An editor’s lot can be a happy one!

presented by

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Donald has delivered versions of this talk for:

- The Magic Circle
- British Magical Society
- Shropshire Magical Society
- I.B.M. British Ring
- Northern Magic Circle

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AN EDITOR’S LOT CAN BE A HAPPY ONE!

By Donald Bevan

Welcome to the past! Not the dim and distant past, but a short hop into the mid-twentieth century and forward into the 21st century. My least favourite subject at school was history, 1066 and all that. This changed with the arrival in my early-teens of a new teacher, whose enthusiasm for the subject was contagious. One comment he made carried over, for me, into magic, this was ‘What or who has gone before, is the reason we are here today’. This stuck with me and produced a lifelong interest in magic history. So in case you wondered, this is a history lesson!

When this narrative needed a title I turned to light opera, *The Pirates of Penzance* and Gilbert and Sullivan’s police sergeant. The result being AN EDITOR’S LOT (UNLIKE THE POLICEMAN’S!) CAN BE A HAPPY ONE.

My brief is to tell you something about the world’s only magic weekly magazine *Abracadabra*, and its founder Goodliffe the Magician. Mention the name to many of our younger magicians and the response is – WHO? *Abracadabra* – WHAT? Although to be fair some will admit to having heard of it. So I will try to tell you something of Goodliffe the Magician; the man, where he came from, his achievements, both in and out of magic. And of his dream, which became reality and lasted 63 years.

In addition I will relate something of my own involvement with Goodliffe, how I started in magic and to recall a few amusing, and not so, happenings in the early part of my own 41-year career in magical journalism.

So here is Goodliffe at his height – which was not very much, being a man small in stature. He is either reaching for his speech notes (he was an accomplished after-dinner speaker) or loading card in wallet. I am never sure which! I suppose I possibly had the closest regular contact with Goodliffe than any living magician; with memories of working and socialising with one of the great influences, often controversial, on magic in the 20th century.
Charles Goodliffe Neale was born August 31st 1912 in Nottingham. An interest in magic began around the age of nine through a magic set and library books. Later fostered when the family moved to Birmingham - his father was in banking, and on promotion transferred to the larger city – where for the young Goodliffe conjuring came in useful at school concerts and other functions.

In his mid-teens came a stroke of luck when a young man dating the girl whose house backed on to the garden of Goodliffe’s home, turned out to be a magician. A member of the British Magical Society, his name was William Bruce, known as De Brucia. He nurtured the young Goodliffe, teaching him sleights and tricks until he was old enough at 18 to join the BMS, eventually becoming president on three occasions and elevated to Fellow.

Goodliffe became a successful businessman with premises in the centre of Birmingham. Having been inducted into the Catholic Church through his Mother at the age of 12, in his early twenties his business centred on supplying furnishings, bibles, prayer books and other accoutrements to churches around the country. It is interesting to note how this all came about.

Starting a new business is never easy and one thing you need, in addition to capital and know-how, are clients or customers. Here magic came to the rescue. The young Goodliffe canvassed priests of local churches by offering free magic shows in return for their business. The ploy obviously worked, for within a very short time a formidable list of customers had been achieved. Never short on initiative, a few years later with war threatened, Goodliffe foresaw the need for blackouts. This meant dark nights with inevitable restrictions on gas and electricity. An answer was candles. Preferably Altar candles. Substantial in size and slow burning these would offer comfort and light in homes and air raid shelters during times of consistent German bombing. Goodliffe proceeded to buy all the stocks of candles he could lay his hands on and subsequently was in a position to 'light the world' when the dark days of war arrived in 1939. Initiative indeed!

By now he had become a very successful performer, in demand for concerts, dinners and prestigious events. He was proud to have been booked five times for the Birmingham Lord Mayor’s Annual Ball.
We move on now to *Abracadabra*, the World’s Only Magical Weekly and how it began. First it is important to acknowledge that this was not the first. There had been other attempts at magical weeklies, but with fairly dismal results. The first was Arthur Brooke’s *Tricks*, in the early part of the century, edited by P.T. Selbit (real name Tibbles, loosely spelt backwards) of illusion fame. This lasted only nine issues.

Max Sterling’s *The Magical World* first appeared in November 1910 until May 1911, then disappeared. It was resurrected in June 1913, surviving only until February 1914, never to return. Ten years on, in 1924, Eric P. Wilson, well known performer and writer of the time, produced his *Magic Weekly*. This too folded after only nine issues.

