

John DeCesare, aka High Card Johnny

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Born in Beverly, Massachusetts John De Cesare moved with his family to New York and Chicago when he was small. He completed grammar school and started high school after the family moved to Detroit, Michigan. While in high school, a friend introduced him to the sport of fencing, an interest he would pursue the rest of his life, eventually becoming a fencing master and teaching the sport to others.

After joining the Army Air Force and completing eleven months of flight school, he was assigned to duty in the South Pacific. A year later, De Cesare was shot down and medically discharged from the military service. Returning to Detroit, he became a tool and die maker in order to pay his way through school.

During the closing era of night club floor shows and Vaudeville, he was part of a dance duo (Cesare & Ginny) doing one night stands hoping to break into show business. During one of these appearances he met a magician appearing on the same bill and got to know him well.

Whenever their paths crossed, De Cesare would ask him "to teach me some magic." When possible he bought books and took classes in magic, all the while practicing and expanding his skills. Bookings for singers, dancers and chorus lines died out, but magicians were still in demand. During this time small theatres, fraternal organizations and private parties, among others, still called for bookings.

He did bit parts in two films "The Spanish Main" and "The Black Swan." Practicing and expanding his routines De Cesare started performing nationally in theaters on television, at trade shows and for private parties. Internationally he has performed in Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

After being hired to do a stage show for the San Mateo Historical Society, a knee injury kept him from performing. He decided to sit at a table and do card magic instead. People there specifically referred to him as a gambler, and that gave him the idea to develop that role.

He started doing research on western gamblers and began incorporating card tricks based on poker, blackjack, bridge and chuck-a-luck into his act.

The last game added to his repertoire was faro. Originated by Napoleon's French Troops in Egypt, it found its way to France, England and the United States in the early 1800s. The game was popular in Louisiana and the other southern states and on riverboats navigating the Mississippi River.

For several years he has limited his appearances to the state of California but is considering taking on more bookings in the future. He is a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, Past Vice-President of the Mystic Thirteen Magic Club and member of the Ring 21 Magic Circle.