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SEAN WATSON
A MAGICAL INSPIRATION





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He has an amazing story, and one the world needs to hear!!! Energetic, enthusiastic, skilled, and one H*LL of a Magician.”

Chris Funk





SEAN WATSON

BY ANDREA STARR

For a small-town kid, Sean Watson has seen more of the world than he ever imagined. Like so many of you reading this, magic first captured his imagination as a child, where you could even say it saved him, and now he works tirelessly to pay it forward. Sean has performed on stages all around the world over the last 30 years, incorporating humour and his enticing personality into his performances; although it is the work he does with youth that is his true passion. When Sean isn't performing large-scale illusions in corporate events, production shows, fairs and festivals, he is busy touring schools all over North America, spreading his message of positivity in the face of adversity. And he knows adversity firsthand.

While Sean has been fortunate to transform an interest in magic into a successful career, it was the journey leading there that was difficult as a child coping with learning disabilities. He was born prematurely, predisposing him to long-term challenges with learning, as well as with behaviour, socializing, and managing emotions. Most noticeably, he developed a speech impediment and struggled with dyslexia, making reading and learning in school an uphill battle, as well as becoming a target for bullying. However it is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) that has been his greatest life challenge. Aside from the disruption in everyday tasks that require organized thought and focus, Sean also had difficulty with communicating his thoughts, and therefore cultivating relationships required more effort. Countless scattered thoughts, impulsivity, and a short attention span are a part of everyday life, although it is his joyful spirit and warm heart that shine through.

Sean needed much guidance and encouragement from his parents, teachers and other school staff members to keep up and keep moving forward. This began with a couple of concerned teacher's aides who noticed him struggling, where they reached out and came to the rescue. One day they brought him to the library and told him to pick out a book. He chose one called the Complete Course in Magic by Mark Wilson. When the aides told Sean to read the book he replied "I can't". But the aides were prepared and ready for his objections. Instead of letting him slide, they challenged him and said, "Yes you can. You can do anything you put your mind to. Always remember these words, Sean!" As the teacher's aides had said and with the help of his father, Dale Watson, Sean was reading the book about magic. Pleased with his son's progress, and wanting him to maintain interest in the subject, Dale decided to browse through Toad Hall Toys in Winnipeg, Manitoba and came home with Sean's very first magic trick, the Ball & Vase. Anyone who has studied and loved magic probably could point to a person who gave them that first taste of magic or who took the time to pass on their wisdom. This kind of 'passing down' of secrets and skill is one of the things that makes the art form of magic unlike any other. To this day, Sean owes unending gratitude to his teachers and his father for introducing him to magic and thereby changing his life forever.

With Sean's high-level energy and hyperactivity, his hands stayed busy with learning and practicing new magic tricks. As he learned more and more, his self confidence grew. His newly learned 'superpower' was impressive to schoolmates as they witnessed him showing off his unique skills. This caught the attention of his principal, Dennis Nord of Darwin Junior

"People just love Sean. He's endearing. They genuinely want to engage with him. Then he shows them some phenomenal magic and they will never forget him!"

James Cielen



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“It’s one thing to entertain an audience, but it’s a whole other thing to leave them better than when you started. Sean has the ability to mix education and entertainment flawlessly. A skilled magician with a great personality who I call a true friend.”

Joe Labero



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High School, where he invited Sean to do a performance during Spirit Week. Sean was 13 years old at the time and the performance ended up being a great success. Word spread of the amazing show, as well as from the many flyers and coloured, laminated business cards that Dale personally made and put under windshields, into mailboxes, and in the hands of corporations. Dale played a big part in starting up Sean's small business at the time, wanting so eagerly to help set him up to succeed in the world. Sean went on to perform at local birthday parties, Bar Mitzvahs, Christmas parties and more, and so began his career in magic.

Toad Hall Toys continued to play a significant role in Sean's life as he frequently visited and immersed himself in the magic tricks and props. It was a place where he could 'talk magic' with this new community he had found. He fondly remembers Guy Bedard, a magician at Toad Hall Toys, who recommended he join the Society of Young Magicians. It was there Sean was introduced to Bill Brace, Bob Barker, James Cielen, Dean Gunnarson and many other mentors who were instrumental in teaching and guiding Sean in his up-and-coming magic career. At age 15, Sean went to his first Wizards Convention in Minneapolis where he competed and won the second-place award. It was at this event where he met a fellow magician, David Farr. The two had much in common and eagerly shared secrets and routines. This friendship and connection developed between them over the years where they continue to collaborate and support each other today.

