

**Excerpts from TAOM History:
50 Years and Counting!**



by Bruce Chadwick, M.A., M.Div.
TAOM Historian

Excerpts from TAOM History: 50 Years and Counting!

by Bruce Chadwick, TAOM Historian

As the Fort Worth IBM Ren Clark Ring 15 hosted the 1997 Texas Association of Magicians convention, much emphasis was placed on celebrating fifty years of TAOM history. This estimation is certainly correct, for the TAOM has been around for at least 50 years and perhaps longer, depending on how you count.

HERMAN YERGER

The historical archives of the TAOM provide a wealth of information about the origin of the organization. All accounts herald Herman Yerger of Austin, Texas as the founder of the Labor Day weekend magic gatherings that became the TAOM organization and annual conventions.

According to the first TAOM newsletter that was published and distributed shortly after the 1946 Austin magic gathering by Secretary M. S. Mahendra, Yerger was a most enthusiastic practitioner of the art of magic.¹ Born on March 22, 1894 in Brooklyn, New York, Yerger and his wife Emilie operated a tent show, played schools, vaudeville, and carnivals.

A former tight wire walker, Mahendra writes that a fall paralyzed Yerger and left him confined to a wheel chair for life.² There are other accounts which explain his paralysis however. In the Summer of 1996, Claude Crowe, editor of the "Texas Magic Collectors Newsletter" (Volume 2, Number 2) states that:

Herman himself had no problem telling friends what actually happened. He was stabbed in the back of the neck by a husband jealous of his wife's attentions to Herman (though he would sometimes deny that the husband had reason to be jealous). Apparently he made a complete recovery from the attack but, as time passed, he began to lose the use of his legs and kidneys. Eventually, X-rays revealed that a piece of the knife blade had broken off in the attack and remained lodged in his spine. He was soon confined to a wheelchair as his condition continued to deteriorate.³

Despite his handicap, Yerger continued to live life with zeal. He would later write, "My formula is simple. First, I refuse to admit that my physical defects are overwhelming, they are something to be lived with, compromised with, and conquered. I realize that the

¹ T.A.O.M. Official Organ Texas Association of Magicians, first TAOM newsletter which was published and distributed shortly after the 1946 Austin gathering. See Appendix A.

² Ibid.

³ Texas Magic Collectors Newsletter, Claude Crowe, Editor, Volume 2, #2, Summer 1996. A revised version of the historical text of this newsletter is reproduced in full. See Appendix B.

man who buried his one talent buried something of himself also. Therefore I try to make the best of my talents, especially the ability to think for myself.”⁴

Even with the confinements of his disability, Herman would continue to perform and be enthusiastic about magic. As Claude Crowe has written,

. . . he continued to perform from the chair, playing throughout Texas and often performing a “Buried Alive” outdoor promotion with his first wife. Herman was a good performer with an aura of mysterioso that would stand him in good stead when he turned to crystal gazing (although Whitney the Magician with whom Herman often appeared, and father of Delora Whitney, said of his card work, “When he held a break it stood out like a valentine card in a pinochle deck”).⁵

Sometime during the 1930’s Yerger retired from performing professionally and began operating a drug store of sorts at 1011 Red River Street in Austin, Texas. Although not a pharmacist, he sold herbs, potions, and other over-the-counter remedies to his clients, provided readings, and maintained living quarters in the back of his establishment. On a May Saturday in 1943, Yerger suggested to Ray Santee who was visiting from San Antonio, that if the next day he would bring up some of the San Antonio magicians and bring the beer, Yerger would barbecue for them. A total of ten magicians, six from San Antonio and four from Austin, all members of I.B.M. Ring 18, convened in Herman’s backyard for a day of food and magic. The only problem with this Sunday gathering was that it was also Mother’s day.

THREE PICNICS AND THE TAOM

According to Ray Santee who was at the first Mother’s Day backyard gathering, Yerger and the other San Antonio Ring members decided on another meeting for Labor Day 1944 so that “more magicians could be in attendance.”⁶ The location of this first “official picnic” was to be Herman’s lodge, property Yerger purchased on Onion Creek about six miles south of Austin. There Yerger erected a club house, some concrete picnic tables, an open air stage, and a barbecue pit. Mahendra, Moore, DeWees, and Yerger got together and made up a list of magic friends and sent out invitations. A flyer was prepared to advertise the event as “Herman’s Magic Show and Picnic, featuring Texas Top Notch Magicians and Prestidigitators.”⁷ Magicians from Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Dallas, and Houston attended the Sunday and Monday, September 3 and 4 event. Of the 169 persons in attendance, 71 of the guests were non-magician friends of Yerger.

A second picnic followed in 1945 with 112 people in attendance, and a small fee of \$5.00 per person was instituted. During this picnic, M. S. Mahendra, Ed DeWees, Ralph DeShong, Dr. Carl Moore, Ren Clark, Henry Schmidt, Jim Bowling, and a few others met and formed a committee to move the gatherings into a state magician’s association. At this

⁴ Frontispiece from the “TAOM Silver Anniversary Convention” booklet for the September 4-7, 1970 Dallas, Texas TAOM Convention. See Appendix C.

⁵ 1996 Texas Magic Collectors Newsletter. See Appendix B.

⁶ 1994 San Antonio TAOM Convention Souvenir Program.

⁷ See Appendix D.

1945 picnic, Doc Mahendra was asked to serve as acting president of the organization, Ren Clark was selected to prepare a constitution and by-laws, Henry Schmidt was asked to be secretary, and Ed DeWees was asked to select a slate of officers to be presented to the 1946 gathering. Yerger was opposed to the idea of such an organization as early as 1944, but eventually warmed up to the idea during the months that followed the 1945 gathering, and especially after it was proposed to him by Ed DeWees that he be the first president of the organization.

Ed DeWees was one of the representatives from the San Antonio IBM Ring 18 who signed the original 1946 TAOM Constitution and By-Laws on behalf of his club. In 1975, he wrote a letter to Colonel J. L. C. Beaman to explain his recollection of how the TAOM organization came into existence, and to counter some of the insinuations that any particular person was the "sole founder." DeWees records that he was privileged to have first hand information regarding the organization of the TAOM.

Dear Colonel,

I'm certainly sorry to learn about your impaired vision and hope that you may find ways and means for improvement in the days ahead.

Now about the early days of TAOM and those who had to do with its organization. I have thought about writing about those early days, especially since 1973 when a history was put together by someone in Dallas and then received considerable criticism from Ren Clark. I'm sure they each honestly believed they were correct, but neither of them had the first hand information available that I am privileged to have.

This letter may give more information than you asked for, but since you have addressed the subject to me, I'm going to use your request as motivation to write a true, documented history of those early days leading to the organization of TAOM. Now at the outset let me say in no uncertain terms that no single individual can by any stretch of the imagination make claim as "the" organizer of TAOM.

In 1940 the San Antonio Ring 18 was chartered. Since Austin, Texas, did not have a Ring or Assembly, persons living in Austin and known to have an interest in magic were invited to join. The most active members in Austin at that time were Herman Yerger and Dr. Carl Moore.

Most of Ring 18's monthly meetings were held in San Antonio. However, several were conducted in Austin. Through the years starting in 1941, a close relationship was formed between Herman Yerger, Doc Mahendra, Carl Moore, and Ed DeWees. We visited each other's homes, talked magic, and exchanged ideas.

It was out of these frequent get-togethers that Herman came up with the idea of enlarging these groups and often invited not only Austin and San Antonio Ring members but other friends in magic throughout the state. Out of these small get-togethers a larger group evolved in 1944. This was Herman's party and he was to pick up the "tab" for the beer and barbecue. Doc Mahendra, Carl Moore, Ed DeWees, and Herman Yerger got together and made up a list of magic friends and sent out invitations. The first conclave was launched and held over Labor Day weekend in the year 1944. Ed DeWees had each person attending to sign his or her name in a register, and he has this book of names in his possession (see photo copy of this book). This first conclave was such a success that Herman and others of us immediately began making plans for a 1945 conclave. A printed invitation was sent out (a photo copy is enclosed). A small group of us in Austin and San Antonio got together with Herman and convinced him that since so many invitations were

being sent for the 1945 conclave, we thought it only proper that those attending should pay a small fee of \$5.00 per person. Herman did not want to charge the fee, but we finally convinced him that this was the proper thing to do. Ed DeWees again registered everyone attending and collected the \$5.00 per person. Ed has the original list of those attending and a record of payment (see photo copy).

The 1945 conclave was again a great success, but there were a few incidents that occurred which made for considerable unpleasantness for some of the wives. Now just a few words about those unpleasant events. Herman more or less gave a blanket invitation for all his Red River friends and customers to attend his magic conclave and enjoy free entertainment, beer, and food. There were 169 persons, counting men, women, and children at the 1944 conclave; of this number, 71 were Austin people who had no interest in magic, some of whom proved very undesirable, as they did heavy drinking, not only beer but hard liquor, used foul language, and some of the women were reported to be prostitutes.

Wives of some of our magic members as well as some of us men didn't think this good for magic. The same type of visitors again appeared at the 1945 conclave. It was at this time that Mrs. Ed (Adelaide) DeWees and Mrs. Ralph DeShong approached Doc Mahendra and Ed DeWees and told them that if they didn't do something about keeping this element of people out of the conclave, they would not attend any in the future. Doc and Ed didn't want to offend Herman, for these "visitors" were his friends and customers and we knew he did not want to form a Texas organization; Doc, Ed, and Carl Moore had suggested that right after the first (1944) conclave, and Herman did not want it. He felt this was his party and he wanted to keep it his; therefore nothing was done about organizing. But in 1945, when these two women approached Doc and Ed, the men felt action had to be taken. Doc and Ed called into session with the Ralph DeShong, Dr. Carl Moore, Ren Clark, Henry Schmidt, Jim Bowling, and possibly one or two others that I don't remember. In any event we decided to go ahead and start an organization of Texas magicians. Herman was not included since we already knew of his objections. While Carl Moore was present, he wasn't in favor for he was afraid he might hurt Herman's feelings. None of us wanted to hurt Herman, but we felt the ball was rolling for magic in Texas and that we should go ahead with the hope of changing Herman's way of thinking.