SO YOU SEE, AN EDITOR’S LOT CAN BE AN UNHAPPY ONE!

In the early summer of 1942 two men set off to drive the five-hour journey from Birmingham to London. The driver was Goodliffe, his companion Jimmy Jenkins, a bespoke tailor. What was unusual was that both were magicians and members of the British Magical Society, based in Birmingham. This organisation was formed in February 1905, being the first of its kind in the United Kingdom and Europe (known in those days as the Continent), topped only by the Society of American Magicians (SAM), formed 1902. In the world of magic these two characters were known simply as Goodliffe and Russell Gower.

In itself this journey was unusual because it was made during Germany’s bombardment of England and in particular London and other major cities. Car owners were few and petrol strictly rationed. So how did two magicians make this formidable trip amidst such restrictions? The answer was never revealed, they were magicians and as such never gave away their secrets!

Their purpose in travelling however we do know. Both had flourishing businesses and were allowed by government to make such journeys once a month for buying and promotion. Being of such diverse business interests, conversation for five hours could have been difficult. Fortunately there was one subject of which they each had considerable knowledge and enthusiasm – magic! Thus the long journey was endured with interesting chat and banter.
On arrival in London the two parted company and went their respective ways to pursue their business commitments, arranging to meet again later in the day. With another long drive facing them, the pair often broke the journey at Elstree, North of London. Here they enjoyed tea with Brunel White, writer, dealer and former magical correspondent to World’s Fair the weekly newspaper for marketeers, showmen, circus folk and enthusiasts. And magicians! Brunel White is seen here in his younger days.

During one of these breaks Brunel White disclosed his intention when the war ended to publish a weekly magic magazine. On the drive home Goodliffe thought about this and by the time he arrived there – having disembarked his passenger – he was positively fuming, for not having thought of it first.

Then came a twist. In October 1944 Brunel White died. This gave Goodliffe a clear path towards his dream of a weekly magic magazine. Despite government restrictions on new publications, ink, paper and other legislation, positive plans were laid. More secrets Goodliffe never disclosed. Remembering of course that unlike his predecessors he had the advantage of an established business, with office, packing and despatch staff readily available.

The first issue of *Abracadabra* hit the magical streets dated Saturday February 2nd 1946.

Two weeks before issue number one appeared, Goodliffe was joined by fellow BMS member Fabian, Ray Griffiths, as Literary and Technical Editor, later
revamped to Associate Editor. Fabian will have been known to many readers, as he attended and reported on numerous conventions for many years.

The arrangement between these two was an odd combination of opposites – Goodliffe, Catholic; Fabian a Methodist lay preacher; differing political views. In magic, Fabian leaned towards mentalism, but was also a successful children’s performer. Goodliffe loved stage, cabaret and comedy magic. An odd combination you’ll agree, but it worked, and well, for almost twenty years.

Never one to ‘let the grass grow’, in 1947 in addition to Abra, Goodliffe’s Magic Monthly appeared, designed for young newcomers to magic. On sale in shops and even W.H. Smith railway kiosks, publication ceased after only eight issues. The reason was pressure from the British Magical Society, The Magic Circle, numerous other clubs and individual Abra readers. These eight issues are much treasured and sought after by collectors.

Equally sought after are the 1946 Abra Summer and Christmas Specials. Repeated in 1947, but for reasons unknown these never really caught on and were not published again.
Goodliffe not only made his mark with the magazine, but also in publishing books on magic. Authors included Goodliffe himself, Jack le Dair, Edward Maurice, Eric Lewis, Wilfred Tyler, Louis Histed, Billy McComb, Fabian, Trevor H. Hall, Amalfi, Magikans. Then came a break of several years, until book publication was resumed in 1968. Many of these I had the pleasure of compiling and editing. Among them books by Bob Ostin, Ron Bishop, Roy Johnson, Alan Shaxon, Andrew Galloway, Val Andrews, Peter D’Arcy, Fred Barton and George Sanderson. The biggest success of all was Harbincadabra by Robert Harbin, 100 numbered copies of the 1800 print being leather bound.

Here’s a tale some of you may have heard before, if so my apologies. Please don’t stop me, even though it always makes me shudder! One of these books contained a number of photographs and illustrations, requiring careful placing to match text. Discussing this with our printer it was suggested we meet, and so an invitation to the printer’s home, some 45 miles distant followed. His wife had prepared a sumptuous four-course meal with wine and all the trimmings. The full treatment. After dinner the printer and I moved to the study where I produced the mock-up of the book along with suggested page layouts. Then I reached into my briefcase for the photographs, about forty. Guess what? They were not there. Still on my desk in the office! AN EDITOR’S LOT . . . ETC!

