

INTERNATIONAL MAGIC MAGAZINE

VANISH

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Making the Impossible Possible



THE
EVASONS
MENTALIST DUO

FREE MAGIC
TRICKS

WITH VIDEO



AT SEA

with The Illusionarium

35 MAGIC
REVIEWS

TRICKS, DVDS, BOOKS

2016 RELEASES



ROAD TO RECOVERY

Michael Night's Inspirational Journey by Paul Romhany

The most fulfilling part of being editor of *VANISH—Int'l Magic Magazine* is being able to pick and choose the stories I write about. In all cases I focus on the stories that inspire me. Perhaps, such will inspire others. In some cases they are stories of great success — performers who have achieved fame and fortune; in other cases, stories of hardship, tragedy and how the Art of Magic can help heal and aid the healing process.

They are ALL important stories, with the one common thread being the passion they share for magic and the growth in their own personal lives. Success comes in a variety of forms. For one, a person might be appearing on television. In another, it may be the fact they can walk again and get on stage to do their act. Both are major achievements. Some have to fight harder than others to reach their goals. The stories, like the one I'm about to share, is one I have found to be one of the most inspiring. It is an important story about a man who has gone through more adversity in his life than



PHOTOS in this article
by Brady Kesling

I WAS NOT PREPARED FOR HIS ENTIRE STORY HOW MAGIC AN “HELP US HELP OURSELVES”

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anybody should have to go through in several life times, yet at the end he continues to share his love of performing and to help others.

One day while looking through Facebook I came across a newspaper article about Michael Night, a magician and hypnotist who had been in a horrific car accident. The story was about his very slow road to recovery, and how, after a year of operations he almost ready able to walk again. He was preparing for his first show since the crash.

I contacted Michael and he openly shared his story. However, I was not prepared for the entire story — what lead up to the accident. The one thing I'd like you to do while reading this is to keep in mind the one thing we all share with Michael, and that is our love for magic and how it can “help us help ourselves.” With all the stories I cover in VANISH this is the one common thread and something I think

we sometimes forget; as we all continue to try to achieve our goals.

Michael Night was born in Toledo, Ohio and (like most) his love for magic started at an early age when he got a magic kit from his brother, and later, a set of Marshall Brodien TV Magic Cards. In grade school he was a drummer in a school band and was asked by the teacher to play for the school. As the time grew nearer to the show, the other kids didn't want to practice and eventually backed out of doing the performance.

Michael went to the teacher who wouldn't let him out of the date saying he'd have to do something. On the day of the performance, scared to death and armed with a shoe box of magical props Michael did the show in front of his friends. The show was a success and from that moment on he was hooked.



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He would get a new book about magic out of the library every week and remembers vividly being asked by the librarian why he wanted all the magic books. His answer was one we've all given, "because I want to be a magician." However, he wasn't prepared for the answer the librarian gave back: "Don't be silly. That's not a profession. You should be a mechanic and work on cars like your dad."

It was this comment that motivated Michael to pursue his dream even more and show that librarian that he could do it.

At the very young age of 15 Michael had a son with a girl who was 18 and he ended up getting legal custody and raising his son at home. He would go to school during the day, work at night, and be home to put his son to bed and do his homework. With help from his mother and sister he was able to take time on the weekends to perform. By the age of 19 Michael found himself traveling around America doing trade shows performing at birthday parties, cub-scout show

circuits and eventually got regular work in restaurants which he did for about six or seven years.

Growing up, Michael discovered a local magic shop called, "Bob's Magic." It was a small magic shop but opened up Michael's life to just how much magic was out there. In the same town was another magic shop called "Ted Carrothers Magic Studio" where Michael eventually ended up working. It was a larger magic shop with costumes and magic. In 1998 Ted passed away, so Michael eventually ended up buying and running the business.

Once 9/11 hit, it totally destroyed the magic business because people no longer were hiring costumes or coming to the shop in the aftermath of the historic tragedy. It was the costumes that were paying the bills and he had to let go of his employees and run it himself. During this time, a hypnotist would come in to the shop named "Raven" who invited him to his show at a comedy club. Closing up early one night Michael went to see

the show and became instantly hooked on hypnosis. With the same dedication he had to magic, he got out every videocassette and book he could on hypnosis and started to work on an act. One day an elderly man, with an extremely long beard and smelled of old stale smoke, came in to the shop and saw him reading a hypnosis book. He asked if he liked hypnosis. He replied "yes."

