



Inside Ed's Head

Written by Ed Hass

Edited by Sal Mannuzza

May 2015

Rara Avis (A Trick for the Sharpest Among Us)

The Background:

I came across the trick “Rara Avis,” by Jack Avis, in *The Best of New Pentagram Card Magic*, edited by Martin Breese. As both Jack Avis and Martin Breese are deceased I was unsure how to get permission to include this. A little digging with Google led me to Martin Breese Publications, which owned the rights to Mr. Breese’s material. I then found that these rights had been sold to an outfit called Lybrary.com, presided over by a gentleman named Chris Wasshuber. Chris kindly granted me permission to include “Rara Avis” here.

Lybrary.com is a company that distributes books in digital format. Their primary products are the “. . . Finest Ebooks from all Subjects, and Exclusive E-Books for Magicians, Gamblers, and Gamers.” I must admit that my first reaction to the concept of reading books on a screen was rather negative. I like the idea of throwing a book I’m reading onto the floor before retiring for the night. Or thumbing through pages randomly to see what looks interesting. Lastly, I’ve never worried that the book I’m reading might become useless if I’ve forgotten to charge it.

Nonetheless, I decided it was time to gingerly tread into the twenty-first century. I bought a book from Lybrary.com: *Paul Rosini’s Magical Gems*, by Rufus Steel—for the princely sum of \$7.00. I soon found a trick that will become part of my repertoire, and I hope to teach you as well. I urge you to take a look at Lybrary.com also. You’ll find a wealth of material at very reasonable prices.

The Effect:

A selection is made and left outjogged in the deck. The magician demonstrates how he’ll find the card—by stabbing the deck with a knife, lifting the cards thusly impaled, and asserting that the selection will be at the bottom of this group.

He now pushes the protruding card in the tabled packet flush, asks the spectator to shuffle the packet, and place it in front of him. Once again cards are stabbed from the top of the deck. The selection is now seen to be at the bottom of this pile. It can be given away as a “holey” souvenir if so desired.

The Knife:

Despite what you may have seen on TV, a deck of cards is a rather impenetrable object. You'll want to use a sturdy knife with a sharp point and a fixed or locking blade. If you use a cheap folding knife, you run the risk of the blade folding into the handle as you stab the deck. Since you are holding said handle at the time, you could find yourself losing to Meir Yedid in a "Who Has the Most Fingers" contest. This trick will only work with a solid knife with a sharp point. If you are careless or uncomfortable using a knife as a tool, *don't do this trick!* If you do decide to do it, and get hurt, see above and sue Jack Avis. There was no warning in his article.

I use a high quality folder for this trick. A good quality Bowie knife or a military style knife could be used as well—perhaps adding interesting patter possibilities.

The Cards:

You can ruin ten to twenty cards performing this trick. I have enough cards that I don't mind ruining a deck every once in a while. I'll eventually consolidate several ruined decks to make up "new" ones of about forty-five cards. You can let the spectators know that for obvious reasons, you're not using your normal deck.

The Method:

Have a card selected, and, if you wish, signed. Then control it to the top using your favorite method. I like to use a control that apparently leaves the card outjogged somewhere in the center of the deck. (I'll explain why and how later. See: "The Control.") Now tell your audience that you are going to find their card in a very unusual way. I say that I'm going to use a magic wand that is different from any they've seen before. At this point (pardon the pun), I bring out my knife.

Explain that you'll find their card by stabbing the top of the deck, and lifting the cards impaled by the knife. Do so, and remove the cards from the point of the knife into left-hand mechanic's grip. (Photo 1) Notice that I'm holding the knife so the edge of the blade is pointing **away** from my left thumb. (Photo 1a) I spent a lot of time practicing how I would grasp the knife so the edge is in a position where I'm least likely to cut myself. Some might consider dulling the edge of the knife—using it for performance only.



Photo 1

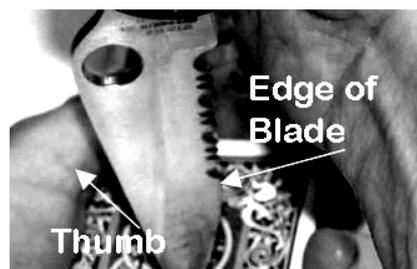


Photo 1a

Now show the bottom card of this packet, and tell the spectators that the selection will appear here when you do the trick “for real.” Place the knife on the table to the right of the cards.