My friend was very gracious and we spent the rest of the evening simply chatting – about magic. The book was completed later over a pub lunch. Goodliffe never knew of this story, as David Budd, the printer, whom some of you will know or remember, and myself never let on!

Someone once asked Goodliffe why he did not write a book himself, ignoring or not knowing that he already had, titled Simply Wizard, published in 1946. His reply to the question was: “I do, a chapter every week!”
He also compiled a little known booklet, *101 Gags and Stories*. Some of which I can tell you we dare not use today!

A feature of *Simply Wizard* was Goodliffe’s only claim to fame as a magical originator, his famous Leg Chopper. This was a twist on the well known head chopper, which included an innovative safety idea.

Here we see him performing the effect with Edna, his office girl.
In 1950 Goodliffe was invited to take a party of British magicians to America to perform at the combined I.B.M./S.A.M. Convention in Chicago. That party is seen here leaving London; from the back we see Geoffrey Buckingham, the centre threesome of Tom Harris (left), John Ramsay, and Max Andrews of Vampire Magic (right), with an air hostess, Goodliffe, and The Magic Circle Secretary Francis White - who is pulling sausages!
Arriving in New York, the party was welcomed by, left to right, Cardini, Harry Blackstone (senior), and our own superb manipulator Paula Baird. Goodliffe making the most of the Leg Chopper with air hostess Sara, and John Ramsay holding on to the girl’s leg. No fool was John! No sign of Francis White, whom Goodliffe maintained was still asleep on the ‘plane!

This trip led to the formation of The Flying Sorcerers, a no subs, no officers magic club comprised only of magicians invited to perform in America. In subsequent years the list grew and was published in the Christmas edition of Abracadabra for several years.
In 1968 Christopher Woodward (a member) organised a Sorcerers’ Reunion in Jersey. Here we see Goodlife (well almost!) producing a caricature silk of himself, drawn by well known American magician, Dorny.

Time now to tell you something of my own entry into this crazy business we call magic. My first sight of the entertainment business was at the age of five through circus, seen in Birmingham my home city. I loved the glamour, the colours, the clowns, acrobats and animals, especially the lions – I loved the lions! Gone were ambitions of growing up to be a train driver, a pilot, or fireman – I wanted to be a lion tamer!

Library books provided pictures of the big cats, which I promptly tore out, and cut out to use as rod puppets! My mother told me what I had done was against the law and I never discovered how she resolved the problem with the library. In later years this became a popular social tale of my own family, especially my daughter Anne, age about six, whose opening line to guests would often be, ‘Did you know my daddy was a crook?’
During World War II, in 1943, my mother and myself were invited to Sunday Tea (now there’s a by-gone expression!) by a lady insurance agent, who called at our house monthly. This invite was also to meet her husband, who turned out to be a magician and member of the British Magical Society in Birmingham. Bill Hands was a superb sleight of hand performer – not a bad cook either! - and this 10-year old sat enthralled as he did wondrous things with cards, balls, thimbles, coins and rope. He finished his show however with what to me was a ‘Big Trick’ – a stack of matchboxes magically appeared, then travelled upwards through a china plate to appear on top of the plate. Quite amazing! I forgot the lions, determined to be a magician!
As the war ended in 1945, library books and Woolworths provided much magic. Then through the boys’ weekly comic *Hotspur*, I discovered The Boys’ Magic Service at Prestatyn in North Wales, run by Jack and Doreen Rees. Their brochure shows them to be versatile and active performers. The magic they supplied was simple, easy to do and, most important, of pocket money cost.

For a nominal fee boys – girls were never mentioned! – could join their ‘Boy Magicians’ Club’ and receive a certificate, badge and magic wand. Plus their monthly magazine *Trixy*. Many of today’s older enthusiasts confess to having been members of that club, some still having complete files of the magazine. Sadly, it never occurred to me to hoard such things, now wisely called collecting.

Another source of magic was a strange but wonderful shop in Birmingham city centre called Alliance Rubber Company – I never discovered why! – run by two elderly and very religious ladies. It was rumoured that a magician once enquired for a pair of Spirit Slates – and was promptly ordered from the shop.
From that shop I bought my first box of tricks – yes, not a present, actually bought myself with 13/6d – around 68 pence today – hard saved pocket money. I vividly recall slapping my assorted coinage on the counter, receiving in return this wonderful, massive box – well, it was massive to me – of amazing magic tricks by Royal Performer Ernest Sewell. A collection of his varied boxes is seen here.