At this small meeting mentioned above, Doc Mahendra was asked to serve as chairman of the organization. Ren Clark was selected to prepare a constitution and by-laws, Henry Schmidt to record our action as secretary, and Ed DeWees was asked to select a slate of officers to be presented to the 1946 conclave. He was also to talk to Herman and try to get him to give up his Labor Day party and turn it into an association of Texas magicians. During the following months prior to the 1946 conclave, Ed DeWees had many sessions with Herman and finally convinced him that the best interests of magic in Texas would be served by the formation of an association. His original idea of a few friends in magic getting together each year had grown too big and too expensive to be handled by one man. Ed DeWees asked Herman if elected to serve as the first president. This made Herman very happy; since he agreed to serve, we could go ahead "out in the open."

At the 1946 conclave we printed a program (see attached). At the business meeting, Doc Mahendra served as chairman, as it might be said temporary, or acting president.

Note: I am enclosing a photo copy of the first issue of TAOM official organ. This will give you the best material available about the mechanics of our organization. Now to summarize as Ed DeWees sees it.

As mentioned at the outset, no one person can make claim as the founder of TAOM. It was a progression of events directed by a few dedicated magicians that put it together over a period of some five or six years. It is always dangerous to list names for fear of overlooking someone. Now that TAOM is some thirty years old and has achieved such success, I am certain that there are many who would be glad to lay claim to its origin. However, since I have in my possession the early records leading up to the organizational meeting in 1946, I am listing the names of those who can rightfully be named as the founders of TAOM -- Doc Mahendra, Ed DeWees, Dr. Carl Moore, Ralph DeShong, Ren Clark, and Herman Yerger. All of these men except Ed DeWees and Ren Clark are deceased.

You may want to put some of this material on your printing press and have it ready for the 1976 convention in Houston.

Sincerely,
(signed)
Ed DeWees⁸

The Texas Association of Magicians was organized at the third Labor Day weekend picnic gathering, at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas on Sunday morning September 1, 1946. The first "T.A.O.M. Official Organ" newsletter contains "Minutes of the Meeting, Texas Association of Magicians, Austin, Texas September 2, 1946."⁹ These minutes are designated as the second business session of the TAOM, the meeting being called to order in the Mural Room of the Stephen F. Austin Hotel, Austin, Texas at 11:00 A. M. on Sunday with acting President M. S. Mahendra presiding.

The newsletter is not accurate in stating that the second business meeting was on Sunday September 2, because September 2 was a Monday. The printed convention program stated that Saturday August 31 was a night-before party, a "Magicians Meeting to discuss matters of General interest to Texas Magicians" was scheduled at 10:30 AM on Sunday September 1, and a "Magician's Business Meeting and selection of the 1947 Conclave City" was scheduled for 10:30 AM on Monday September 2. Apparently the Sunday morning meeting when the TAOM was declared into existence was the first TAOM business meeting. The minutes found in the first TAOM newsletter for "Sunday September 2, 1946" should have been listed for the Monday second business meeting.

The first order of business for this second business meeting on Monday September 2 was a report by Ren Clark, chairman of the Constitution and By-laws Committee. Ren read the tentative draft that he and his committee had prepared. It is noted that attorney Sproesser Wynn helped revise the constitution and put it into proper legal language. The minutes do not reveal if Ren's committee was comprised of other individuals other than himself and Wynn.

After the initiation fee of \$2.50 and \$1.50 first year's dues was set, DeShong moved the adoption of the Constitution and By-Laws, it was seconded by several and then was carried by a unanimous vote.

⁸ Letter written by Ed DeWees to Colonel Beaman, October 7, 1975, and composed on stationery from the First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, Texas. A copy of this letter was forwarded to this author by Fred Story of Tulia, Texas.

⁹ See Appendix A.

Ed DeWees asked that the meeting be temporarily adjourned so that the representatives of the various Rings and Assemblies could name their respective representatives or governors to the TAOM. The meeting was then resumed and the results were as follows:

S.A.M. No. 13, A. Robert White
S.A.M. No. 19, James Bowling
I.B.M. No. 15, Ren Clark
I.B.M. No. 18, Herman Yerger
I.B.M. No 34, H. H. Gaddis
I.B.M. No. 39, John Dunlop

Next this Board of Governors met and elected the following to serve until October 1, 1947, or until their successors were duly elected and installed:

President: Herman Yerger
Vice-President: Ralph DeShong
Secretary: M. S. Mahendra
Treasurer: Glen Y. Davidson

It was emphasized from the onset that the TAOM was to be controlled by the Board of Governors, with each Governor being selected by the members of his or her Ring or Assembly. The Governor in turn would then represent his club in all matters requiring executive action.

For a person to become a 1946 charter member of the TAOM, the person had to first be in good standing with one of the approved magic clubs in Texas. Next the prospective member would fill out an application and submit it to the Treasurer along with a \$2.50 initiation fee and \$1.50 for first year's dues. The application was then passed by the TAOM Membership Committee for approval and it was also submitted for approval to the prospective member's Ring or Assembly Secretary. It was emphasized in the first TAOM bulletin that a person could be a charter member of the organization if their application was received (and presumably also accepted by the TAOM) by November 1946. According to the second bulletin (noted as Volume 1, Number 2) published in December 1946, 118 people made application to become charter members of the Texas Association of Magicians.¹⁰ In the third bulletin (Volume 1, Number 3) published in July 1947, four additional names were listed and Secretary Mahendra specified that they should be added to the roster in bulletin number two. This made a total of 123 charter members.¹¹

WHEN WAS THE FIRST CONVENTION?

The TAOM archives are clear that the first 1944 and second 1945 Labor Day weekend picnic gatherings were exactly that, gatherings of magicians and friends over Labor Day weekend and hosted by Herman Yerger in Austin, Texas. The question

¹⁰ See Appendix F.

¹¹ See Appendix G.

comes regarding the 1946 gathering, whether or not it was just a third picnic, or the first convention of the TAOM. The printed flyer or program used to publicize the 1946 gathering used the title "TEXAS MAGICIAN'S CONCLAVE."¹² It is clear that at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas on Sunday morning September 1, 1946, shortly after 10:30 AM, the Texas Association of Magicians came into existence.

A short synopsis of the TAOM beginnings appeared in the 1947 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program. This synopsis (or parts thereof) is used in many bulletins and souvenir programs of subsequent TAOM conventions:

HISTORY OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS

The Texas Association of Magicians was first conceived at Austin, Texas during the Labor Day Conclave of 1946. The idea of such a Conclave first started with Herman Yerger when he built a theatre and lodge for the use of magicians and their friends and invited them to be his guests on Labor Day of each year.

In the beginning this was a small gathering and Herman furnished food and refreshments for everyone while his guests supplied most of the entertainment. All of this started three years ago. Then the attendance grew so large as to make it impossible for one man to assume such a heavy task.

It was at that time that I.B.M. Ring No. 18 of San Antonio assisted Herman in 1946 by sending out invitations, planning shows, etc. Members of Ring No. 18 and well-known leaders from other Texas Rings and Assemblies then suggested that a state organization be formed with the express purpose of exploiting a Labor Day Magical Conclave in Texas.

Accordingly, A. Ren Clark, the present leader of the largest magical organization in the World--the International Brotherhood of Magicians--with the legal assistance of Sprosser Wynn--T.A.O.M.'s legal advisor--drew up a Constitution and By-laws for the new organization. These were presented by M. S. Mahendra, then President of I.B.M. Ring 18 to about one hundred magicians assembled in Austin at Herman Yerger's lodge. They were duly adopted and officers and directors elected. Herman Yerger was given the honor of being the first President--Ralph DeShong of Wichita Falls, Vice President--M. S. Mahendra of San Antonio, Secretary--Glenn Davidson of Houston, Treasurer and thus began the Texas Association of Magicians composed of all accredited magic clubs of the State of Texas.¹³

It is important to note that the Fort Worth 1947 convention program does not specify that the convention was the first TAOM convention. However, Fort Worth did distribute a earlier promotional flyer which invited attendance to the "1st Annual TAOM Convention."¹⁴ The 1947 Fort Worth TAOM convention was definitely the first convention to be advertised solely under the Texas Association of Magicians name.

¹² See Appendix E.

¹³ 1947 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program, See Appendix H for reproductions of the front cover and the history page of the program.

¹⁴ See Appendix I.

The 1947 Fort Worth TAOM convention would probably be considered the first TAOM convention if it were not disputed by Doc Mahendra, the first editor of the TAOM periodical. In his fourth TAOM bulletin (Volume 1, Number 4) dated November 1947, Mahendra lists a roster for the Fort Worth TAOM convention and titles it the "2nd Annual Convention, Ft. Worth, Texas."¹⁵ Elsewhere the bulletin recounts the success of the 1947 Fort Worth TAOM gathering and states "Well its now all over and a matter of magic history, but those who attended the second TAOM Convention will long remember the outstanding shows, general good fellowship and meeting the grandest bunch of magicians anywhere in America." Also in this bulletin, under the heading "Financial Statement, T.A.O.M.," the first sentence reads: "Our first Convention was held over Labor Day at Austin, Texas and this is when the TAOM was formed."

