

# A Short History of the Magicians Alliance of Eastern States by Helen R. Endlich, Historian

The Magicians Alliance of Eastern States can actually trace its origin back to the year 1938, being an outgrowth of the Keystone State Federation of IBM Rings, which held conventions during the 1930's, the last one being held in 1938 at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

My own information regarding the MAES is of course somewhat limited, but in the main quite accurate, being confined to facts furnished by Mr. Charles Jones, formerly of Harrisburg, Pa., now in California, Dr. Kenneth Sheelor of Silver Spring, Md., and also the things I heard my late husband Dr. Endlich talk about, and my own memories of the early days. I am also indebted to Clint Riedel, Lititz 3, Pa., the present, Secretary-Treasurer of the MAES, who has held that post since Dr. Endlich's death in 1954, for a more recent factual account of Convention locations and dates, and the names of the Presidents in respective order.

MAES has had in the vicinity of twelve hundred or more members; many of these may be called inactive, it is true, and a number have passed away - but once a member always a member, and there are a number of regulars and semi-regulars who make it a very compact organization, and it is considered one of the best of the smaller organizations, well known along the Eastern seaboard. The younger and more recent members know mostly that it is the MAES, and the only dues are the \$3.00 application fee (which was once a token fee of twenty-five cents, believe it or not). They know that the Convention meets once a year in September, and is a wonderful gathering for magicians and friends. A prime requisite is naturally a definite interest in Magic, and also that anyone applying for membership either now belongs to a magic club or organization, or has belonged to one in the past.

Some of the men responsible for the formation of the MAES were Dr. William M. Endlich, Dr. Kenneth H. Sheeler, Messers Charles Jones, Harry J. Messersmith, Harry Otto, Elmer Eckam, Phil Weisbecker, John D. Lippy, Jr., Clint Riedel, Larry Hess. If I have omitted anyone, the omission is unintentional, I assure you.

While the dream of a new magic society was certainly not entirely my late husband's own, I am prone to call him the founder, as others sometimes do, due to the fact that his initial interest and unrelenting application to the cause of the MAES was the important factor in building up the society over the years. Into it went his hopes and dreams, even his frustrations and privations, at times. He was an inveterate letter writer and I have recollections of hundreds of letters he wrote as Secretary-Treasurer all those years from about 1938 to 1954, in behalf of the Society to members and other magicians. I recall very well the part he took each year contacting Convention officers, the time spent on his books and membership cards, making changes and tracking down old members of those who had moved, in the handling of reports, including the program of events, always inserted each year in those books with the "blue" backs. I am sure that in all those files of letters, cards and records of each succeeding year there is far more history that I can barely mention in this short article.

Dr. Endlich's continuous interest in MAES was paramount. Even during the War Years when conventions were not held, 1943-1945 inclusive, he used to talk about the MAES, get out the membership cards and the records, waiting for the time he could be active again. He had a dream, to build the MAES into a fine magical organization, and it went on for years, gathering strength; perhaps it wasn't as big a dream as some dreams go, but without some sort of dream any life is meaningless, and this was his... I do know that his work with the MAES did much to keep him alive the last four years of his life, when his health was uncertain and doubtful. Because of his great feeling for the MAES he came to be known as "Old Mister MAES Himself" a name bestowed on him by his close friend, Dr. Sheelor. Near the end of the Thirties, in fact, near the end of the magical life of the Keystone Federation of IBM Rings, magicians from Rings from other Eastern states wanted to join, and of course this presented difficulties, as the Keystone Federation was a Pennsylvania organization... But soon the Federation no longer existed, for the 1938 meeting at Wilkes-Barre was the last. In the meantime there was discussion among the more active members about the forming of a new society, which would take in magicians from a wider area, preferably the Eastern states, although the membership would not necessarily be limited to them. As a result of this later talks were held, and while it all began in Wilkes-Barre, much of it was carried on in Harrisburg at the YMCA, where the local IBM met at that time. The "Y" gave the Ring members certain privileges because of their interest in boys, for magic classes were held there, with the magicians taking turns at conducting them. Eventually all these activities and talks led to the formation of the Magicians Alliance of Eastern States. I believe that I am correct in assuming that Dr. Sheelor had much to do with the naming of the organization.