Collecting my new prize I received a shock. In a display cabinet along with varied magic props, was the matchbox trick Bill Hands had performed a few years previous. I was elated and really wanted that trick – but not at four pounds ten shillings – a lot of errands and dreamland to me. Although possibly described by some of today’s generation as a mechanical monstrosity, Orrin’s Matchboxes remains for me a quite startling effect and a rare and sought after collector’s item. On several visits to the shop I eyed these props enviously, marketed I later learned by Davenports. So I started saving vigorously, blindly estimating I could buy the trick in about three months’ time. Then one day walking into the shop – to collect my weekly copy of Abracadabra – I saw that the trick – had gone. The lady told me that as no-one seemed interested in buying it at that price she had sold it to another young magician, for £1.10.0, or £1.50. And that there would not be another! So I never owned that intriguing effect, but I was grateful to the late Chris Pratt (former Secretary of The Magic Circle) and his wife Jill for photographs.
1946 was special to me. A magician came to my school Christmas party. Elvey the Magician. This commanding figure in black trousers, cummerbund and white silk blouse, not only did spectacular and colourful magic but was also a skilled escapologist – seen here in typical escapologist pose. I thought he was wonderful, little knowing that like my friend Bill Hands he was a member of The British Magical Society and before long – a couple of years – would become one of my best friends and magical mentor. He was I believe Secretary of the Modern Mystic League in Blackburn, Lancashire in the early 1930s.

My involvement with Goodliffe began in December 1965. Earlier that year I was involved in a major road accident - with a brick lorry. The lorry won! In and out of hospital, operations and many months recuperation - during which time my position with a national food company was ‘reorganised’ – I was out of a job! Suddenly an ironic solution appeared. Early December Fabian suffered a fatal heart attack while driving to work. He was a delightful man and I was shocked when a phone call next day from Goodliffe gave me the news. More shock when Goodliffe asked if, with my journalistic experience – limited I might add to editing magic society magazines – I could help him produce at least the partly finished Christmas Abra. I agreed, and December 10th 1965 began a happy 15-year association, working with Goodliffe. Note I say working with, not for, as I never felt the relationship was that of employer and employee; more of colleagues, friends even, for he was a most kind and understanding man.

Incidentally, that first day I joined Goodliffe produced a panic involving one of magic’s popular characters, Harold Taylor. Checking proofs and laying pages revealed his name had been misspelt by the printer as Harlod, in a full page prominent position. A few hundred copies having been printed, an immediate re-run was ordered. Some copies however slipped through the net. So if any of you have a HARLOD TAYLOR issue dated Christmas December 1965, you have a rarity.

Harold Taylor
My first assignment was to Blackpool Convention in February 1966, to which I accompanied ‘the boss’. Yes, I had accepted Goodliffe’s invitation to become his Associate Editor. Then came my ‘solo flight’, reporting the Easter Parade of the Northern Magic Circle at Morecambe. My first convention report and, quite frankly, a bit scary. Talk about in at the deep end! Many more of course were to follow, taking us both around the UK and often to other countries.

In Morecambe I was introduced to Bayard Grimshaw, who for many years with his wife Marion did a fast telepathic act. From 1965 to 1972 Bayard, an experienced writer and editor was Magical Correspondent to World’s Fair. He also edited the I.B.M. British Ring magazine The Budget for several years. Bayard became a close friend and taught me much about journalism. He died in December 1993, age 91, and I still miss him.

In 1978 Goodliffe produced another first, the monthly audio magic magazine Abracassetta. Goodliffe compiled this himself, collecting the material, adding his own editorial comments. What he might have produced with today’s technology I shudder to think! Abracassetta ran for two years.

‘I always wanted to be an escapologist!’ No, not me, Goodliffe, and here’s why, something which had us both hysterical with laughter. Summoned urgently to his office, I found him literally wrapped in audio tape. The machine had apparently spewed out the tape as he was trying to rewind and fast-forward virtually at the same time. The machine rebelled, the result was tape around his hands, neck and chair! It took me quite a while to untangle him from the mess and with a ball-point pen rewind the tape back into the cassette. Goodliffe was laughing all through this and had me joining him as he uttered the tag-line – ‘I always wanted to be an escapologist!’

