

## Reflections on a career in commercial showbusiness

By R.W. Bacon

The 30-plus years in commercial showbusiness have been fabulous. With my wife/partner L.J. Newton, who retired from the stage in 1999, we toured far-and-wide across the U.S. with our two shows, *Mr. Slim's Goodtime Ragtime Vaudeville Revival*, and *Mr. Slim & L.J. | Classic Comedy Juggling*. There was seldom a dull moment performing at theatres, colleges, fairs, festivals, resorts, clubs, casinos, conventions, revues, circuses, museums – the gamut of venues from shaky outdoor stages to the finest theatrical palaces.

The audience approval – the instant feedback on our work – was invaluable, and the heady wash of applause will always echo in memory.



Reprinted from  
*Variety Arts Gazette, January 2007*

Likewise, the recognition was appreciated, and the respect of peers cherished. But the deepest satisfaction is in knowing that for decades our *live* shows brought people together. Sometimes the audience was 50, sometimes 5000, but over the years we entertained millions – *live, in person*, bringing them together to share an experience with us, their friends, or family. In my view that's the real value of the performing arts – bringing people together.

Most significant were the people we met in our travels. We had the opportunity to work with the very best performers in their respective fields. All these elite performers were superb craftsmen, many were inspirational geniuses, some were self-absorbed egomaniacs, and a few were memorable eccentrics – but the bond among fellow performers is strong, and we embraced friendship with them all.

This career would not have been possible without the efforts of hundreds of agents, producers, and entertainment directors. For 30 years of partnership,

we say a big, sincere *Thank You* for your confidence in us.

(Note: My comments on the lower order of parasites, middlemen, charlatans, and other serpents-of-the-deep that populate the business are reserved for my private memoirs!) ■

**2010 note:** OK. Let's get real. Do the above paragraphs constitute *all* the showbiz reflections? Of course not. The decades in such a crazy and creative business filled us with memories and stories, some hilarious, some uplifting, some pathetic. Thus far, profiles of several valued mentors are on the web site, as well as articles on the New York stage and Hollywood productions. For the amusement and edification of friends, fans, and students, more articles may follow.

However, despite all our travels, adventures, friendships, and observations, don't look for everything to be spilled out on the web site. The author is fully capable of holding some opinions unexpressed!

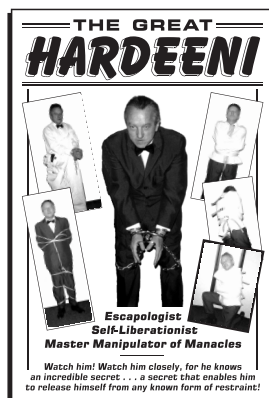
Mr. Slim  
& L.J.



Classic  
Comedy  
Juggling

## The Family

- **Wesley H. Bacon II** (1922-2001): (father) sleight-of-hand manipulator, escape artist, Big-Band-era vocalist, six-gun twirler, shipboard telegrapher, aviator – and ultimate autodidact.
- **Edith (King) Weeks** (1900-1983): (grandmother) Pianist, singer, music director, 1920s silent movie accompanist, ... and 1950s cookie-baker!



**W.H. Bacon**  
(1922-2001)

"Narvé", "The Great Hardeeni",  
& "The Enchanting LeMac"

**The Fine Print:** R.W. Bacon, had a "before showbusiness" career as a journalist, editor, & publication designer; and has an "after-showbusiness" career as a designer/ editor, author/historian, & museum professional. His undergraduate degree: Syracuse University (Journalism); graduate: Harvard (Museum Studies).



**Otto Persson** (1937-1994) **Herbert Weber** (1914-1991)

"Professor Offtop" "The Great Huberto"  
& "Los Latinos"



**Albert & Mina Sahlstrom**  
(1920-1990 / 1920-1992)

Circus Miede, Denmark  
"The Two Virginias" / "The Almiros"

## The Mentors

- Albert Sahlstrom, European master of silent comic juggling ... himself himself a protégé of consummate artists Bobby May & Bela Kremó.
- ... Plus boundless gratitude to dozens of veteran performers, from legendary wire-walkers & unicyclists to inspiring comic tap dancers & virtuoso saw players.

**See in-depth profiles of these mentors elsewhere on this web site.**