Mahendra remained numerically consistent in future TAOM bulletins. The TAOM bulletin (Volume 1, Number 5) dated August 1948 announced that the third annual TAOM Convention would be held Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, September 4, 5, and 6, 1948 in Houston, Texas.¹⁶ Like Fort Worth however, Houston didn't adopt Mahendra's chronology. In their 1948 convention souvenir program Houston stated:

HISTORY OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS

A state wide organization of professional, semi-professional and amateur magicians. It is the result of a dream of Herman Yerger, first President of the T.A.O.M. who, after retiring from the life of a traveling magician and mentalist, settled in Austin, Texas, where he now resides. In 1944 Herman bought property near Austin, on which he had erected a club house, open air stage, barbecue pit, etc. for one purpose, and that being to have his magician friends from over the State attend his Annual Conclave, the first being held on Labor Day weekend 1944. Labor Day Conclaves followed in 1945 and 1946. Each year the crowd grew larger, so in 1946 prominent magicians of Texas urged Herman to agree to the organization of a State Association of Magicians was organized with Herman Yerger as First President, Ralph DeShong of Wichita Falls, Vice President, M. S. Doc Mahendra, San Antonio, Secretary and Glenn Y. Davidson of Houston as Treasurer, the last two named still hold these offices, with Ralph DeShong, President, and Jas. A. Bowling of Houston, Vice President. ***First T.A.O.M. Conclave was held in the city of Fort Worth, and we WELCOME YOU TO HOUSTON for the Second Annual Conclave of the TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS.***¹⁷

Additionally, the name badges for the Houston 1948 Convention were printed with the designation "2nd Annual Conclave."¹⁸

This didn't budge Mahendra however. The TAOM bulletin Volume 3, Number 1 for August 1949 announced that the fourth Annual TAOM Convention (1949) would be in Dallas, Texas.¹⁹ The bulletin for August 1950 (Volume 4, Number 2) announced four

¹⁵ See Appendix J.

¹⁶ See Appendix K.

¹⁷ 1948 Houston TAOM Convention Souvenir Program, front page, italicize by this author. See Appendix L for a reproduction of the program front cover.

¹⁸ See Appendix M.

¹⁹ See Appendix N.

days of convention, September 1, 2, 3, and 4 and a headline which read “Announcing Fifth Annual TAOM Convention At San Antonio, Texas.”²⁰ Austin was the host for the “Home-Coming Meeting” 1951 TAOM convention, and Volume 5, Number 2 of the bulletin for August 1951 stated that it would be the sixth annual convention.²¹ Austin concurred with the numbering system and sent out a letter to promote the sixth convention.²²

The TAOM bulletin Volume 6, Number 2 for August 1952 announced that Fort Worth would host the seventh annual convention.²³ Whether it was out of acceptance or indifference, the 1952 Fort Worth TAOM hosts conceded to the TAOM bulletin’s (Mahendra’s) numbering system. Fort Worth’s 1952 souvenir program labeled its convention as the seventh annual TAOM convention.²⁴ Fort Worth’s adoption of the numbering system may imply a concession that the 1946 Herman Yerger lodge picnic was the first TAOM convention.

It is very important for historians to acknowledge that the newsletter convention numbering sequence that was in place by the 1950 San Antonio convention (convention number five) is the numbering system that the TAOM continued to use for the next forty-three years, through the 1993 Austin convention (advertised as convention number 48). If this numbering sequence is continued to the present, then the 1995 Lubbock convention was number 50, the 1996 Houston convention was number 51, the 1997 Fort Worth convention was number 52, and the 1998 San Antonio convention will be number 53. Again, this numbering system recognizes the 1946 Yerger Austin picnic as convention number one, the first convention of the TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS.

The following is a list of the each TAOM Convention, the year it was held, the name of the president for the particular convention year, the location for the convention, and notations on the numbering system(s) used for each convention. Blank spaces indicate that either the host city/club in question did not number its convention, or that the current TAOM archives in possession of the TAOM Historian at the time this treatise was composed do not indicate a number.

Conv Nbr:	Conv Year:	President: for the	Location of Host City/Club:	Convention Bulletin Advertised Number:	Host City/Club Labeled their Convention As Number:
	1943	May Mother’s Day	Austin		
	1944	Labor Picnic	Austin		
	1945	Labor Picnic	Austin		
1	1946	Labor Picnic <i>Yerger Elected</i>	Austin	1	
2	1947	Herman Yerger	Fort Worth	2	1

²⁰ See Appendix O.

²¹ See Appendix P.

²² See Appendix Q.

²³ See Appendix R.

²⁴ See Appendix S.

3	1948	Ralph De Shong	Houston	3	2
4	1949	Jas. A. Bowlin	Dallas		
5	1950	Ed DeWees	San Antonio	5	
6	1951	Dr. Carl L. Moore	Austin	6	
7	1952	A. R "Ren" Clark	Fort Worth	7	7
8	1953	Tommy Bearden	Houston		
9	1954	Royal Brin, Jr.	Dallas		
10	1955	L. Louis Harrop, M.D.	Corpus Christi		10
11	1956	C. Allen Sears	Austin		11
12	1957	W. C. Stubblefield	Fort Worth		12
13	1958	James Daniels	San Antonio	13	
14	1959	Ed Watkins	Dallas		
15	1960	Thomas B. Martin	Houston		
16	1961	W. Doug Grounds	Corpus Christi		16
17	1962	Allen Sears	Austin		
18	1963	Robert O. Utter	Fort Worth		
19	1964	Ed DeWees	San Antonio	19 (Env)	19
20	1965	Dr. John H. Gladfelter	Dallas	20	
21	1966	Frank Clauder	Houston	20 (Badge)	
22	1967	Gene Looper	Corpus Christi		
23	1968	Wilbur Kattner	Fort Worth		
24	1969	Dean Duncan	San Antonio		
25	1970	Harold Thomas	Dallas		25
26	1971	Walter Blaney	Houston		
27	1972	John L. Howell	Abilene		27
28	1973	Nolan Manly, Jr.	Fort Worth		28
29	1974	Robert C. Ford	San Antonio		
30	1975	Dr. Ralph A. Marcom	Dallas		30
31	1976	Ed Campagna	Houston	31	
32	1977	Bob Emery	Austin	32	
33	1978	Roger Crabtree	Fort Worth	33	33
34	1979	Frank Ramirez	San Antonio	34	
35	1980	Noel Coward	Dallas	35	
36	1981	Frank C. Price	Houston		
37	1982	Gerald Edmundson	Fort Worth		
38	1983	Kent C. Cummins	Austin		38
39	1984	Steve Norman	Abilene		
40	1985	Alex D. Gutierrez	San Antonio		40
41	1986	Bob Karlebach	Dallas		
42	1987	J. D. "Tex" Babin	Corpus Christi		
43	1988	Bruce Chadwick	Fort Worth	43	43
44	1989	Douglas Kornegay	Houston	44	
45	1990	Chuck Lehr	Dallas	45 (nickel)	
46	1991	Bill Faulkner	Tyler		
47	1992	Joe Douglas	Corpus Christi	47	
48	1993	Raymon Galindo	Austin	48	48
49	1994	Charles E. Golla	San Antonio		47
50	1995	Bill Mayes	Lubbock	50	50
51	1996	Terry Campagna	Houston	50	
52	1997	David Hira	Fort Worth	50	50
53	1998	George Blackburn	San Antonio		
54	1999	Peter the Adequate (Hinrichs)	Austin		
55	2000	Scott Wells	Dallas		

REN CLARK: FOUNDER OF TAOM?

In 1952, the Fort Worth convention program brought to head a controversy that began brewing during the early days of the TAOM. This "Ren Clark Founder Controversy," a controversy that existed continually until his death, surrounded Ren Clark's claims that he was "the founder" of the TAOM.

The 1952 "7th Annual Convention" program contains a biography of A. R. (Ren) Clark and it states: "It was Ren who first suggested and promoted the founding of the Texas Association of Magicians, at one of Herman Yerger's annual Labor Day get-

together. Therefore, it is fitting that the Texas magicians should honor one who has brought recognition to his state by his accomplishments in the magic world.”²⁵

This author was privileged to be personally acquainted with Ren Clark for many years. In questioning Clark about the beginnings of the TAOM organization, Ren Clark told this author rather emphatically that he founded the TAOM.

In 1970, the Texas Association of Magicians celebrated their Silver Anniversary Convention to mark the first 25 years of TAOM history. The Dallas convention distributed to each attendee a saddle stapled book which chronicled the TAOM convention from its beginnings. The author(s) dedicated a page or two to each convention, and included many photographs where available.

The book did contain numerous inconsistencies however. For example, inside the front cover it read: “On a small ranch near Austin, Texas, Herman Yerger conceived the idea for the Texas Association of Magicians. At an informal picnic Herman presented his idea to a group of friends and from this casual meeting came the charter for the association.”²⁶

History is very clear that Herman Yerger did not want a Texas magic association. He wanted the picnics to remain as they were, his annual parties. It was only after Ed DeWees convinced Yerger to allow the Labor Day gatherings to be formed into an annual magician’s association did Yerger concede to the idea. It should also be noted that the enticement DeWees used to help Yerger change his mind was the offer to make Yerger the first president of the TAOM. That is when Yerger in 1945 or 1946 accepted the idea for a state-wide magician’s organization that became the Texas Association of Magicians.

The Dallas club did try to correct the silver anniversary chronicle. Attached inside the front cover of the program was a letter written by Paul Siegel. Dated August 9, 1970, the letter was addressed “To All T.A.O.M. Members.”

The following additional data has been brought to my attention by Ren Clark and is included with this booklet in an effort to offer a complete document which would be of significant interest to anyone concerned in the founding of our organization.