We turn now to Goodliffe’s achievements outside of magic, although he always asserted that he never allowed business to interfere with magic!
Meanwhile his business was expanding, to include jewellery, pottery and souvenirs for churches. His work was eventually recognised by the Catholic Hierarchy in 1976 when he was created a Knight of Sylvester, the highest accolade awarded to someone outside the priesthood.

The following year, with his wife Anne, he travelled to Rome for a private audience with His Holiness Pope Paul VI. This to present the Pope with a special edition of a book featuring reformed Irish alcoholic Matt Talbott, who was under consideration for Sainthood. It is interesting to note that the Pope is kneeling, in order to reach the level of Goodliffe’s wheelchair. Something Goodliffe later ‘milked’ at every opportunity!
So why the wheelchair? In the early 1960s Goodliffe was diagnosed with the onset of Multiple Sclerosis, which he battled for a few years with depleting mobility, until finally taking to a wheelchair. Did this stop him in any way? Not on your life! He continued travelling, speaking, reporting and writing, with the support of willing family and friends.

I mentioned earlier that Goodliffe was a popular speaker at magic dinners. Here he is seen in full flow, with Bill Stickland, Secretary of the I.B.M. British Ring looking on.

In 1960 The Magic Circle arranged a special dinner honouring Goodliffe for his contributions to international magic. The menu appeared to be a copy of the magazine but in fact contained all the details of the evening.

The picture shows Michael Bailey and Derek Speight arriving in the dining room on bicycles. Dressed as street news vendors they delivered the special *Abra*, in which Fabian, unknown to Goodliffe, had collaborated. Michael Bailey once told me he often wondered how they managed to smuggle two rusty old bicycles into the plush surroundings of London’s smart Café Royal!
Then in 1965 The British Magical Society also arranged a special dinner, honouring both Goodliffe and Fabian on the publication of *Abra* issue 1,000. The menu this time featured caricatures of both principals.
Always keen on and proud of milestones, Goodliffe issued a special copy of *Abra* at 500 weeks. Then came issue 1,000, just mentioned. Both these issues produced by Fabian.

I was involved in the 25-year celebration. That Silver Jubilee in 1971 suffered real gremlins – a six-week national postal strike, which many of you will remember. This caused delays with copy, artwork and advertising (no internet in those days!), the resultant issue being smaller than planned. However, with help from Goodliffe’s family and sales reps. we managed to organise limited deliveries as we scuttled around the country each Thursday afternoon delivering bulk parcels of *Abras*, which others delivered to local readers. My own trip took in Birmingham, Worcester and Bristol.

We could not of course reach everyone, and in February Blackpool Magicians’
Club kindly gave us a table at their convention, where several hundred copies were collected by readers. Sadly some had to wait until the strike was over, particularly our overseas friends.

Then we reached the 2000th issue – thought to be an impossible goal. Next came 50 years with another special in 1996. Followed by Abra 3000 in 2003, another impossible dream – so the pundits said. They were wrong! The dream continued with the Diamond issue, 60 years, in 2006.
Another of Goodliffe’s innovations were the daily *Abrads* produced for The Magic Circle Golden Jubilee in 1955 - three issues – written, prepared and printed overnight! Again for the Diamond Jubilee in 1965, two issues. For the British Magical Society (the elder!) and The Magic Circle centenaries in 2005, I was approached to repeat the exercise, but chose to echo Goodliffe’s own words following the two previous occasions – never again!

Incidentally, I haven’t mentioned tricks deliberately, because with an average of three every week the result is several thousand of all kinds, contributed by many magical names. I shall name only one, because for several decades he was undoubtedly the most prolific magical inventor, adapter and writer in this country. That man was Len Belcher. If you need new tricks, search out Len Belcher.

Back to the story. In addition to the postal strike, 1971 was memorable for another reason. We learned of a competitor, another weekly magic magazine – in America. The pundits moved fast. ‘You can no longer claim to be the World’s Only Magical Weekly’ they chirruped. ‘Fine’ said Goodliffe, and promptly changed the by-line to
‘The International Magical Weekly’! The newcomer, The Talisman, published by Jerry Blount and Jules Lenier, consisted of eight pages – in contrast to Abra’s 20 or more pages – of tricks, moves and little news. It did however soundly beat those other attempts at a weekly from the early part of the century. It managed 72 weekly issues before folding.