By the twelfth grade, Sean was inspired to explore other avenues such as street performing, starting out at The Forks Market in Winnipeg. His eccentric personality would easily capture the attention of passers-by and provide them with mind blowing up-close

entertainment. Sean inherits his charisma and quirky personality from his Croatian mother, who has since passed. He describes her as a beautiful woman who was very passionate, highly confident, and who would always speak her mind. Sean is quite thankful to take after this 'firecracker' side as it brings energetic diversity to his performances on stage and allows him to have the confidence to go up to any person in public and boggle their mind with his tricks. He knows his career in magic would not be anywhere close to what it is had he not had her influence in his life. Sean's mother unfortunately suffered from alcoholism, causing home life to be rather difficult for Sean, his older brother Greg, and Dale. Although this made for some poor memories, Sean chooses to focus on the positive ones of her where she made him laugh, and would encourage him to recognize his successes and attributes more so than his weaknesses.

Shortly after graduation, Sean decided to expand his opportunities and head to the "Land Down Under" where his Aunt Marjorie resided. On the way over, Sean made a stop in Hong Kong and spent a month perfecting his one-on-one magic by watching and learning from the street performers he met along the way. His perfected skills came in handy when he was about to be mugged by a group of young men there and Sean was able to impress them with some magic while they were trying to taunt him. The run-in resulted in laughs and video recordings of his sleight of hand. Once Sean made it to Australia, he street-performed at Southbank in Brisbane for six months before returning home to Winnipeg.

Sean's early magic life was greatly influenced

by watching performances of well-known magicians like Paul Daniels, Lance Burton and, of course, David Copperfield, as well as from the lectures he attended through the Magic Club of Winnipeg. Sean was so inspired to take his work to new heights and particularly loved James Cielen's dove act, where he then decided to work with Kim Wilson and learn dove magic. Sean later had the opportunity to work with Dean Gunnarson, who taught him the Rope Escape trick, among other things. They performed in a show together with long-time friend and Hypnotist, Tyzen Paley. Sean Fields, an original magic creator, helped Sean come up with new sleight of hand techniques, while Magician Chris Funk was instrumental in helping him create astounding stage shows. There was never any shortage of encouragement or leadership from the wonderful people who have come into Sean's life and had a part in producing the level of showmanship and performance we see in him today.

Sean returned to Australia to perform for one year at the Sega World Theme Park in Sydney where he amazed the Aussies and tourists alike with his walk-around magic and stage shows. Sean continued his training there with mentors such as Sam Powers, who he collaborated with on stage illusions, and Ophir Zenou with close-up magic. In 1997, Sean saw a show performed by Joe Labero where he was strikingly impressed. He loved the way that Joe was able to do such a grand scale show while still engaging with the



audience and being so down to earth. This allowed Sean to believe he really could be his true authentic self while performing. When Sean returned to Canada he knew magic was his destiny, and even though his speech impediment and ADHD gave him his doubts, he could see he had a future on this path. Magic gave him confidence to conquer his disabilities and move forward in life with a positive attitude.

Sean is most passionate in doing one-on-one magic, allowing him to be up close and personal with his audience. He began to own his uniqueness and perceive his insecurities as strengths, learning to cope with and overcome them. This has since been the driving force in his career. Sean has begun sharing on stage that with the belief in himself and the belief from loved ones, he has been able to achieve great success in his life and not allow his differences and challenges

to hold him back. If you had told 12-year-old Sean that he would be travelling to schools, Indigenous communities, and other various stages, giving motivational speeches about overpowering his challenges with ADHD and a speech impediment, he wouldn't have believed you. Sean is so grateful to share his experiences with people, especially the younger observers he meets, with the hope that he can inspire and motivate strength and resilience among them. Even if just one person begins to believe that he or she can succeed past their hardships, then it will all have been worth it.



TO THIS DAY, THERE IS NO OTHER MAGICIAN WHO I COLLABORATE WITH THAT BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN ME, BOTH MAGICALLY AND CREATIVELY. I CAN SOMETIMES BE TIMID WHEN LEARNING NEW MAGIC AND SEAN ALWAYS ENCOURAGES ME TO JUST GO FOR IT! HAVING THAT TYPE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM ANOTHER ENTERTAINER WHO I TRUST 100% HAS HELPED ME BECOME A BETTER MAGICIAN AND PERFORMER."

