

Comic in chief

Presidents let funny side show at times

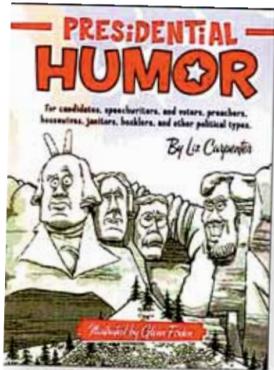
By RON BERTHEL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The leader of the free world — aka the president of the United States — deals with some pretty serious issues every day. So when the chief executive gets off a good one-liner now and then, it's noteworthy.

In her book "Presidential Humor," Liz Carpenter, who worked for Presidents Johnson, Ford and Carter, has compiled dozens of White House witticisms and wise words uttered by and about U.S. presidents from Washington to Bush, by George!

Here are some examples from the book:

- "Thank God, she doesn't have to be confirmed by the Senate." (Herbert Hoover, referring to his newborn granddaughter)
- "Mrs. Eisenhower and I got an invitation to the Inaugural Ball saying RSVP, and I told her to answer it and say we had another engagement." (Dwight D. Eisenhower)
- "If you can't convince them, confuse them." (Harry S. Truman)
- "It is a great pleasure — and a great honor — to be at the Yale Law School's Sesquicentennial Convocation. And I defy anyone to say that and chew gum at the same time." (Gerald R. Ford)
- "Books serve to show a man that those original thoughts of his aren't very new after all." (Abraham Lincoln)
- "I've given my aides instructions that if trouble breaks out in any of the world's hot spots, they should wake me up immediately, even if I am in a Cabinet meeting." (Ronald Reagan)
- "No man will ever bring out of the presidency the reputation which carries him into it." (Thomas Jefferson)
- "It was absolutely involuntary. They sank my boat." (John F. Kennedy, when asked about his wartime heroics.)



"Presidential Humor" by Liz Carpenter (Bright Sky Press)



Magician Steve Cohen, center, performs his Chamber Magic show at The Waldorf Hotel in New York. Cohen wrote the book "Win the Crowd: Unlock the Secrets of Influence, Charisma and Showmanship." "I'm giving away the psychological secrets," Cohen says.

The magic words

Books: Tricks of trade work in everyday life

By LARRY NEUMEISTER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

He likes to call himself the Millionaires' Magician for the many deep pockets he's dazzled with his sleight of hand. But Steve Cohen says everyday folks can use his performance techniques to change their lives for the better the way he wows a crowd.

No, Cohen, the host of a weekly sold-out Chamber Magic show at The Waldorf-Astoria hotel, isn't giving away the house of cards on how he performs his tricks.

"I'm giving away the psychological secrets," says Cohen, who has written a book on the topic.

Want to be bolder? Try secretly dropping a quarter in someone's pocket, he says.

Shy? Try talking to strangers in elevators, and you'll see how quickly people lower their guard.

The 36-year-old, who studied psychology at Cornell University, advises people preparing to speak before a crowd on what to drink, how to loosen their throats and mouths, how to breathe correctly

and why humming can tune their voices to speak. He hopes that with his techniques, people can go beyond their comfort zones.

The bespectacled Cohen said he began sharing tips after meeting people at his show, where he uses cards, coins, jewelry, books and even his own heartbeat to entertain. His audience has included former General Electric Co. Chairman Jack Welch, actor Michael J. Fox, late astronomer Carl Sagan and former Intel Corp. Chairman Andy Grove.

"I had a lot of people, smart people, coming up to me after this show saying, 'That was really amazing, but you're more than doing a magic show, you're almost like a salesman. What kind of skills do you do that I could use?'" Cohen said.

So Cohen wrote the book "Win the Crowd: Unlock the Secrets of Influence, Charisma, and Showmanship," which was published in 2005 by HarperCollins Publishers Inc. and released in paperback in summer 2006.

So far, Cohen's favorite reviews have come from customers worldwide after the book was released in six languages.

"Business people say it has increased their confidence when they're giving presentations and even when they're trying to pitch one person on something," he said.

K.C. Hagin, a 25-year-old New Yorker, recently saw Cohen's act.

"It wasn't pulling a rabbit out of a hat. It was incredibly sophisticated," she said.

She said the key to his magic is his ability

to engage his audience throughout the show. "They're as shocked as you are at what's happening," she said. "That's how he's so convincing."

Cohen describes magic as a mental game of cat and mouse in which proper preparation allows the magician to lead others along enough so that "they get trapped in your words or your plan."

Nothing, he said, is left to chance. Cohen said some simple rules that give a magician the upper hand over his audience can be applied in life, too, for anyone who wants to command a room, read people better or get inside the minds of others to influence their thoughts.

"Being a magician is kind of like being a manipulator, but not with the negative connotation," he said. "I'm not trying to bilk anyone out of their money, convince them of a new belief system, create a cult."

In the book, Cohen discusses how to create a colorful personality, build confidence, prepare for important encounters with one person or many, predict the behavior of others and gain control over the way others behave, just like he does in his performances.

Ultimately, he said, he'd like his concepts to help people gain more from the magic in the world around them, whether it's the birth of a baby or a flower blooming in a field.

Cohen said he had divulged more information about actual tricks in his book, but withdrew the details when fellow magicians balked. As a result, he said he gets nothing but praise from others in his field.

'Trouble' doesn't measure up to author's first novel

By BRUCE DESILVA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jonah Stem needs a new pair of shoes, and shopping for them is going to get him in a whole lot of trouble.

He's a third-year medical student, and his shoes, drenched by a patient's burst peritoneum, are making squishing sounds as he trudges toward Times Square after an 18-hour hospital shift, hoping to find a shoe store still open at 3 a.m.

He's approaching 53rd Street when he hears a woman scream. Then he sees them: a woman dripping blood and a menacing man.

Jonah has never thought of himself as a hero. He doesn't know why he does it, but he steps between them. The other man, it turns out, has a knife. As they scuffle, Jonah slips and is knocked unconscious. The knife ends up in the other man's throat.

At first, the police seem skepti-

cal of Jonah's story, but they can't poke any holes in it. The New York press dubs him "Superdoc" and trumpets his heroism. Eve Gones, the woman he rescues, calls him a hero, too, and she wants to get to know him better.

Jonah succumbs to the temptation, one of a series of bad decisions that send his ordered life spinning out of control.

"Trouble" is the second novel by Jesse Kellerman, the son of popular crime writers Jonathan and Faye Kellerman. He had an auspicious debut with "Sunstroke," a quirky, noir detective yarn told in the voice of a sardonic narrator.

But "Trouble" doesn't live up to the promise of the first book.

The humor is gone, replaced by a grim narrator who dwells on the ugliest of details. Readers will require a high tolerance for graphic descriptions of surgeries, violence and sexual depravity.

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