

Louisville Ky.
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Evaluation of the UFO Experience

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Courier-Journal Photos by Marion Klein
Al Hixenbaugh, the man who sounds like a walking typographical error, poses for a picture. Usually, he's taking the photo.

HIX-ING

The Magic Act

Meet Doctor Hixenbaugh—photographer-hypnotist

By ALAN LEVY, *Courier-Journal Staff Writer*

"I keep getting migratin' headaches . . . When I have a cough, nothing works better than throat loungers . . . An occasional drink breaks the monopoly . . . I like that musical show where the girls play on the tangerines . . . The trouble with my job is I have to jump around like an actorbat . . ."

—From *The Collected Sayings of Al Hixenbaugh.*

AL FRED "DOCTOR AL" HIXENBAUGH is neither a hoax nor a walking typographical error. Al Hixenbaugh is for real. Strictly for real.

Half of Louisville probably has met him already in one of his many capacities—as a full-time photographer for *The Courier-Journal* and *The Louisville Times* for almost 15 years or as boat-owner, amateur entertainer, occasional lecturer (on photography) at the University of Louisville, and hypochondriac (alternately beset by migratin' headaches and ulcers).

On a recent weekend at a night club in the South End, Hixenbaugh made his professional debut as a hypnotist and magician. Many of his followers and new friends watched the 45-minute performances he gave.

Hix, a 37-year-old chipmunk of a man, was unruffled by the spotlight and the applause. Being strictly for real, he was just himself—the same personality that leaves his friends and co-workers shaking their heads to the tune of: "He must be kidding!"

He spoke the same English with the same

inflections that make it hard to believe he is a native of Wheeling, W. Va.—not Brooklyn.

In speech that has been described as "sounding like a man who needs a shave," he told an interviewer his qualifications for his new role:

"I've studied hypnosis, advanced psychology, and other courses from books and from a couple of doctors whose names they would not wish me to divulge. I took a correspondence course from Sir Sidney Lawrence of London, England—one of the top criminologists and hypnotists in London, England.

"I took other-type courses out of New York. There's no gift to it. As a photographer, I have always been interested in science, mental telegraphy, outer space, and the power of the subconscious mind. And photography, of course."

"Do we mix the developer the same way we did in the old building?"—*Al Hixenbaugh, when The Courier-Journal moved its offices several years ago.*

The trio subsides, the dancers walk gingerly back to their tables, the Master of Ceremonies says a few words, and Doctor Al Hixenbaugh is on stage.

In rapid succession, he takes a photograph with a banana, extracts a sausage from a definitely empty box, crumples and tears a piece of paper that emerges in the shape of a woman's garment, torments an onlooker with a seemingly blown-out candle that insists on

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To know Hixenbaugh is to meet a legend

HIXENBAUGH *Continued*

relighting itself, and calls for some hula music to accompany his Hindu rope trick.

Then comes the hypnosis.

Two volunteers come from the audience—a bully boy sort of young man and an older, sedate-looking chap.

Hix orders them to take deep breaths as they sit in two straight-backed chairs. With their eyes closed, they follow his instructions, but the bully boy soon blinks and then opens his eyes. Hix dismisses him politely, tells him he isn't a good subject.

He goes to work on the older man, who soon clasps his hands over his head and is unable to part them until Hix gives the command.

Hix takes the man's pulse and then hands him a paper plate.

"This is a steering wheel," Hix tells him. The man steers with Hix as his guide. He takes the sharp curves, shifts gears, girds for each bump on the road.

The man trades his wheel in for a Palomino pony—alias a broomstick. He rides the pony hopalong about the floor. Later, he performs an adolescent dance.

Hix counts slowly to ten. The lights come up gradually, as does the awakening man.

"Glad to have met you, sir. If you need me, call me," Doctor Al Hixenbaugh says professionally.

"Say you're poor in your English class at college . . . So you come to me

and say I'd like to have some help. So I put you under the influence and I tell you you'll improve. Then you'll improve. I even learned one fella to fly an airplane that way . . ."—Al Hixenbaugh.

