

Smoke and mirrors

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When I was a kid, maybe ten years old, I went to a magic show at a local auditorium.

This wasn't some guy in a tuxedo pulling a rabbit out of a hat or a string of coloured handkerchiefs from his magic wand. He was a professional with several assistants and some very sophisticated illusions.

He was well known in the entertainment industry and was highly respected in the community of professional magicians and illusionists.

His final illusion had him dressed like a swami of sorts, complete with eastern style gown and turban. With some kind of mysterious sitar music playing to set the mood, he sat cross legged on a large pillow and went into trance. The spotlight focused on him against the black background curtains as the stage lights dimmed. He slowly began to rise until he levitated about six feet off of the stage.

Outstanding!

The whole mystique about a magic or illusionist act is that they appear to be doing things that defy logic and physics. How can a man levitate and defy gravity?

How could Harry Houdini escape from a locked milk jug that was filled with water while he was handcuffed and shackled?

It is the fact that it is all indeed an illusion and not quite what it seems that keeps us fascinated.

There's a series of YouTube videos by a guy named 'The Masked Magician.'

In this series of videos he performs many of the greatest illusions of all time. Then he performs them for a second time, however, the camera angles change and they show how each illusion is performed.

I'm not sure why this guy decided to give away all the secrets and betray his fellow magicians and illusionists.

Seeing how it is all done certainly removes the mystique of any performance you will see in the future.

It's like revealing the man behind the smoke and giant mask in the Wizard of Oz.

The past four years in the U.S seems to have eliminated the mystique of the highest office in the land.

Previously, a presidential press conference was a big deal.

Reporters with White House credentials would ask relevant questions and would receive, for the most part, relevant answers, before the great leader would end the question period and disappear behind the forbidden door followed by his security detail, press secretary, and other guys in dark suits.

The great leader maintained an aura of dignity mixed with a little mystery. The only time you saw the 'private' side of the president was with carefully controlled photos of him with the presidential dog, or similar homey touches. Although I don't believe for a minute Richard Nixon was a real dog owner who took the famous Checkers out for a walk and cleaned up after him.

While social media is now part of our daily lives, over use certainly has its drawbacks.

In between official press conferences in Washington, there has been a myriad of mini-conferences issued via Twitter. Unfortunately they almost all answered the questions that no one asked.

On the other side of things, the media has become too involved with things that really don't matter and don't need to be in the public eye.

The scrutiny of the office, the president's family and other non-relevant issues has become more of a paparazzi chase that should be left in Hollywood.

In the quest to create an American royal family, the U.S has a definite pattern of electing presidents.

They like someone who is late middle age. Not too old (not counting president elect Biden) that they should have retired, and not too young to lack experience. Average age of a president taking office since 1900, is around 54.

All have been married with children, of various ages. If they have really young ones, all the better for the newspaper photographers for cute 'kids play on the presidential front lawn' photos.

Now the press revels in taking photos that would have never been published only a few years ago.

Photos of Donald Trump with his famous hair out of place in the wind or looking somewhat over weight on the golf course with a mocking caption are common.

The press would have never printed a photo of JFK with his hair out of place or Ronald Reagan in his underwear running out to turn off the lawn sprinkler.

The rules of engagement have changed ? the smoke and mirrors are gone and so has the mystique of the office.

Maybe Biden and Harris can put some dignity back in the White House - if the press plays along.