



Scarne's Encyclopedia of Games

By John Scarne



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John Scarne (1903-1985) was an American stage magician particularly adept at playing card manipulation. He became known as an expert on cards and other games, and authored a number of popular books on cards, gambling, and related topics. He was born Orlando Carmelo Scarnecchia in Steubenville, Ohio in the United States of America, and at some point anglicized his name to John Scarne. He grew up in the New Jersey communities of Fairview and Guttenberg. When he left school after the 8th grade, he learned from a local card sharp how to perform such swindles as The Three Card Monte, and how to cheat in gambling card games by manipulating the cards. He began practicing sleight of hand with the goal of becoming a card sharp, but his Roman Catholic mother dissuaded her son from gambling in general, and cheating others in particular. She persuaded him to practice magic instead. He soon extended his skill at handling cards to learning-and devising-magical effects with cards. He spent a few months learning about crooked gambling devices (including marked cards and loaded dice) at a nearby novelty store. Thanks to his endless practice, Scarne began making money as a magician. Gradually, he became quite an expert of all kinds. He was hired as a consultant or adviser by various companies, as well as by the US Army, which sent him to bases around the world in order to educate soldiers about the dangers of card and dice cheats. He wrote 15 books and co-wrote a few more for a total of 28 books on games. He wrote two autobiographies: and served as a technical advisor in the 1973 motion picture, The Sting, and doubled for actor Paul Newman's hands during scenes that involved card manipulations and deck switching. Scarne was often proclaimed by experts, magicians and editors of the time as the greatest card manipulator of all time. But he was happiest when inventing new games, which he did quite a bit. And he was especially proud of one called Teeko, which he invented in 1945

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