- 1) Herman Yerger conceived the idea of a Labor Day Magical Get-Together and picnic, which started in September of 1944 and continued for three years.
- 2) Herman Yerger was the 1st President of the Texas Association of Magicians.
- 3) Ed DeWees and Doc Mahendra were two important individuals in helping Herman plan and carry out his magical get-togethers. These same individuals were founders of the TAOM, along with a few other individuals.
- 4) Ren Clark was the person who first conceived and suggested the idea of forming the T.A.O.M.

²⁵ 1952 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program. See Appendix S.

²⁶ 1972 Dallas TAOM Convention Silver Anniversary book. See Appendix C

- 5) Ren Clark and Sproesser Wynn drew up the Constitution and By-laws for the T.A.O.M.
- 6) Among those who could be listed as the founders of T.A.O.M. are: Ren Clark, Ralph DeShong, Ed DeWees, Doc Mahendra and Herman Yerger.

I sincerely hope that these facts (as listed) have enabled you to complete your understanding of the founding of our association as we have come to know it.

With Best Regards.
(signed)
Paul Siegel
Editor
T.A.O.M. History²⁷

The corrections were not emphatic enough for Ren Clark however. Ren would always claim that he and he alone was the sole founder of the TAOM. He would often label himself as "Ren Clark: Founder TAOM." To some, this was simply Ren indicating that he was one of founders of the TAOM, but this is not what he meant. When he was asked, Ren would state very plainly that he was THE founder of the TAOM.

Clark put his specific claims in writing numerous times. The TAOM constitution and by-laws were revised in 1975. On the cover page attached to the revised document Clark writes:

Herman paid for all costs - beer, liquor & food. About one-half, or slightly more, of those in attendance were magicians, and the balance were Herman's friends. Herman was a big hearted, generous person but he was a person of modest means and it could be seen that such annual gatherings in the future would be a burden that one person should not be expected to bear; so I got together Jim Bowling of Houston, Ed DeWees of San Antonio, Doc Mahendra of San Antonio, Dr. Carl Moore of Austin and Ralph DeShong of Wichita Falls and suggested the formation of the Texas Association of Magicians with Herman Yerger as our 1st president - and it was from this meeting that the association was formed.

What does the above have to do with the New Constitution and By-laws? NOTHING! Except that I wish to point out - that since I opened my big mouth and suggested the formation of the Texas Association of Magicians, as usual when such things take place, I was given the task of writing up the 1st Constitution and By-laws of the association.²⁸

In 1978, Ren Clark wrote a short history of the TAOM which appeared in the 33rd annual convention souvenir program:

On Sunday afternoon, September 2nd, 1945, Ren Clark called together for an informal meeting, Ed DeWees, "Doc" Mahendra, Dr. Carl Moore and Ralph DeShong. Ren suggested the formation of an association of Texas magicians which would meet alternately in the major cities where there was an I.B.M. Ring or an S. A. M. Assembly. It was pointed out that this Conclave was larger than the first one and that the attendance would likely continue to increase each year and that it would be unfair for

²⁷ Letter from Paul Siegel attached inside the front cover of the 1970 Dallas TAOM Convention Silver Anniversary book. See Appendix C.

²⁸ See Appendix T.

Herman to continue to bear the expense for the food and drinks since he was not financially able to do so. All agreed to this but at the same time, felt that this was a delicate matter and no one wished to hurt Herman's feelings; so it was decided to discuss the matter again the following morning at Dr. Moore's breakfast.

A second meeting was held Monday morning with those present on the previous day, together with the addition of Jim Bowling and one or two others. Some of the ladies came by and entered into the discussion and expressed their strong feeling that future meetings should restrict the Conclave to magicians and their families.²⁹

Others do not agree to Ren Clark's claim. Ed DeWees' 1975 letter for example states, "I am listing the names of those who can rightfully be named as the founders of TAOM -- Doc Mahendra, Ed DeWees, Dr. Carl Moore, Ralph DeShong, Ren Clark, and Herman Yerger." Again note DeWees' letter for reference:

Wives of some of our magic members as well as some of us men didn't think this good for magic. The same type of visitors again appeared at the 1945 conclave. It was at this time that Mrs. Ed (Adelaide) DeWees and Mrs. Ralph DeShong approached Doc Mahendra and Ed DeWees and told them that if they didn't do something about keeping this element of people out of the conclave, they would not attend any in the future. Doc and Ed didn't want to offend Herman, for these "visitors" were his friends and customers and we knew he did not want to form a Texas organization; Doc, Ed, and Carl Moore had suggested that right after the first (1944) conclave, and Herman did not want it. He felt this was his party and he wanted to keep it his; therefore nothing was done about organizing. But in 1945, when these two women approached Doc and Ed, the men felt action had to be taken. ***Doc and Ed called into session with the Ralph DeShong, Dr. Carl Moore, Ren Clark, Henry Schmidt, Jim Bowling, and possible one or two others that I don't remember. In any event we decided to go ahead and start an organization of Texas magicians.*** Herman was not included since we already knew of his objections. While Carl Moore was present, he wasn't in favor for he was afraid he might hurt Herman's feelings. None of us wanted to hurt Herman, but we felt the ball was rolling for magic in Texas and that we should go ahead with the hope of changing Herman's way of thinking.³⁰

Whatever actually happened and whoever it was that actually suggested it, it is clear that the idea for a Texas magician's association came to fruition at the 1945 Austin picnic. History is also clear that Ren Clark, his committee, and attorney Sproesser Wynn (TAOM's legal advisor) prepared the constitution and by-laws that were revealed on Sunday September 1, 1946 and adopted at the second business meeting of the TAOM on Monday September 2.

Although we do not currently have any documentation to support the assumption, it may have been Ren Clark who coined the title the "Texas Association of Magicians." The title does not seem to appear anywhere in documentation until Ren Clark and his committee produced the constitution and by-laws.

Whatever Ren Clark's contributions to found the organization, he should always be remembered as being gracious to the TAOM. His contributions to the TAOM were

²⁹ 1978 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program; history pages authored by Ren Clark. Italicize by this author. See Appendix U for a reproduction of these history pages.

³⁰ DeWees 1975 letter to Colonel Beaman. Italicized by this author. See pages 3-5 of this manuscript.

immense. He was the General Convention Chairman for the first gathering of the TAOM outside of Austin, at the Fort Worth 1947 convention. He was one of TAOM's early presidents, 1951-52 when Fort Worth held its second TAOM convention (number seven). Finally, the incredibly generous endowment that he left the TAOM after his death is a monumental testimony as to how he felt about Texas' greatest magic organization.

CONCLUSIONS

Anyone who has ever been associated with the Texas Association of Magicians can be proud of a fifty year plus history that has promoted the fine art of magic. It is impossible to list all of the individuals who given unselfishly to this fine organization. The TAOM annual conventions now rank among the best magic conventions in the world, and many contend that they are often better than the big IBM and SAM conventions.

There was much discussion among the leaders of the Texas Association of Magicians from about 1994 to 1997, to pinpoint a date to celebrate the organization's 50th anniversary. Based upon the organization's history, it is impossible to be emphatic about a date. Any one of three years could be considered the 50th anniversary; 1995, 1996, or 1997. The TAOM archives support the following conclusions:

For the 1995 Lubbock TAOM 50th convention: The TAOM came into existence in Austin 1946. If this convention is counted as the first TAOM convention, Lubbock held the 50th convention of TAOM history in 1995. This conclusion supports the tradition convention numbering system.

For the 1996 Houston TAOM 50th convention: The first convention advertised solely under the TAOM title was held in Fort Worth 1947. Fort Worth called their 1947 convention the "1st TAOM Convention," and Houston the following year called their convention the second. If the 1947 convention was the first TAOM convention, the Houston convention in 1996 was the 50th annual convention of TAOM history.

For the 1997 Fort Worth TAOM 50th convention: If the 1947 Fort Worth TAOM convention was the first TAOM convention, exactly 50 years of TAOM history have passed since 1947.

For the 1998 San Antonio TAOM convention: If San Antonio recognizes the convention numbering sequence that was in place when they hosted the 1950 TAOM convention (advertised as convention number five) and recognizes that the numbering sequence was consistent through the 1993 Austin TAOM convention (advertised as convention number 48), then the 1998 San Antonio convention will be the 53rd annual convention of the Texas Association of Magicians.

Whatever the outcome of how future TAOM conventions are numbered, all members should keep in mind that it is not the small matters of date, time, and place that really matter. It is rather the fellowship, the enjoyment, the friendship, and the progress of magic that is central. In closing, perhaps no finer words can be said than those authored by Herman Yerger himself:

Some magicians go to conclaves to learn something new; some go to fatten their ego. After all, a conclave is the one place where magicians are assured of finding a group of like-minded people who will try to believe their tall tales--tales that would extinguish Diogenes' lantern and cause Baron Munchhausen to swoon. But those are minor reasons magicians go to conclaves. The real reason is the Damon-and-Pythias love and loyalty for each other.³¹

* * * *

END NOTE: For all future investigations regarding the TAOM convention numbering sequence, it should be duly noted that at the 1997 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Board of Directors meeting, following a brief explanation by TAOM Historian Bruce Chadwick concerning the ambiguity of the early TAOM numbering sequence, the board officially adopted Mahendra's convention numbering sequence. This official recognition adopts the understanding henceforth that the 1946 Austin picnic was convention number one and the 1998 San Antonio convention is convention number 53. It was further adopted by the board that all future conventions should thereafter be numbered consistently and numerically, the 1999 convention to be convention number 54, the 2000 convention to be convention number 55, and so forth.

Copyright February 1998
Bruce Chadwick MA, M.Div.
All Rights Reserved

PO Box 12345
Fort Worth, Texas 76110 USA
Phone 817-927-0581

www.brucechadwick.com
mail@brucechadwick.com

³¹ "Prologue by Herman Yerger," Conclave of Magic, published in THE LINKING RING, Volume 45, Number 2, February 1965, page 45.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Excerpts from TAOM History: 50 Years and Counting!

by Bruce Chadwick, TAOM Historian

As the Fort Worth IBM Ren Clark Ring 15 hosted the 1997 Texas Association of Magicians convention, much emphasis was placed on celebrating fifty years of TAOM history. This estimation is certainly correct, for the TAOM has been around for at least 50 years and perhaps longer, depending on how you count.

