet away? When in a store step back from the mirror as far as possible.
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Some colors that look neat up close look washed out at long range. Some colors at a distance sort of "run" into your face and other clothing giving you a bland appearance. Shopping for "show clothes" requires a different perspective. The big question is "how will they appear to the person in the middle row of the average church or auditorium where we perform?"

D. COSTUME

The basic purposes of your clothes or costume for stage are: a. To show respect for the occasion and indicate that you take the program seriously. b. to illustrate that the program is something special and worth being excited about. c. to be pleasing to the eye of the audience.

Pleasing the eye of the audience does not mean we want to be sexy or viewed as physically attractive. As Christians that cannot be our intent. On the other hand we certainly don't want to be unattractive or displeasing. Out of consideration for the audience we need an appearance that is appropriate and pleasant to look upon. (We don't seek to attract people to our bodies, but we do seek to attract them to our message).

Dressing in "everyday" clothes displays the attitude that the presentation is an "everyday thing". In other words, it is nothing to be enthusiastic about or even to walk across the street to see. That is not what we want to communicate!

Special clothes indicate a special event. Take the time to find an outfit that compliments the nature of your presentation. Dress for ministry success!

Here are some practical tips:

Usually it is best to go with primary colors. Black is almost always a good color (unless your backdrop is all black). Blues and reds are also good.

Do not pick a "busy" pattern. It most likely will not coordinate with the look of other things on stage. (Your
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appearance is part of the total picture that comes to the audience from the platform). Also "busy" patterns at times seem to weary the eyes or distract the audience.

Solid color outfits or tasteful prints are almost always safe choices.

Jewelry is a nice way to add brightness to a solid color. The jewelry does not need to be expensive! (Remember the difference between closeup and distance). Inexpensive..even costume jewelry..can look great from platform or stage.

Wide belts or narrow belts, (depending on your body type), suspenders, and even sequins are all good possibilities for making an outfit seem more special.

COMMENT: You do not need expensive clothes for stage or show. From a distance the things that usually make clothes expensive cannot be noticed anyway. Good quality is desirable because it means your clothes should last. Durability is a good buy. Don't hesitate to shop the bargain racks in quality stores. A low priced item, with proper accents, can look terrific and last a long time!

E. COSMETICS

Too much is always too much. Unless you are under bright lights your normal makeup is probably fine. If you are to be under bright lights you will need a deeper foundation, redder or brighter lipstick, an extra touch of blush, an darker shade of mascara, and more fluff or body to your hair. Basically bright lights and a big stage call for an exaggeration of normal.

On the matter of hair, a little extra fluff is good in most any platform situation. Hair is harder to overdo than makeup.

Note: When it comes to perfume and deodorant the matter of distance versus closeup does not apply. Yes, you will be at
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a distance from the people so body odor is less likely to be
detected, but also...you will be sweating more than normal and
following the show you will probably be greeting people...so
perfume and deodorant are very necessary.

A final thought about cosmetics is it is a good idea to ask
someone about your makeup and general appearance. Find someone
with an appearance you respect. Make sure the person also is
loving. Some people will take advantage of such a question
and criticize you for the sake of their own ego. Stay away from
them. If you do it with caution it is a matter of wisdom to
get some counsel about matters of dress and makeup.
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CHAPTER SIX: COMPETENT

Whether or not you are a center of attention on stage you as an assistant are a very big part of the program. Through fulfilling your role and responsibility well you will make the overall program much better.

Here are some practical matters that have much to do with you making the program better by doing your job well.

A. KNOWING THE PROGRAM

In an earlier chapter the matter of having a schedule of the routine and show order was discussed. At this point the concern is that the assistant would go beyond having information about the program and also gain good understanding of the program.

For example: Knowing the program starts at 7:30 is information. Realizing that since the program starts at 7:30 means you need to be there by 6:30 to have everything ready is understanding. Knowing you need to be properly dressed for the program is information. Realizing you need to be dressed at least one half hour before the program and you must not wait until the last minute to change is understanding.

Take the needs of the program seriously. Your job is much more than just being there when things start and staying until they end. Your job, (opportunity is a better term), is to do everything you can to make sure the program runs smoothly.

This kind of knowledge of a program comes from taking time to think and pray about all the things that will happen. Since God has given you this special area of service determine to learn everything about it you can. If you are going to do the work of an assistant do it well.

It is especially practical and important to learn the needs of effectively presenting large illusions. The assistant can
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add a great deal of power to the impact of an illusion when she realizes the effect and impression the magician is seeking in making the presentation. There is more to an illusion than "how it works".

For example: Knowing how to position yourself in a ZIG ZAG illusion is information. Understanding is when you realize the audience must not sense how contorted you are. The audience needs to receive the impression that you are perfectly comfortable and standing in a normal way even though your middle has apparently just been cut out and removed.