Why all this about Al Hixenbaugh?

Not because Al's act is particularly exceptional. But many Louisvillians have met Hix—and few will forget the experience. They know they have come in contact with a legend.

. . . because Hix is the man who reportedly foiled a would-be holdup man in 1951 by exploding his flashbulb in the bandit's face.

. . . because Hix is definitely the only photographer ever to get a picture of Sputnik 10 years before it was built and launched. At the time, the object of his photo was described as the oddest flying saucer ever—but now we know what it was!

. . . because, while he was covering a labor-management dispute that reportedly involved roofing nails scattered on a driveway inside the plant's gate, the only flat tire reported was on the car of Al Hixenbaugh.

. . . And because it takes a lot of nerve and talent to be Al Hixenbaugh.

Hix is pleased with his resurgence in the limelight. He is quoted as saying:

"All them crowds don't give me hydrophobia . . . I just hope I don't work too hard or take my performance too seriously. My big trouble is: I'm too conscious."



Courier-Journal Photos by Marion Klein

With a flip of his wrist, Doctor Al exposes the result of long training from books and "a couple of doctors."

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BILL LADD'S Almanac

Dabbler In The Occult Arts Now Takes A Flier In Predictions With Hypnosis

DR. AL HIXENBAUGH is a photographer for The Courier-Journal.

Heretofore, he has been notable for being the only photographer to get a picture of Sputnik 10 years before it was built and launched.

Now, however, he is a dabbler in the occult arts, he tells me. He was around the other day showing his certificate as a doctor in the field of hypnosis and is now studying on his master's in that area. I am not quite sure how one gets to be either doctor or master, except that he showed me a letter signed by an Englishman of noble blood and several titles telling him he was well on his way to the master's degree.

Hix is a magician, he tells me, and is about to introduce his version of the catch-the-bullet-in-your-teeth trick to the citizens of a Central Kentucky town. Hixenbaugh's version is to catch the bullet in a deck of cards. He confidently predicts the bullet to penetrate the cards and stop at the exact one selected in advance by an honest member of the audience.

Needed: Marksman

Questioned as to why he will not catch the bullet in his teeth, Hix indicated that he has a certain misgiving about the ability of the marksman who will fire the rifle. He also regards the teeth feature as a boon to the profession of dentistry, for

which he has only the average affection.

I asked Hix how he planned to recruit the marksmen. He stated that he would put an ad in the paper for same, cautioning applicants that in case of near-misses, there might be no one left to pay off. This feature, he felt, would discourage the amateur who hoped to brush up on his aim at dress rehearsal.

I keep saying "Hix told me" because he seems also to have purchased a do-it-yourself press-agent kit. For instance, he tells me that he has been dabbling in predictions with his hypnosis. He has found a gentleman, he advises, who when under the influence can predict accurately the results of a series of races held last May at Churchill Downs. Within the month, he will begin working on those to be run next May. The above phrase "under the influence" refers to hypnosis, actually.

It's Top Secret

At any time now, Hix may embark on experimentation in the marriage of hypnosis to professional sports. The nature of this experiment has been declared top secret by Hix and Bud Bruner.

About Hix and his pre-dated picture of Sputnik. On his way home from shooting an early fire picture years ago, Hix got a picture of what was held in some quarters to be a flying saucer. He sent the thing off to the Pentagon, where it must still be. At any rate, he has never heard whether it was a flying saucer, or as some of his

cynical fellow workers hinted, a spot on the lens.

Now, less than 10 years later, there is not one Sputnik, but two, flapping about us!

Three, counting the commonwealth Life Sputnik, which revolves atop the building at Fourth and Broadway. This, I hear, has been photographed as far away as Carrollton and shown to friends as a true picture of Sputnik passing the television tower and starling motel at Sixth and Broadway.



AL HIXENBAUGH
The bullet-catcher