HERMAN YERGER

The historical archives of the TAOM provide a wealth of information about the origin of the organization. All accounts herald Herman Yerger of Austin, Texas as the founder of the Labor Day weekend magic gatherings that became the TAOM organization and annual conventions.

According to the first TAOM newsletter that was published and distributed shortly after the 1946 Austin magic gathering by Secretary M. S. Mahendra, Yerger was a most enthusiastic practitioner of the art of magic.¹ Born on March 22, 1894 in Brooklyn, New York, Yerger and his wife Emilie operated a tent show, played schools, vaudeville, and carnivals.

A former tight wire walker, Mahendra writes that a fall paralyzed Yerger and left him confined to a wheel chair for life.² There are other accounts which explain his paralysis however. In the Summer of 1996, Claude Crowe, editor of the "Texas Magic Collectors Newsletter" (Volume 2, Number 2) states that:

Herman himself had no problem telling friends what actually happened. He was stabbed in the back of the neck by a husband jealous of his wife's attentions to Herman (though he would sometimes deny that the husband had reason to be jealous). Apparently he made a complete recovery from the attack but, as time passed, he began to lose the use of his legs and kidneys. Eventually, X-rays revealed that a piece of the knife blade had broken off in the attack and remained lodged in his spine. He was soon confined to a wheelchair as his condition continued to deteriorate.³

¹ T.A.O.M. Official Organ Texas Association of Magicians, first TAOM newsletter which was published and distributed shortly after the 1946 Austin gathering. See Appendix A.

² Ibid.

³ Texas Magic Collectors Newsletter, Claude Crowe, Editor, Volume 2, #2, Summer 1996. A revised version of the historical text of this newsletter is reproduced in full. See Appendix B.

Despite his handicap, Yerger continued to live life with zeal. He would later write, "My formula is simple. First, I refuse to admit that my physical defects are overwhelming, they are something to be lived with, compromised with, and conquered. I realize that the man who buried his one talent buried something of himself also. Therefore I try to make the best of my talents, especially the ability to think for myself."⁴

Even with the confinements of his disability, Herman would continue to perform and be enthusiastic about magic. As Claude Crowe has written,

. . . he continued to perform from the chair, playing throughout Texas and often performing a "Buried Alive" outdoor promotion with his first wife. Herman was a good performer with an aura of mysterioso that would stand him in good stead when he turned to crystal gazing (although Whitney the Magician with whom Herman often appeared, and father of Delora Whitney, said of his card work, "When he held a break it stood out like a valentine card in a pinochle deck").⁵

Sometime during the 1930's Yerger retired from performing professionally and began operating a drug store of sorts at 1011 Red River Street in Austin, Texas. Although not a pharmacist, he sold herbs, potions, and other over-the-counter remedies to his clients, provided readings, and maintained living quarters in the back of his establishment. On a May Saturday in 1943, Yerger suggested to Ray Santee who was visiting from San Antonio, that if the next day he would bring up some of the San Antonio magicians and bring the beer, Yerger would barbecue for them. A total of ten magicians, six from San Antonio and four from Austin, all members of I.B.M. Ring 18, convened in Herman's backyard for a day of food and magic. The only problem with this Sunday gathering was that it was also Mother's day.

THREE PICNICS AND THE TAOM

According to Ray Santee who was at the first Mother's Day backyard gathering, Yerger and the other San Antonio Ring members decided on another meeting for Labor Day 1944 so that "more magicians could be in attendance."⁶ The location of this first "official picnic" was to be Herman's lodge, property Yerger purchased on Onion Creek about six miles south of Austin. There Yerger erected a club house, some concrete picnic tables, an open air stage, and a barbecue pit. Mahendra, Moore, DeWees, and Yerger got together and made up a list of magic friends and sent out invitations. A flyer was prepared to advertise the event as "Herman's Magic Show and Picnic, featuring Texas Top Notch Magicians and Prestidigitators."⁷ Magicians from Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Dallas, and Houston attended the Sunday and Monday, September 3 and 4 event. Of the 169 persons in attendance, 71 of the guests were non-magician friends of Yerger.

⁴ Frontispiece from the "TAOM Silver Anniversary Convention" booklet for the September 4-7, 1970 Dallas, Texas TAOM Convention. See Appendix C.

⁵ 1996 Texas Magic Collectors Newsletter. See Appendix B.

⁶ 1994 San Antonio TAOM Convention Souvenir Program.

⁷ See Appendix D.

A second picnic followed in 1945 with 112 people in attendance, and a small fee of \$5.00 per person was instituted. During this picnic, M. S. Mahendra, Ed DeWees, Ralph DeShong, Dr. Carl Moore, Ren Clark, Henry Schmidt, Jim Bowling, and a few others met and formed a committee to move the gatherings into a state magician's association. At this 1945 picnic, Doc Mahendra was asked to serve as acting president of the organization, Ren Clark was selected to prepare a constitution and by-laws, Henry Schmidt was asked to be secretary, and Ed DeWees was asked to select a slate of officers to be presented to the 1946 gathering. Yerger was opposed to the idea of such an organization as early as 1944, but eventually warmed up to the idea during the months that followed the 1945 gathering, and especially after it was proposed to him by Ed DeWees that he be the first president of the organization.

Ed DeWees was one of the representatives from the San Antonio IBM Ring 18 who signed the original 1946 TAOM Constitution and By-Laws on behalf of his club. In 1975, he wrote a letter to Colonel J. L. C. Beaman to explain his recollection of how the TAOM organization came into existence, and to counter some of the insinuations that any particular person was the "sole founder." DeWees records that he was privileged to have first hand information regarding the organization of the TAOM.

Dear Colonel,

I'm certainly sorry to learn about your impaired vision and hope that you may find ways and means for improvement in the days ahead.

Now about the early days of TAOM and those who had to do with its organization. I have thought about writing about those early days, especially since 1973 when a history was put together by someone in Dallas and then received considerable criticism from Ren Clark. I'm sure they each honestly believed they were correct, but neither of them had the first hand information available that I am privileged to have.

This letter may give more information than you asked for, but since you have addressed the subject to me, I'm going to use your request as motivation to write a true, documented history of those early days leading to the organization of TAOM. Now at the outset let me say in no uncertain terms that no single individual can by any stretch of the imagination make claim as "the" organizer of TAOM.

In 1940 the San Antonio Ring 18 was chartered. Since Austin, Texas, did not have a Ring or Assembly, persons living in Austin and known to have an interest in magic were invited to join. The most active members in Austin at that time were Herman Yerger and Dr. Carl Moore.

Most of Ring 18's monthly meetings were held in San Antonio. However, several were conducted in Austin. Through the years starting in 1941, a close relationship was formed between Herman Yerger, Doc Mahendra, Carl Moore, and Ed DeWees. We visited each other's homes, talked magic, and exchanged ideas.

It was out of these frequent get-togethers that Herman came up with the idea of enlarging these groups and often invited not only Austin and San Antonio Ring members but other friends in magic throughout the state. Out of these small get-togethers a larger group evolved in 1944. This was Herman's party and he was to pick up the "tab" for the beer and barbecue. Doc Mahendra, Carl Moore, Ed DeWees, and Herman Yerger got together and made up a list of magic friends and sent out invitations. The first conclave was launched and held over Labor Day weekend in the year 1944. Ed DeWees had each person attending to sign his or her name in a register, and he has this book of names in

his possession (see photo copy of this book). This first conclave was such a success that Herman and others of us immediately began making plans for a 1945 conclave. A printed invitation was sent out (a photo copy is enclosed). A small group of us in Austin and San Antonio got together with Herman and convinced him that since so many invitations were being sent for the 1945 conclave, we thought it only proper that those attending should pay a small fee of \$5.00 per person. Herman did not want to charge the fee, but we finally convinced him that this was the proper thing to do. Ed DeWees again registered everyone attending and collected the \$5.00 per person. Ed has the original list of those attending and a record of payment (see photo copy).

The 1945 conclave was again a great success, but there were a few incidents that occurred which made for considerable unpleasantness for some of the wives. Now just a few words about those unpleasant events. Herman more or less gave a blanket invitation for all his Red River friends and customers to attend his magic conclave and enjoy free entertainment, beer, and food. There were 169 persons, counting men, women, and children at the 1944 conclave; of this number, 71 were Austin people who had no interest in magic, some of whom proved very undesirable, as they did heavy drinking, not only beer but hard liquor, used foul language, and some of the women were reported to be prostitutes.

Wives of some of our magic members as well as some of us men didn't think this good for magic. The same type of visitors again appeared at the 1945 conclave. It was at this time that Mrs. Ed (Adelaide) DeWees and Mrs. Ralph DeShong approached Doc Mahendra and Ed DeWees and told them that if they didn't do something about keeping this element of people out of the conclave, they would not attend any in the future. Doc and Ed didn't want to offend Herman, for these "visitors" were his friends and customers and we knew he did not want to form a Texas organization; Doc, Ed, and Carl Moore had suggested that right after the first (1944) conclave, and Herman did not want it. He felt this was his party and he wanted to keep it his; therefore nothing was done about organizing. But in 1945, when these two women approached Doc and Ed, the men felt action had to be taken. Doc and Ed called into session with the Ralph DeShong, Dr. Carl Moore, Ren Clark, Henry Schmidt, Jim Bowling, and possibly one or two others that I don't remember. In any event we decided to go ahead and start an organization of Texas magicians. Herman was not included since we already knew of his objections. While Carl Moore was present, he wasn't in favor for he was afraid he might hurt Herman's feelings. None of us wanted to hurt Herman, but we felt the ball was rolling for magic in Texas and that we should go ahead with the hope of changing Herman's way of thinking.