Most of the remaining history is more or less known to the magicians here in the East. From time to time the Linking Ring, official IBM magazine, has carried accounts of the conventions, written by someone belonging to MAES, and then also attending members spread the good word. I have often heard expressions of satisfaction from conventioners toward the MAES as a convention of their choice.

The Convention has been held in at least 15 cities; all a city needs is a sponsoring club willing to take over the responsibilities of holding the convention, and of course this means work, as all officials know. A few times in recent years the Executive Committee has taken over the sponsoring, due to lack of sponsoring bids. The Executive Committee deserves a lot of credit for this, because it involved time and the matter of arrangements due to distances in travel and other circumstances... Credit for work of this type and interest shown can be given to John D. Lippy, Jr., and in addition, to Richard J. Barbash, Dr. Kenneth Sheelor and Clint Riedel; to them the MAES is more than just an organization, it is a nostalgic and sentimental thing, at least I am inclined to believe that, due in part both to their love of Magic and their friendly association with Dr. Endlich in the past.

The first convention was held in Hershey, Pa., in 1940, with Elmer Eckam (now deceased) elected president, and for a First, was very well attended; the second in Newark, N. J., president, Dr. Kenneth Sheeler, and the third in Lancaster, Pa., 1942, with Philip Weisbecker, president. During a lapse of four years due to World War II, President Weisbecker continued in office until the next convention in Baltimore in 1946, where Arthur Reichenbach was elected. Other conventions in order of location, year and accompanying presidents are as follows: Allentown, 1947, Harry Baker (now deceased); Washington, D.C., 1948, Roland Goodman; Plainfield, 1949, Dr. J. S. Kenney; Philadelphia, Pa., 1950, Mel Missmer (now deceased); then Allentown and Baltimore again, in 1951 and 1952, with presidents, Phil Thomas and Clint Riedel, respectively; then came Lancaster, 1953, Howard Parks, president; Norfolk in 1954, Eddie Clever elected; Harrisburg, Pa., 1955, Doug Oxner,

one month, with John D. Lippy, Jr. taking over as president due to Mr. Oxner's death in an auto accident. Next came Asbury Park, N. J. in 1956, with Ken Allen; Reading, Pa., 1957, Earl Scheirer; Wilkes Barre, Pa., 1958, E. J. Trimble elected; Philadelphia, 1959, Dr. Joseph Roth; Elizabeth, N. J., 1960, Richard Barbash; Harrisburg, 1961, with Don Rose; York, Pa., 1962, Edward Ziegenfuss; Philadelphia again, 1963, George Pintarch, with the 1964 convention coming up in Reading, president to be elected.

This year, 1964, the Professional Magicians Club of Lancaster is sponsoring the Convention here in Reading. My records indicate that this club holds the lead in sponsoring, at least four times, both in Lancaster and Reading. Philadelphia was host city three times, and several other cities, Allentown, Baltimore, Harrisburg, each had the convention two times.

I might add that a plaque was unveiled by John D. Lippy, Jr., in 1958 at Wilkes-Barre, Pa., in the Fort Durkee Hotel, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the MAES. The flag used in the unveiling was the same flag used in unveiling the plaque marking the original station where President Lincoln arrived in November of 1863 when he made his immortal Gettysburg address. Mr. Lippy very kindly presented this flag with an explanatory letter to me after the MAES unveiling.

A few facts about the late Dr. William M. Endlich might be appropriate here because of his continuous interest in the development of the MAES.

In relation to Magic, he was a protégé of the late Rev. C. M. Wolsten, a Baptist minister who used magic in his religious work in a section of Philadelphia known as Kensington, and became interested in Magic around the age of 16, helping the minister in his magic work. Later, along with practicing the profession of dentistry, he gave many performances, exhibiting at magic conventions, and he also published a booklet on Chemical Magic in 1931.

He is probably best known for his work as an organizer, having helped to organize, in addition to the MAES, the Keystone State Federation of IBM Rings, several boys' magic clubs, Ring #6 of Philadelphia, of which he was a life-time honorary member, at one time its secretary for 8 consecutive years, also serving at another time for several years in the same office. He was Secretary-Treasurer of the MAES for approximately 16 years before his death in 1954. At the time of his death he was a member of not only the MAES, but Ring #6, the SAM and the Yogi Club, of Philadelphia.

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