- DAVID FARR

QUESTIONS **SEAN WATSON**



Q Sean, what is the best experience you can remember performing live?

"God, there are so many but I had this fun experience doing a Straight Jacket Escape challenge with my buddy David Farr in 1999. It was at a Minnesota Twins game against the Toronto Blue Jays in Minneapolis where I was representing Canada and David was representing the United States to see who could get out first. The thing is we both wanted to win so we rigged it to be a tie, watching each other so we could get out at the same time, all while being cheered on by these MLB teams and the huge audience. And I guess an experience where I felt I had really made it to where I would call myself a serious performer, was probably opening for Diana Ross and Don McLean at the Vegas Hilton. Or maybe that time I was doing walk-around magic at the Kodak Theatre in L.A. when it was still called the Kodak, and met Chris Baldizan. He was the Entertainment Director of the MGM Grand in Las Vegas at the time and he hired me to work for him after I stole his watch. These experiences were unforgettable! Sometimes I have to pinch myself that I have come this far and that so much more is still within my reach."

Q Speaking about performing, I know that stuff happens sometimes behind the scenes. Any stories you would like to share?

"Oh! Wow, so many, but a few stand-outs. I won't say which Animal Rights activist organization or the community it occurred in but during one of my shows, my birds were stolen out of my dressing room by said organization to save them from performing with me. When the police caught up to the activists, I was down one bird as one of the activist's cats ate it. It was sad to lose one of the birds this way and with such an ironic twist."

My Dad also loves to remind me of this other time, as it involved him, at my high school where I was to perform and wanted to use flash pots to give a burst of smoke for visual effect. However, Toad Hall Toys at that time only had one flash pot left but I needed

two. My Dad made me a second one, but with too much wire; and instead of creating a small short-circuit in the pot during my performance, it tripped the circuit breaker for the entire school auditorium. As I was about to make my grand entrance, everything went black! I tried to convince the Principal to still let me perform after we reset everything, but he said a strong 'no'. It was a well-learned lesson that day, and probably some laughter, at my expense.

There was another time I performed with David Farr at the Spokane State Fair in Washington. It was my very first show in the States where I did a stage performance and he did walk-around magic. I started with a manipulation act which included producing a parakeet out of fire (flash paper). But I also used gun powder with it for a smoke effect. Well, I put too much and it blew up in my face, singeing my eyebrows and hair, and turning my face black! I managed to still produce the bird, wiped my face, and continued on with the show without the audience realizing I had burning and stinging pain from second degree burns. It was only after the show that David recognized how bad my burns were and said we needed to head to the hospital. But the show goes on!"

Q How has being a child/adult with ADHD impacted your life?

"Well it's really a day-to-day thing. Staying focused has been the most difficult and always finding ways to stay connected. Magic has been a big part of how I now connect with all kinds of people, as it allows me to be myself around everyone. It gives me confidence in interacting with others."

Q What has performing magic brought into your life?

"Aside from giving me a great career, it's brought passion and joy. Magic allowed me to feel like I belonged, that there was a place for me to just be my outgoing self. My life would have been very different without magic. It was my key, my link. It's why I want to speak to others about finding their own key, their own magic, whatever it is."

show that, with what I have done. To show others you can achieve your dreams. But you must be organized and have a plan.

Q What kind of relationships in your life inspired you to take on motivational speaking?

"Many great people traveled this road with me, but my Dad, Dale Watson, and his belief in me kept me going when I felt like I couldn't. I get my dedication to my work from him, as well as my kindness and generosity. He always put himself out for me and various people have told me how much I do that for them. Him helping me inspired me to want to help others. On the magic side of things, it was really James Cielen that inspired me the most. Heck, I wanted to be him, or at least half as good!"

Q Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?

"I would like to perform at the Magic Castle for sure, but mostly I want to build on my motivational speaking opportunities. This is where my heart lies; making a difference in people's lives, especially the kids, is the best part of my world now and in the future. I am of course open to whatever other opportunities that may present down the road; I'll perform anywhere!"

Q What are you most grateful for these days?

"So many things, so many people, but mostly the many audiences over the years that allowed me to connect with them and be myself. For every look of amazement, especially on a kid's face, for every look of wonder, I want to say thank you! As well as a huge thanks to my family for working behind the scenes with me in my magic career, including but not limited to my brother Greg, my step-mom Lorraine, and always, my Dad. I had my challenges, and they had theirs in working with me, but I truly appreciate all that they've done for me. For those I was not able to mention, I'll have to thank them in person."

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