At this small meeting mentioned above, Doc Mahendra was asked to serve as chairman of the organization. Ren Clark was selected to prepare a constitution and by-laws, Henry Schmidt to record our action as secretary, and Ed DeWees was asked to select a slate of officers to be presented to the 1946 conclave. He was also to talk to Herman and try to get him to give up his Labor Day party and turn it into an association of Texas magicians. During the following months prior to the 1946 conclave, Ed DeWees had many sessions with Herman and finally convinced him that the best interests of magic in Texas would be served by the formation of an association. His original idea of a few friends in magic getting together each year had grown too big and too expensive to be handled by one man. Ed DeWees asked Herman if elected to serve as the first president. This made Herman very happy; since he agreed to serve, we could go ahead "out in the open."

At the 1946 conclave we printed a program (see attached). At the business meeting, Doc Mahendra served as chairman, as it might be said temporary, or acting president.

Note: I am enclosing a photo copy of the first issue of TAOM official organ. This will give you the best material available about the mechanics of our organization. Now to summarize as Ed DeWees sees it.

As mentioned at the outset, no one person can make claim as the founder of TAOM. It was a progression of events directed by a few dedicated magicians that put it together over a period of some five or six years. It is always dangerous to list names for fear of overlooking someone. Now that TAOM is some thirty years old and has achieved such success, I am certain that there are many who would be glad to lay claim to its origin. However, since I have in my possession the early records leading up to the organizational meeting in 1946, I am listing the names of those who can rightfully be named as the founders of TAOM -- Doc Mahendra, Ed DeWees, Dr. Carl Moore, Ralph DeShong, Ren Clark, and Herman Yerger. All of these men except Ed DeWees and Ren Clark are deceased.

You may want to put some of this material on your printing press and have it ready for the 1976 convention in Houston.

Sincerely,
(signed)
Ed DeWees⁸

The Texas Association of Magicians was organized at the third Labor Day weekend picnic gathering, at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas on Sunday morning September 1, 1946. The first "T.A.O.M. Official Organ" newsletter contains "Minutes of the Meeting, Texas Association of Magicians, Austin, Texas September 2, 1946."⁹ These minutes are designated as the second business session of the TAOM, the meeting being called to order in the Mural Room of the Stephen F. Austin Hotel, Austin, Texas at 11:00 A. M. on Sunday with acting President M. S. Mahendra presiding.

The newsletter is not accurate in stating that the second business meeting was on Sunday September 2, because September 2 was a Monday. The printed convention program stated that Saturday August 31 was a night-before party, a "Magicians Meeting to discuss matters of General interest to Texas Magicians" was scheduled at 10:30 AM on Sunday September 1, and a "Magician's Business Meeting and selection of the 1947 Conclave City" was scheduled for 10:30 AM on Monday September 2. Apparently the Sunday morning meeting when the TAOM was declared into existence was the first TAOM business meeting. The minutes found in the first TAOM newsletter for "Sunday September 2, 1946" should have been listed for the Monday second business meeting.

The first order of business for this second business meeting on Monday September 2 was a report by Ren Clark, chairman of the Constitution and By-laws Committee. Ren read the tentative draft that he and his committee had prepared. It is noted that attorney Sproesser Wynn helped revise the constitution and put it into proper legal language. The minutes do not reveal if Ren's committee was comprised of other individuals other than himself and Wynn.

⁸ Letter written by Ed DeWees to Colonel Beaman, October 7, 1975, and composed on stationery from the First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, Texas. A copy of this letter was forwarded to this author by Fred Story of Tullia, Texas.

⁹ See Appendix A.

After the initiation fee of \$2.50 and \$1.50 first year's dues was set, DeShong moved the adoption of the Constitution and By-Laws, it was seconded by several and then was carried by a unanimous vote.

Ed DeWees asked that the meeting be temporarily adjourned so that the representatives of the various Rings and Assemblies could name their respective representatives or governors to the TAOM. The meeting was then resumed and the results were as follows:

S.A.M. No. 13, A. Robert White
S.A.M. No. 19, James Bowling
I.B.M. No. 15, Ren Clark
I.B.M. No. 18, Herman Yerger
I.B.M. No 34, H. H. Gaddis
I.B.M. No. 39, John Dunlop

Next this Board of Governors met and elected the following to serve until October 1, 1947, or until their successors were duly elected and installed:

President: Herman Yerger
Vice-President: Ralph DeShong
Secretary: M. S. Mahendra
Treasurer: Glen Y. Davidson

It was emphasized from the onset that the TAOM was to be controlled by the Board of Governors, with each Governor being selected by the members of his or her Ring or Assembly. The Governor in turn would then represent his club in all matters requiring executive action.

For a person to become a 1946 charter member of the TAOM, the person had to first be in good standing with one of the approved magic clubs in Texas. Next the prospective member would fill out an application and submit it to the Treasurer along with a \$2.50 initiation fee and \$1.50 for first year's dues. The application was then passed by the TAOM Membership Committee for approval and it was also submitted for approval to the prospective member's Ring or Assembly Secretary. It was emphasized in the first TAOM bulletin that a person could be a charter member of the organization if their application was received (and presumably also accepted by the TAOM) by November 1946. According to the second bulletin (noted as Volume 1, Number 2) published in December 1946, 118 people made application to become charter members of the Texas Association of Magicians.¹⁰ In the third bulletin (Volume 1, Number 3) published in July 1947, four additional names were listed and Secretary Mahendra specified that they should be added to the roster in bulletin number two. This made a total of 123 charter members.¹¹

WHEN WAS THE FIRST CONVENTION?

¹⁰ See Appendix F.

¹¹ See Appendix G.

The TAOM archives are clear that the first 1944 and second 1945 Labor Day weekend picnic gatherings were exactly that, gatherings of magicians and friends over Labor Day weekend and hosted by Herman Yerger in Austin, Texas. The question comes regarding the 1946 gathering, whether or not it was just a third picnic, or the first convention of the TAOM. The printed flyer or program used to publicize the 1946 gathering used the title "TEXAS MAGICIAN'S CONCLAVE."¹² It is clear that at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas on Sunday morning September 1, 1946, shortly after 10:30 AM, the Texas Association of Magicians came into existence.

A short synopsis of the TAOM beginnings appeared in the 1947 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program. This synopsis (or parts thereof) is used in many bulletins and souvenir programs of subsequent TAOM conventions:

HISTORY OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS

The Texas Association of Magicians was first conceived at Austin, Texas during the Labor Day Conclave of 1946. The idea of such a Conclave first started with Herman Yerger when he built a theatre and lodge for the use of magicians and their friends and invited them to be his guests on Labor Day of each year.

In the beginning this was a small gathering and Herman furnished food and refreshments for everyone while his guests supplied most of the entertainment. All of this started three years ago. Then the attendance grew so large as to make it impossible for one man to assume such a heavy task.

It was at that time that I.B.M. Ring No. 18 of San Antonio assisted Herman in 1946 by sending out invitations, planning shows, etc. Members of Ring No. 18 and well-known leaders from other Texas Rings and Assemblies then suggested that a state organization be formed with the express purpose of exploiting a Labor Day Magical Conclave in Texas.

Accordingly, A. Ren Clark, the present leader of the largest magical organization in the World--the International Brotherhood of Magicians--with the legal assistance of Sprosser Wynn--T.A.O.M.'s legal advisor--drew up a Constitution and By-laws for the new organization. These were presented by M. S. Mahendra, then President of I.B.M. Ring 18 to about one hundred magicians assembled in Austin at Herman Yerger's lodge. They were duly adopted and officers and directors elected. Herman Yerger was given the honor of being the first President--Ralph DeShong of Wichita Falls, Vice President--M. S. Mahendra of San Antonio, Secretary--Glenn Davidson of Houston, Treasurer and thus began the Texas Association of Magicians composed of all accredited magic clubs of the State of Texas.¹³

It is important to note that the Fort Worth 1947 convention program does not specify that the convention was the first TAOM convention. However, Fort Worth did distribute a earlier promotional flyer which invited attendance to the "1st Annual TAOM

¹² See Appendix E.

¹³ 1947 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program, See Appendix H for reproductions of the front cover and the history page of the program.

Convention.”¹⁴ The 1947 Fort Worth TAOM convention was definitely the first convention to be advertised solely under the Texas Association of Magicians name.

The 1947 Fort Worth TAOM convention would probably be considered the first TAOM convention if it were not disputed by Doc Mahendra, the first editor of the TAOM periodical. In his fourth TAOM bulletin (Volume 1, Number 4) dated November 1947, Mahendra lists a roster for the Fort Worth TAOM convention and titles it the “2nd Annual Convention, Ft. Worth, Texas.”¹⁵ Elsewhere the bulletin recounts the success of the 1947 Fort Worth TAOM gathering and states “Well its now all over and a matter of magic history, but those who attended the second TAOM Convention will long remember the outstanding shows, general good fellowship and meeting the grandest bunch of magicians anywhere in America.” Also in this bulletin, under the heading “Financial Statement, T.A.O.M.,” the first sentence reads: “Our first Convention was held over Labor Day at Austin, Texas and this is when the TAOM was formed.”

