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Medford resident Jim Rainho honored with highest magician's award



Medford —

It's been a banner year for Medford magician Jim Rainho. In July, he was inducted into the Order of Merlin Excalibur, the highest degree of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, issued at the organization's annual convention in Norfolk, Va. Due to prior commitments, Rainho was unable to attend the convention, but was presented with the award by Andrew Inglese, the president of the local IBM Ring,

Rainho was also the recipient of the Anthony Murphy Award, the most prestigious award given by the Assembly 104 of the Society of American Magicians, for his dedication to the art of magic, sharing his talent and magic knowledge and expertise with new magicians by his lectures and personal instructions to insure magic's future as an entertainment vehicle.

In August, on the occasion of Rainho's birthday, Robb Preskins, one of New England's best magic entertainers wrote on Facebook: "He taught me a lot when I was first starting out, and I was privileged to perform on stage with him. Happy Birthday, Jim!"

Jim started performing magic at the age of 16, at a Revere Beach sideshow, assisting magician Edgar Arsenault, who performed under the name of Ed Arno, and in, what was then known as, the "bean supper circuit" for churches and civic clubs.

Rainho considered himself a professional after performing his first night club gig in 1949, at the Memory Lane Night Club, located where now stands a 99 Restaurant, near Assembly Square in Somerville.

Along with his magic act, Rainho was also involved with music, in a country and western group called the Rhythm Ramblers, that appeared in personal appearances of the Jerry and Sky (radio personalities of radio station WHDH), and in the "Ranger Red Show."

He also wrote several country and western songs that were published. His magic and music activity lasted until he entered into the U.S. Army, serving as a radioman in Korea.

Upon his return to civilian life, Rainho returned to performing in night clubs, but the night clubs, by then, were doing their own vanishing acts, many closing down for lack of customers. People were staying home in front of the new magic box called television. The clubs that did stay open dropped live entertaining for the new medium.

Rainho changed over to doing private functions, corporate events and trade shows, which took him all over the United States and abroad. He also started to manufacture his own magic creations that he sold to magic shops worldwide. He has more than 100 original magic effects that he created and manufactures.

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This year, in August, Rainho performed the 15,000 show of his career at an event for the Somerville Recreation Department. A week later, he performed his 15,001 show in Medford for the Medford Recreation Summer Camp at the Columbus School. The numbers are from actual datebooks from 1960 to the present and estimated performances before 1960. Rainho is still performing — now on his 15,026 show.

Jim Rainho was born in Portugal, immigrated to the U.S. when he was 9 years old, grew up in Cambridge and moved to Medford when he got married to Alice Costa, also of Cambridge. They have four children: Donna Crawford, Diane Silvio, Stephen, all of Medford, and Rachel Perry, of Waltham, who is a teacher at Medford High School, and is the Girls Varsity Soccer coach. The Rainhos have 11 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.