B. BACKSTAGE

Your props and tables must be arranged in an orderly manner backstage. A clutter backstage means props possibly will be lost, they may be stepped on and broken, and you also may be in the way of other acts getting ready to do their part on the program. The Bible says, "let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). A disorganized mess is a poor witness.

As the assistant you are a backstage manager. Establish an area for your stuff and watch it carefully.

Obviously it is also important to be QUIET backstage. If the audience out front knows you are behind the backdrop...it must forget about it. It certainly must not see you moving around or hear you.

If you are on a program with other acts or presentations do be careful to stay out of the way when backstage. Establish your area and stay in it. Do not touch the props of other performers or interrupt them as they make their preparations.

C. KEEP BUSY

If there are silks to fold, fold them. If props can be put
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away, put them away. If something needs to be ready get it ready as soon as possible.
If nothing else, stay busy listening to the program. That way you know if there is a problem and you can come immediately if called.

*Note: When urging this diligence about the show it is assumed that you can be busy out of sight. As nice as it is to fold silks right away or start packing props even before the show is over, if it means being a distraction don't do it. Ideally you have a spot backstage or off stage where you can quietly listen and work while the show is going on.

D. HANDLING THE SOUND AND LIGHT PEOPLE

At the back of this book are samples of the program sheets and technical sheets we use in our programs. The critical thing in handling sound and light people is knowing exactly what you want.

Before you talk to the person running the sound board or putting his finger on the light switch know the cue that signals the start of your music. Know the effect that signals the stop of the music. Know the type of "feel" you want to create through the volume of the music. Know the lighting that is needed.

Even though the technical needs are primarily the responsibility of the magician to communicate..it often falls to the assistant to do so because of time being short or the attention of the magician being called for by others. Therefore be familiar with the needs. If possible have them written out. Sound and light men are normally thrilled to be handed a sheet of paper that clearly explains the requirements of our act or program. It definitely saves a lot of hassle and technical mess ups to have things on paper rather than hurriedly talked about in the last few minutes before the show.
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E. CUE UP THE TAPES

It is a simple matter that can save from embarrassing moments and interruption to the flow of the program. Take time to make sure that the tapes are rewound to the proper side and then played forward until the first note of the music. The magician will probably want to check the tapes, but you check them too.

It seems to be easy to forget about cuing tapes until it is time for the show to start. Then it is too late. The audience will hear the sounds and songs if you do it at the last minute. Even so it is better to do it too late than not at all. HOWEVER THE IDEAL is to have it done way of ahead of time. You can be a big help to the magician and overall show if you assist with sound checks and make sure that all aspects of the sound are ready to go.

*Note: It is a good idea to have two tapes of all music. One is backup in case something happens to the other. This tape also should be cued so if there is a problem it can be immediately put into the machine.
CONCLUSION

There is much more that could be said, but in light of the scope of this book enough has been said for now. A gospel magician's assistant has much work and responsibility. The assistant also has great opportunity.

The opportunity first and foremost is to glorify God by way of being the best you can be in this form of ministry. In doing your best you are helping the overall program achieve greatest effectiveness.

Your opportunity is also to experience personal joy and satisfaction. As intimidating as assisting may seem to be at first you will eventually find it can be quite fun and rewarding. You will discover happiness for yourself in realizing you are part of bringing smiles and a life changing message to others. More than that, because assisting is a challenging activity you will feel some personal success when you meet the challenge and learn to handle it.

There is also the opportunity of enjoying the matter of teamwork. If the magician happens to be your mate you will find double pleasure. Not only are you enjoying marriage together, you also are enjoying ministry together. What a privilege to serve each other while serving God most of all.

Then too there is the opportunity of being touched again and again by that which is dear to the heart of the saviour...the needs of the lost. As you work to make your presentation the best it can be you will realize your work will never be good enough to change lives. Only God can do that. You then will be seeking God as you work and through that you will be reminded of His desire that "none should perish but all should come to repentence".
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So is it worth the work? Yes! It can actually be fun to assist with a gospel magic program. Yet far more than fun you will know that you are doing something God has set before you to do for the sake of His kingdom.

To God Be The Glory

"For With God Nothing Shall Be Impossible" (Luke 1:37)

Duane and Mary Laflin
May 1992
| PLACE |  |
| DATE |  |
| TIME |  |
| Length of program |  |
| Age of audience |  |
| Size of audience |  |
| Contact person |  |
| Payment for program |  |
| Directions to place of program |  |

| PROGRAM | THEME |  |
| MUSIC # |  |  |
| # |  |  |
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THEATER CURTAIN

main backdrop

LIGHTS PROPS MOVEMENT

MUSIC
Start Stop

Sound Level