It is fair to acknowledge that mostly the job of a small specialist magazine editor can be a lonely one. Unlike newspapers, no copy boys or sub-editors dashing in and out of the office, or proof-readers to yell at. Just mundane office work, typewriter or computer your only companion – yes, there was a time we actually used typewriters – augmented maybe by an office assistant. However, what made my job exciting, exhilarating and worthwhile were people – magicians, seen and unseen. Through the medium of Abracadabra I made many friends, not only in the UK, numerous other countries too.

As mentioned earlier Goodliffe was a great traveller, taking conventions, dinners, lectures and other events into his busy life. All despite the debilitating illness of Multiple Sclerosis. Among overseas conventions he reported on were those of FISM – Federation of International Societies of Magic, held every three years and for the first time ever in the UK in 2012. So it was to great surprise he suggested in 1973 that I attend the FISM Congress in Paris. That trip was memorable in many ways.

For example, the outstanding magic, also a party for fifteen hundred in the superb Orangerie of the Palace of Versailles, the home of the French kings, with the finest spread of food and wine I ever saw, before or since, served by flunkies in court dress. Have I mentioned that an Editor’s Lot Can Be a Happy One?

I have memory of a particular incident in Paris, during a bedroom party hosted by Bill Stickland, then Secretary of the I.B.M. British Ring. Many familiar names in magic were there. I think the only person not heard of - was me! One guest was the sensational Dutch performer Fred Kaps, appearing that week at the Eiffel Tower. He sat on the bed doing close-up magic. Being a warm night mid-July, guests spilled onto a balcony. With chatter in full swing, suddenly around midnight came a loud banging on the door, which when opened revealed two gendarmes – police! The
hotel had complained of the noise, so too had neighbours. A quiet word from Bill, a promise to lower the noise and everyone back in the room, the police left. And so too had Fred Kaps! Later he told me that, working in Paris, the last thing he needed was being arrested!

1980 was a strange year. Some good things, some not so good, others decidedly bad, especially the deaths of Fred Kaps, Lewis Ganson and, as detailed shortly, Goodliffe.

Among the good things was Goodliffe’s suggestion that Martin Breese, George Kovari and myself attend three conventions – in America! Came the end of June and we were off, to I.B.M. Evansville, SAM Pasadena and PCAM (Pacific Coast Association of Magicians) in Oregon, all in three weeks. Another case of – never again!

After the excitement of America, Christmas turned out to be a very damp squib. Early November Goodliffe was taken ill and by the end of the month it was clear the situation was serious. Sadly he died on Boxing Day, December 26th, age 68. Then came questions. What would happen to Goodliffe’s ‘baby’? And what about my job? A worrying time, for although the future of Goodliffe’s church business was assured through three sons, a question mark hung over Abra. Rumour and speculation surrounded the future of the magazine for several days; when the call came for me to enter the inner sanctum of the Board Room, I did so in trepidation.

Jubilation! Twenty minutes later I emerged as Managing Editor of a new company, Goodliffe Publications Ltd. Four years later, out of the blue, to quote a phrase, I learned that the magic business had been sold to Davenports, who took over in January 1985. Moving from Alcester in Warwickshire to Bromsgrove in Worcestershire began another era. One which lasted, for me, 26 years, during which time the Davenports were always supportive, but never intrusive, allowing the magazine to retain its independent status.
In November 2006 the Davenport family announced my retirement as Managing Editor, brought about mainly through my wife Lilian’s long-term illness, which sadly terminated her life the following February.

So the search was on for a new editor and although several applied and were considered, one person in particular was ‘head hunted’ to success, Walt Lees. This brought big changes to *Abra*. Full colour covers and some coloured inner pages every week; more pages per issue and a dedicated team, led by Roy Davenport as the driving force. Walt Lees editor, Jack Delvin advertising manager, plus a new printer, co-opted graphic artists, and no doubt others involved. The future of the magazine was assured. Or was it?

**Walt Lees**

In March 2009 Davenports announced the sale of *Abracadabra* to a new proprietor. Then, the very next week, they pulled the plug completely, as the sale had fallen through and *Abra* closed for ever. The magic world, the editor and staff were stunned. No time for a special farewell issue, copies ceased and that was the end of The World’s Only Magical Weekly, after 3,296 issues, spread over 63 years.

So, let me say again that An Editor’s Lot Can Be a Happy One, and mostly, mine certainly was!
I leave you now with Goodliffe performing in America, closing his act with Louis Histed’s Toucan, described in *Abracadabra* – where else!

I hope you found something of interest, and never forget the magic word – *ABRACADABRA*!