Photo 2

Next, push the outjogged card flush (if there is one), ask the spectator to pick up the cards remaining on the table, and “give them a little shuffle.” As you say this, begin an overhand shuffle with the few cards in your hand by shuffling the top card into your left hand in position for a “Gambler’s Cop.” (Photo 2) (If you’re not familiar with this move, you should be! See: *Inside Ed’s Head*, October 2012, p. 6.

www.edhassmagic.com/eds-head.) Shuffle off the rest of the cards into the left hand. (You must get the selection from the top of the initially stabbed packet to the bottom, to prepare for the cop. Any way you feel like doing this is fine.)

When the cards have been shuffled, ask the spectator to place them back in front of you. You’ll now want to do the next few actions in a smooth, steady rhythm.

Take all the cards in your left hand above the copped card with your right hand and table them. Pick up the knife, and stab the deck, *hard*, and immediately bring the impaled cards to your left hand where they’re taken on top of the copped card. (Photos 3, 4) Be sure to bring the knife to your left hand. If you move your left hand to the knife, you risk flashing the copped card.



Photo 3
Magician’s View



Photo 4
Spectator’s View

As soon as you’ve grasped the cards, remove and table the knife. Square up your cards and show their selection at the bottom of the packet.

The Control:

When I first started doing this trick, I had the selection signed, returned to the deck, and controlled to the top via a jog-shuffle. I had the card signed because I didn’t want any suspicion of duplicate cards. (Especially if I was using a deck made up from the remnants of some old decks, where I *would* have duplicate cards.) This control bothered me a bit, as it allowed for the

possibility that the selection would be in the first group of cards stabbed. Although no one mentioned this to me, I wanted to eliminate that possibility. Since I had recently learned Lee Asher's "Losing Control," which effectively brings a card to the top of the deck while apparently leaving the selection outjogged in the center, I started using this control. (http://www.leeasher.com/store/online_downloads/losing_control.html. Sign up for his email list, and you get 10% off your first order.)

Unfortunately, I was unsure of the effectiveness of this control once the card was removed from the deck, so I stopped having the card signed. This made me somewhat unhappy, but I lived with it.

Literally a few days ago, I was reacquainted with another control that might allow me both options—Larry Jennings' "Open Control." I had encountered this control a couple of times previously, but never felt a need to use it. Reading *Impact*, by Aldo Colombini, I came across the move again. I saw how it might be useful to allow me to have the card signed *and* leave it outjogged from the middle of the deck. As of this writing, I haven't tried this in front of real people. I'll update this article if/when I do.

Larry Jennings' "Open Control":



Photo 5

Spread the deck hand-to-hand and have the spectator **touch** one of them as you spread. Separate the cards so the selection is the top card of the **left**-hand spread. Maintain the spread condition of the cards in both hands, being sure that the cards at the left end of the right-hand spread are well separated. (Photo 5) Thumb off his selection, and ask him to sign its face while you turn away for a few seconds.



You might even consider covering your eyes with the spread cards as you do so. (Photo 6) Do *not* say anything about showing the card to the rest of the spectators. After a few seconds, ask him to turn the card face down again, and replace it where it came from—on top of the spread in your left hand. Offer your left hand and take the selection onto the spread. (See photo 5 a

Photo 6



Move your right hand back and to the left so you can begin to outjog the selection. (Photo 7.)

Photo 7



Photo 8

Press up on the lower-right corner of the selection with your right middle finger—pinning it to the cards in your right hand. (Photo 8, bottom view)



Photo 9

As you do this, start bringing the cards to a vertical position. The left thumb pins the leftmost card of the right-hand spread on top of the selection (Photo 9) as the cards in the left hand are squared, and your grip is modified so your left little finger goes under the packet, to act as a “stop” when you push the selection flush (Photo 10-11). The cards in the right hand are also squared, and tabled immediately in front of you.



Photo 10
Magician's View



Photo 11
Spectator's View



Photo 12

As the outjogged card is being shown, you can remark that you weren't sure if everyone was shown the card. Now place your right fingers on the outer edge of the outjogged selection, and the side of your right thumb on the back of the card above it, about an inch from the end. (Photo 12.)

As you lower the deck to a horizontal position, push the outjogged card flush, as your left thumb drags the top card off the front of the deck, placing

it outjogged on top of the tabled cards. (Photos 13, 14.)



Photo 13



Photo 14



Photo 15

Finally, place the remaining cards on top of those on the table (Photo 15), leaving you in perfect position to bring out your broadsword.

Inside Ed's Head, May 2015
Copyright 2015 by Edward Hass.
Feel free to link to this article at:
www.edhassmagic.com/eds-head.