Mahendra remained numerically consistent in future TAOM bulletins. The TAOM bulletin (Volume 1, Number 5) dated August 1948 announced that the third annual TAOM Convention would be held Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, September 4, 5, and 6, 1948 in Houston, Texas.¹⁶ Like Fort Worth however, Houston didn’t adopt Mahendra’s chronology. In their 1948 convention souvenir program Houston stated:

HISTORY OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS

A state wide organization of professional, semi-professional and amateur magicians. It is the result of a dream of Herman Yerger, first President of the T.A.O.M. who, after retiring from the life of a traveling magician and mentalist, settled in Austin, Texas, where he now resides. In 1944 Herman bought property near Austin, on which he had erected a club house, open air stage, barbecue pit, etc. for one purpose, and that being to have his magician friends from over the State attend his Annual Conclave, the first being held on Labor Day weekend 1944. Labor Day Conclaves followed in 1945 and 1946. Each year the crowd grew larger, so in 1946 prominent magicians of Texas urged Herman to agree to the organization of a State Association of Magicians was organized with Herman Yerger as First President, Ralph DeShong of Wichita Falls, Vice President, M. S. Doc Mahendra, San Antonio, Secretary and Glenn Y. Davidson of Houston as Treasurer, the last two named still hold these offices, with Ralph DeShong, President, and Jas. A. Bowling of Houston, Vice President. ***First T.A.O.M. Conclave was held in the city of Fort Worth, and we WELCOME YOU TO HOUSTON for the Second Annual Conclave of the TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS.***¹⁷

Additionally, the name badges for the Houston 1948 Convention were printed with the designation “2nd Annual Conclave.”¹⁸

¹⁴ See Appendix I.

¹⁵ See Appendix J.

¹⁶ See Appendix K.

¹⁷ 1948 Houston TAOM Convention Souvenir Program, front page, italicize by this author. See Appendix L for a reproduction of the program front cover.

¹⁸ See Appendix M.

This didn't budge Mahendra however. The TAOM bulletin Volume 3, Number 1 for August 1949 announced that the fourth Annual TAOM Convention (1949) would be in Dallas, Texas.¹⁹ The bulletin for August 1950 (Volume 4, Number 2) announced four days of convention, September 1, 2, 3, and 4 and a headline which read "Announcing Fifth Annual TAOM Convention At San Antonio, Texas."²⁰ Austin was the host for the "Home-Coming Meeting" 1951 TAOM convention, and Volume 5, Number 2 of the bulletin for August 1951 stated that it would be the sixth annual convention.²¹ Austin concurred with the numbering system and sent out a letter to promote the sixth convention.²²

The TAOM bulletin Volume 6, Number 2 for August 1952 announced that Fort Worth would host the seventh annual convention.²³ Whether it was out of acceptance or indifference, the 1952 Fort Worth TAOM hosts conceded to the TAOM bulletin's (Mahendra's) numbering system. Fort Worth's 1952 souvenir program labeled its convention as the seventh annual TAOM convention.²⁴ Fort Worth's adoption of the numbering system may imply a concession that the 1946 Herman Yerger lodge picnic was the first TAOM convention.

It is very important for historians to acknowledge that the newsletter convention numbering sequence that was in place by the 1950 San Antonio convention (convention number five) is the numbering system that the TAOM continued to use for the next forty-three years, through the 1993 Austin convention (advertised as convention number 48). If this numbering sequence is continued to the present, then the 1995 Lubbock convention was number 50, the 1996 Houston convention was number 51, the 1997 Fort Worth convention was number 52, and the 1998 San Antonio convention will be number 53. Again, this numbering system recognizes the 1946 Yerger Austin picnic as convention number one, the first convention of the TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MAGICIANS.

The following is a list of the each TAOM Convention, the year it was held, the name of the president for the particular convention year, the location for the convention, and notations on the numbering system(s) used for each convention. Blank spaces indicate that either the host city/club in question did not number its convention, or that the current TAOM archives in possession of the TAOM Historian at the time this treatise was composed do not indicate a number.

Conv Nbr:	Conv Year:	President: for the	Location of Host	Convention Bulletin	Host City/Club Labeled their
------------------	-------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------------------

¹⁹ See Appendix N.

²⁰ See Appendix O.

²¹ See Appendix P.

²² See Appendix Q.

²³ See Appendix R.

²⁴ See Appendix S.

			City/Club:	Advertised Number:	Convention As Number:
	1943	May Mother's Day	Austin		
	1944	Labor Picnic	Austin		
	1945	Labor Picnic	Austin		
1	1946	Labor Picnic <i>Yerger Elected</i>	Austin	1	
2	1947	Herman Yerger	Fort Worth	2	1
3	1948	Ralph De Shong	Houston	3	2
4	1949	Jas. A. Bowlin	Dallas		
5	1950	Ed DeWees	San Antonio	5	
6	1951	Dr. Carl L. Moore	Austin	6	
7	1952	A. R "Ren" Clark	Fort Worth	7	7
8	1953	Tommy Bearden	Houston		
9	1954	Royal Brin, Jr.	Dallas		
10	1955	L. Louis Harrop, M.D.	Corpus Christi		10
11	1956	C. Allen Sears	Austin		11
12	1957	W. C. Stubblefield	Fort Worth		12
13	1958	James Daniels	San Antonio	13	
14	1959	Ed Watkins	Dallas		
15	1960	Thomas B. Martin	Houston		
16	1961	W. Doug Grounds	Corpus Christi		16
17	1962	Allen Sears	Austin		
18	1963	Robert O. Utter	Fort Worth		
19	1964	Ed DeWees	San Antonio	19 (Env)	19
20	1965	Dr. John H. Gladfelter	Dallas	20	
21	1966	Frank Clauder	Houston	20 (Badge)	
22	1967	Gene Looper	Corpus Christi		
23	1968	Wilbur Kattner	Fort Worth		
24	1969	Dean Duncan	San Antonio		
25	1970	Harold Thomas	Dallas		25
26	1971	Walter Blaney	Houston		
27	1972	John L. Howell	Abilene		27
28	1973	Nolan Manly, Jr.	Fort Worth		28
29	1974	Robert C. Ford	San Antonio		
30	1975	Dr. Ralph A. Marcom	Dallas		30
31	1976	Ed Campagna	Houston	31	
32	1977	Bob Emery	Austin	32	
33	1978	Roger Crabtree	Fort Worth	33	33
34	1979	Frank Ramirez	San Antonio	34	
35	1980	Noel Coward	Dallas	35	
36	1981	Frank C. Price	Houston		
37	1982	Gerald Edmundson	Fort Worth		
38	1983	Kent C. Cummins	Austin		38
39	1984	Steve Norman	Abilene		
40	1985	Alex D. Gutierrez	San Antonio		40
41	1986	Bob Karlebach	Dallas		
42	1987	J. D. "Tex" Babin	Corpus Christi		
43	1988	Bruce Chadwick	Fort Worth	43	43
44	1989	Douglas Kornegay	Houston	44	
45	1990	Chuck Lehr	Dallas	45 (nickel)	
46	1991	Bill Faulkner	Tyler		
47	1992	Joe Douglas	Corpus Christi	47	
48	1993	Raymon Galindo	Austin	48	48
49	1994	Charles E. Golla	San Antonio		47
50	1995	Bill Mayes	Lubbock	50	50
51	1996	Terry Campagna	Houston	50	
52	1997	David Hira	Fort Worth	50	50
53	1998	George Blackburn	San Antonio		
54	1999	Peter the Adequate (Hinrichs)	Austin		
55	2000	Scott Wells	Dallas		
56	2001	Don Stiefel	Corpus Christi		

REN CLARK: FOUNDER OF TAOM?

In 1952, the Fort Worth convention program brought to head a controversy that began brewing during the early days of the TAOM. This "Ren Clark Founder

Controversy,” a controversy that existed continually until his death, surrounded Ren Clark’s claims that he was “the founder” of the TAOM.

The 1952 “7th Annual Convention” program contains a biography of A. R. (Ren) Clark and it states: “It was Ren who first suggested and promoted the founding of the Texas Association of Magicians, at one of Herman Yerger’s annual Labor Day get-togethers. Therefore, it is fitting that the Texas magicians should honor one who has brought recognition to his state by his accomplishments in the magic world.”²⁵

This author was privileged to be personally acquainted with Ren Clark for many years. In questioning Clark about the beginnings of the TAOM organization, Ren Clark told this author rather emphatically that he founded the TAOM.

In 1970, the Texas Association of Magicians celebrated their Silver Anniversary Convention to mark the first 25 years of TAOM history. The Dallas convention distributed to each attendee a saddle stapled book which chronicled the TAOM convention from its beginnings. The author(s) dedicated a page or two to each convention, and included many photographs where available.

The book did contain numerous inconsistencies however. For example, inside the front cover it read: “On a small ranch near Austin, Texas, Herman Yerger conceived the idea for the Texas Association of Magicians. At an informal picnic Herman presented his idea to a group of friends and from this casual meeting came the charter for the association.”²⁶

History is very clear that Herman Yerger did not want a Texas magic association. He wanted the picnics to remain as they were, his annual parties. It was only after Ed DeWees convinced Yerger to allow the Labor Day gatherings to be formed into an annual magician’s association did Yerger concede to the idea. It should also be noted that the enticement DeWees used to help Yerger change his mind was the offer to make Yerger the first president of the TAOM. That is when Yerger in 1945 or 1946 accepted the idea for a state-wide magician’s organization that became the Texas Association of Magicians.

The Dallas club did try to correct the silver anniversary chronicle. Attached inside the front cover of the program was a letter written by Paul Siegel. Dated August 9, 1970, the letter was addressed “To All T.A.O.M. Members.”

The following additional data has been brought to my attention by Ren Clark and is included with this booklet in an effort to offer a complete document which would be of significant interest to anyone concerned in the founding of our organization.

- 1) Herman Yerger conceived the idea of a Labor Day Magical Get-Together and picnic, which started in September of 1944 and continued for three years.
- 2) Herman Yerger was the 1st President of the Texas Association of Magicians.

²⁵ 1952 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program. See Appendix S.

