

unwind

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



ALA-KAZAM! B.C.'S FIRST FAMILY OF MAGIC

Vancouver's Chow family are tops in the battle of the hands. But they're not the only B.C.ers playing with smoke and mirrors. Locally and internationally, magicians are conjuring up a renaissance of the arcane arts. **PAGES B2-3**



International award-winning magician Rod Chow has raised Jack and Nicholas to follow him into the craft and become champion magicians in their own right.



Vancouver brothers Nicholas, 8, (left) and Jack Chow, 11, (right). Together, the family (mom Sylvia is an award-winning magician's assistant) have won 50 medals. LES BAZSO PHOTOS — THE PROVINCE

Hats off to B.C. magicians

WIZARDRY: Province conjures its share of sleight-of-hand-champion tricksters

BY ELAINE O'CONNOR
STAFF REPORTER

Disappearing women in magic

Vancouver's Rod Chow has pulled a rabbit out of a hat. Two, in fact.

The award-winning magician has raised two sons, Jack, 11, and Nicholas, 8, who have followed him into the craft to become champion magicians in their own right.

In his narrow office in Chinatown, where Chow and his wife work in the family insurance business (in the world's narrowest building, according to Guinness), father and sons practise their craft.

With some coaching, Nicholas, in a shiny tie and black pants, coaxes boas and flowers from empty tubes. Jack displays sleight-of-hand skills as balls appear in his small hands.

Together, the family (mom Sylvia is a magician's assistant) have won more than 50 medals. They just

To call magicians a brotherhood is accurate. There are only 50 full-time professional female magicians in the world. The 7,000-member Society of American Magicians has just 500 women. But more women are refusing to pull a vanishing act.

Massachusetts illusionist Lyn Dillies, who once made two elephants appear before a live audience, has been performing for 20 years.

In 1990, Jade became the first woman to win gold in the International Brotherhood of Magicians' World Mag-

ic Competition and she now tours internationally.

B.C.'s Juliana Chen won world-title gold in 1997. The U.K.'s Romany Diva of Magic entertained the Queen in 2006 on her 80th birthday.

Scarlett the Deceiver, a woman who self-levitates, recently landed a 70-minute show in Las Vegas.

And the next generation of women are ready to take the stage. Most recently, twenty-something "surrealist" Angela Funovits' dangerous stunts won her first runner-up on *Phenomenon*.

returned from the Pacific Coast Association of Magicians Conference in California with five medals up their sleeves — the first time in the event's 75 years a father and two sons won gold in the same year.

No, magic is not genetic. It's the result of practice: weekends and after school. But the boys enjoy it.

"It's fun because they clap," says Jack. "I like to be a good entertainer," adds Nicholas.

They've been raised on it. Nicholas took tricks to show-and-tell and once pulled a live chicken out of a hat for his class at Thanksgiving. He won his first international competition at age five. He's now a four-

time Pacific Coast and two-time Vancouver champion.

Jack also started making magic early. At age two he assisted his dad on stage, and he did his first solo show at three. He won his school's talent show as a first-grader. Today, he's a six-time Pacific Coast and four-time Vancouver champ.

"They are small," their dad says, "but they play big. I'm glad they're into it. It makes our family unique."

Chow fell under magic's spell as a kid watching Peter Rolston at the PNE in the '60s. He took up card tricks and performed his first show at 14 at his dad's office party.

"I could do anything with a deck of cards," Chow recalls.

In the early '90s, he joined the Vancouver Magic Circle and the Society of American Magicians and started competing. He's since won 32 titles and is an international magic champ, having won first place at the World Magic Seminar in 2006. He owns a thousand books on magic and a thousand decks of cards. He even wooed his wife with magic: on their first dinner date he made sugar vanish in his palm. Their wedding featured magic-hat aisle markers and playing-card-