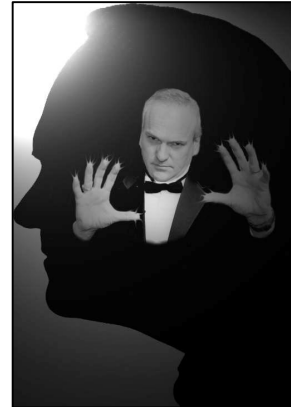


## The Magic Touch

Gary Summers, is turning his hobby into money

**BY STEPHANIE PORTER**  
**The Express**

There is a room in Gary Summers' basement piled high with the tools of his trade: a guillotine in one corner, a box for cutting people in half, a cage for his doves, cases of sound systems and tricks large and small. There is also a stack of learn-it-yourself magic kits put together by Summers. "A lot of the beginner magic kits out there are cheaply made and unsatisfying," he says. "For mine, I have good quality magic props, complete with video instructions to teach kids how to do the magic." Summers was always interested in magic. But as a shy child, he says he would never have imagined being able to perform in front of, much less entertain, a large group of people. Twenty years ago, while on a business trip to Toronto, he wandered into a magic shop and picked up a few props. That started the ball rolling: he practiced, began showing his tricks, and soon invested in some larger pieces. From card tricks to levitation, rope illusions to making it snow indoors, Summers can pull out many of the traditional magic tricks and a few of his own design. "I'm a late bloomer," Summers says, shrugging. "It's not something I do to say, 'Wow! look what I can do!' It's the reaction from people I love." He's getting to see a lot of it these days. He - and his faithful assistants, his wife Bonnie and daughter Megan - are booked to perform 35 shows this holiday season. Summers' performances range from a 30-minute kid's birthday party, to a one-and-a-half hour, full-fledged magic show.



He's also drawn on his experience as a former school teacher and written a couple of message magic shows, which are proving popular amongst children and teenagers, parents and educators. The 'I Love to Read' show, performed mainly in libraries, is designed for younger children, as an introduction to the importance of reading.

A few years ago, he approached the Departments of Health and Education about an anti-drug show he was working on. 'Discover the Magic within you' can be performed at a number of levels, teaching students from Kindergarten to Grade 9 about the hazards of drinking, smoking, and substance abuse.

Also a trained hypnotherapist - he holds regular sessions to help people lose weight, stop smoking or just relax - it's the fun shows, which he compares to those by Reveen the Impossibilist, he really enjoys. His face lights up as he tells story after story about his "spellbinding" hypnosis shows: the teenager who hung a moon while acting as a Grade 2 student mad at his teacher. People in the audience falling off their chairs, asleep. Martians interacting with each other. "Hypnosis is much more difficult than magic because you're dealing with psychology," he says, adding that his undergrad degree was in just that subject. Now that he's mastered his show, complete with music and sound effects, he's making his talents available to community service groups. Summers has penned a 70-page fundraising manual, which includes press releases and promotion ideas. He hopes community groups, sports teams or schools will take advantage of the program - which can raise up to \$25,000 for them.

But the real potential money-maker for Summers is in product development. He has already designed a few big-ticket props, which he sells through his website and dealers around the world. One of his most popular items is a topsy-turvy or multiplying chair. Designed by Summers, this single sturdy chair magically turns into two. Even at a cost of \$1,500 US, Summers has sold the chair to magicians in California, Finland, Boston, England and Japan. Like any good magician, Summers won't tell his secrets, maintaining only that he has no special powers - though he certainly wishes he did. He will share some of his knowledge and experience though.