²⁶ 1972 Dallas TAOM Convention Silver Anniversary book. See Appendix C

- 3) Ed DeWees and Doc Mahendra were two important individuals in helping Herman plan and carry out his magical get-togethers. These same individuals were founders of the TAOM, along with a few other individuals.
- 4) Ren Clark was the person who first conceived and suggested the idea of forming the T.A.O.M.
- 5) Ren Clark and Sproesser Wynn drew up the Constitution and By-laws for the T.A.O.M.
- 6) Among those who could be listed as the founders of T.A.O.M. are: Ren Clark, Ralph DeShong, Ed DeWees, Doc Mahendra and Herman Yerger.

I sincerely hope that these facts (as listed) have enabled you to complete your understanding of the founding of our association as we have come to know it.

With Best Regards.
(signed)
Paul Siegel
Editor
T.A.O.M. History²⁷

The corrections were not emphatic enough for Ren Clark however. Ren would always claim that he and he alone was the sole founder of the TAOM. He would often label himself as "Ren Clark: Founder TAOM." To some, this was simply Ren indicating that he was one of founders of the TAOM, but this is not what he meant. When he was asked, Ren would state very plainly that he was THE founder of the TAOM.

Clark put his specific claims in writing numerous times. The TAOM constitution and by-laws were revised in 1975. On the cover page attached to the revised document Clark writes:

Herman paid for all costs - beer, liquor & food. About one-half, or slightly more, of those in attendance were magicians, and the balance were Herman's friends. Herman was a big hearted, generous person but he was a person of modest means and it could be seen that such annual gatherings in the future would be a burden that one person should not be expected to bear; so I got together Jim Bowling of Houston, Ed DeWees of San Antonio, Doc Mahendra of San Antonio, Dr. Carl Moore of Austin and Ralph DeShong of Wichita Falls and suggested the formation of the Texas Association of Magicians with Herman Yerger as our 1st president - and it was from this meeting that the association was formed.

What does the above have to do with the New Constitution and By-laws? NOTHING! Except that I wish to point out - that since I opened my big mouth and suggested the formation of the Texas Association of Magicians, as usual when such things take place, I was given the task of writing up the 1st Constitution and By-laws of the association.²⁸

²⁷ Letter from Paul Siegel attached inside the front cover of the 1970 Dallas TAOM Convention Silver Anniversary book. See Appendix C.

²⁸ See Appendix T.

In 1978, Ren Clark wrote a short history of the TAOM which appeared in the 33rd annual convention souvenir program:

On Sunday afternoon, September 2nd, 1945, Ren Clark called together for an informal meeting, Ed DeWees, "Doc" Mahendra, Dr. Carl Moore and Ralph DeShong. Ren suggested the formation of an association of Texas magicians which would meet alternately in the major cities where there was an I.B.M. Ring or an S. A. M. Assembly. It was pointed out that this Conclave was larger than the first one and that the attendance would likely continue to increase each year and that it would be unfair for Herman to continue to bear the expense for the food and drinks since he was not financially able to do so. All agreed to this but at the same time, felt that this was a delicate matter and no one wished to hurt Herman's feelings; so it was decided to discuss the matter again the following morning at Dr. Moore's breakfast.

A second meeting was held Monday morning with those present on the previous day, together with the addition of Jim Bowling and one or two others. Some of the ladies came by and entered into the discussion and expressed their strong feeling that future meetings should restrict the Conclave to magicians and their families.²⁹

Others do not agree to Ren Clark's claim. Ed DeWees' 1975 letter for example states, "I am listing the names of those who can rightfully be named as the founders of TAOM -- Doc Mahendra, Ed DeWees, Dr. Carl Moore, Ralph DeShong, Ren Clark, and Herman Yerger." Again note DeWees' letter for reference:

Wives of some of our magic members as well as some of us men didn't think this good for magic. The same type of visitors again appeared at the 1945 conclave. It was at this time that Mrs. Ed (Adelaide) DeWees and Mrs. Ralph DeShong approached Doc Mahendra and Ed DeWees and told them that if they didn't do something about keeping this element of people out of the conclave, they would not attend any in the future. Doc and Ed didn't want to offend Herman, for these "visitors" were his friends and customers and we knew he did not want to form a Texas organization; Doc, Ed, and Carl Moore had suggested that right after the first (1944) conclave, and Herman did not want it. He felt this was his party and he wanted to keep it his; therefore nothing was done about organizing. But in 1945, when these two women approached Doc and Ed, the men felt action had to be taken. ***Doc and Ed called into session with the Ralph DeShong, Dr. Carl Moore, Ren Clark, Henry Schmidt, Jim Bowling, and possible one or two others that I don't remember. In any event we decided to go ahead and start an organization of Texas magicians.*** Herman was not included since we already knew of his objections. While Carl Moore was present, he wasn't in favor for he was afraid he might hurt Herman's feelings. None of us wanted to hurt Herman, but we felt the ball was rolling for magic in Texas and that we should go ahead with the hope of changing Herman's way of thinking.³⁰

Whatever actually happened and whoever it was that actually suggested it, it is clear that the idea for a Texas magician's association came to fruition at the 1945 Austin picnic. History is also clear that Ren Clark, his committee, and attorney Sproesser Wynn (TAOM's legal advisor) prepared the constitution and by-laws that were revealed on

²⁹ 1978 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Souvenir Program; history pages authored by Ren Clark. Italicize by this author. See Appendix U for a reproduction of these history pages.

³⁰ DeWees 1975 letter to Colonel Beaman. Italicized by this author. See pages 3-5 of this manuscript.

Sunday September 1, 1946 and adopted at the second business meeting of the TAOM on Monday September 2.

Although we do not currently have any documentation to support the assumption, it may have been Ren Clark who coined the title the "Texas Association of Magicians." The title does not seem to appear anywhere in documentation until Ren Clark and his committee produced the constitution and by-laws.

Whatever Ren Clark's contributions to found the organization, he should always be remembered as being gracious to the TAOM. His contributions to the TAOM were immense. He was the General Convention Chairman for the first gathering of the TAOM outside of Austin, at the Fort Worth 1947 convention. He was one of TAOM's early presidents, 1951-52 when Fort Worth held its second TAOM convention (number seven). Finally, the incredibly generous endowment that he left the TAOM after his death is a monumental testimony as to how he felt about Texas' greatest magic organization.

CONCLUSIONS

Anyone who has ever been associated with the Texas Association of Magicians can be proud of a fifty year plus history that has promoted the fine art of magic. It is impossible to list all of the individuals who given unselfishly to this fine organization. The TAOM annual conventions now rank among the best magic conventions in the world, and many contend that they are often better than the big IBM and SAM conventions.

There was much discussion among the leaders of the Texas Association of Magicians from about 1994 to 1997, to pinpoint a date to celebrate the organization's 50th anniversary. Based upon the organization's history, it is impossible to be emphatic about a date. Any one of three years could be considered the 50th anniversary; 1995, 1996, or 1997. The TAOM archives support the following conclusions:

For the 1995 Lubbock TAOM 50th convention: The TAOM came into existence in Austin 1946. If this convention is counted as the first TAOM convention, Lubbock held the 50th convention of TAOM history in 1995. This conclusion supports the tradition convention numbering system.

For the 1996 Houston TAOM 50th convention: The first convention advertised solely under the TAOM title was held in Fort Worth 1947. Fort Worth called their 1947 convention the "1st TAOM Convention," and Houston the following year called their convention the second. If the 1947 convention was the first TAOM convention, the Houston convention in 1996 was the 50th annual convention of TAOM history.

For the 1997 Fort Worth TAOM 50th convention: If the 1947 Fort Worth TAOM convention was the first TAOM convention, exactly 50 years of TAOM history have passed since 1947.

For the 1998 San Antonio TAOM convention: If San Antonio recognizes the convention numbering sequence that was in place when they hosted the 1950 TAOM convention (advertised as convention number five) and recognizes that the numbering sequence was consistent through the 1993 Austin TAOM convention (advertised as

convention number 48), then the 1998 San Antonio convention will be the 53rd annual convention of the Texas Association of Magicians.

Whatever the outcome of how future TAOM conventions are numbered, all members should keep in mind that it is not the small matters of date, time, and place that really matter. It is rather the fellowship, the enjoyment, the friendship, and the progress of magic that is central. In closing, perhaps no finer words can be said than those authored by Herman Yerger himself:

Some magicians go to conclaves to learn something new; some go to fatten their ego. After all, a conclave is the one place where magicians are assured of finding a group of like-minded people who will try to believe their tall tales--tales that would extinguish Diogenes' lantern and cause Baron Munchhausen to swoon. But those are minor reasons magicians go to conclaves. The real reason is the Damon-and-Pythias love and loyalty for each other.³¹

* * * *

END NOTE: For all future investigations regarding the TAOM convention numbering sequence, it should be duly noted that at the 1997 Fort Worth TAOM Convention Board of Directors meeting, following a brief explanation by TAOM Historian Bruce Chadwick concerning the ambiguity of the early TAOM numbering sequence, the board officially adopted Mahendra's convention numbering sequence. This official recognition adopts the understanding henceforth that the 1946 Austin picnic was convention number one and the 1998 San Antonio convention is convention number 53. It was further adopted by the board that all future conventions should thereafter be numbered consistently and numerically, the 1999 convention to be convention number 54, the 2000 convention to be convention number 55, and so forth.

Copyright February 1998
Bruce Chadwick MA, M.Div.
All Rights Reserved

PO Box 12345
Fort Worth, Texas 76110 USA
Phone 817-832-6062

chadwickillusionist@yahoo.com
www.brucechadwick.com

³¹ "Prologue by Herman Yerger," Conclave of Magic, published in THE LINKING RING, Volume 45, Number 2, February 1965, page 45.