The man walked straight out of the shop and a few hours later returned with a box filled with books and videos on the subject, which also smelled of stale smoke, and handed them to Michael saying "enjoy them." To practice his hypnosis he would give customer's a discount if he could practice his newly found hypnosis skill on them. A year later "Raven" came back in to the shop and realized Michael was serious about being a hypnotist so took him on as a student and would end up touring comedy clubs and theatres together. Michael was living the dream of touring and being on stage doing what he loved.

In 2008, Michael received a call saying his youngest son Stefen, who was 16, had been taken to hospital because he wasn't feeling well. After a variety of tests and a CT scan (that didn't show anything), Stefen was released and sent home. During the night Stefen had a seizure and was taken again to the hospital. Michael raced to the hospital, where his son was then flown by helicopter to Cleavand, however during the flight Stefen passed away from a brain aneurysm.

After that Michael gave up and stopped performing not knowing how he could ever get up on stage and be funny again. He started drinking excessively with over 30 beers a night before passing out. His weight ballooned to over 600 pounds and even then the hospital didn't know his exact weight because they told him they would need a car scale to weigh him! The depression lasted a year before Michael one day realized just how mad his son would be at him so he decided he needed to do something about it. He started to take care of his health, lost over 320 pounds and counting, and put his focus back on performing. While the pain never goes away Michael was at least able to put his energy in to something positive





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and started going back out on the road and touring with his show of comedy magic, ventriloquism and hypnotism.

It was during one of tours in December 2010 that he fell asleep one-night after a gig at the wheel, and crashed in to a pole that crushed both of his legs, broke five ribs and ended up with numerous operations in the hope to walk again. During that time he had rods put in his legs, which have broken, had a surgeon leave a broken drill bit in his leg, and even has his right foot taken off and had 3-inches taken off and replaced his foot! Still with a sense of humor Michael tells the story that he is 6'1 on one side and 6'4 on the other.

During Michael's recovery in 2012 his eldest son took his own life. He was having problems with his girlfriend and couldn't see a way out of it. I found Michael to be very sharing and open to talking about his life and the loss of his sons. He is currently writing a book about what he has been through, and how he continues to learn and grow. It was interesting to hear him talk about how brings these tragic elements of his life in to his show creating very strong

moments that connect to an audience on a much deeper level.

Michael has found that performing can also be a vehicle that helps him let out his feelings and also how his performance can help other people. In a talk to students one day, somebody asked him what it felt like when his son killed himself. His response was, "My son was in a lot of pain and he thought killing himself would end his pain. What he didn't realize was that it doesn't end his pain but just gives it to somebody else. He gave his pain to me." After that show a girl came up to Michael and told him how she was thinking of taking her life that day, but after what he had said she didn't want to give that pain to her family. That day Michael saved a life!

Recently, against doctor's orders Michael wanted to get back up on stage. He put together a special Valentines show, which turned out to be highly successful and gave him something he desperately needed

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to work toward and focus his energy back in to. During the show the adrenaline from performing kicked in and he was able to keep the audience entertained for over two hours, however he couldn't walk for a week after. The recovery is slow and his legs are still broken, but he can see himself back on stage and working toward a regular performing schedule again. With what Michael has been through there is a lot of physical and mental healing, and the magic and desire to perform helps him keep going.

As we talked, the one thing Michael commented on during each of the tragic events was how magicians, some of whom he had never met, helped him throughout his recovery. One example was after the passing of his second son, Michael Finney came to do a lecture at the local club and put all the proceeds towards helping toward the funeral. There were others who sent notes such as Tom Mullica and ventriloquist Tom Crawl who would encourage Michael to get back in to ventriloquism. Every kind gesture and word of encouragement from fellow performers has helped Michael move forward and realize just how much of a caring community we are.

Looking toward the future Michael would like to get back in to performing more, sharing his story so he can help others and even start a foundation to help magicians who are going through tough times. After the car accident he ended up selling a lot of his equipment, living in Ohio in the freezing cold winter without heat because he couldn't pay the bills without an income that relied on his stage income. He realized that being a full time performer and suddenly having to stop can be extremely hard and



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taxing both financially and emotionally. His ultimate goal would be to have something in place to help others. For me, this is a testament to Michael's true character. Somebody who goes through so much hardship in life, yet rather than wallow in self-pity, wants to help others! Michael is personally and professionally inspiring. I look forward to following his comeback through the pages of VANISH as he continues his journey.

You can follow Michael's Road to Recovery from his accident on his Facebook site at https://www.facebook.com/BreagALeg/?__mref=message_bubble

