

Day Tripping: **Pacifica Skate Park and Salmon Crepes**

PACIFICA

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**PACIFICA
BRIDES**

LOCAL RESOURCES
FOR THE BIG DAY

AGAINST THE TIDE

THE BEAUTY OF
MAGIC HAS BEEN
A LIFE CHANGER
FOR PACIFICA
RESIDENT

making magic

**SUPERBLY
SPINDRIFT**

HISTORIC COMMUNITY
THEATER GROUP BRINGS
STORIES TO LIFE

FOR MY NEXT TRICK

PACIFICA
MAGICIAN
USES
SLEIGHT
OF HAND
TO SHOW
ANYTHING'S
POSSIBLE

Photos and story by Cat Cutillo



Jeanne Fields has been performing magic for 25 years. She brings a unique perspective to her acts.

"I THINK IT'S THE UNKNOWN AND SOMETHING THAT CAN HAPPEN FROM NOTHING. THAT'S REALLY WHAT MAGIC IS."

— JEANNE FIELDS, MAGICIAN

Twenty-five years ago, Jeanne Fields was working as a secretary and feeling unfulfilled.

One day, she looked up from her desk to find a 6-foot-5 man in a black tuxedo towering above her. His name was Tom Nixon. He was a magician who had previously performed at her company's sales conference.

"He did magic at my desk and everybody in the department just swarmed my desk," recalls Fields. She immediately signed up for a two-hour seminar with the magician in order to learn the tricks of the trade.

"From then on, every single day I came into work, I'm doing magic. Everywhere I was, I did magic. I took to it like a duck takes to water," says Fields, a Pacifica resident for the last 30 years.

She studied under Nixon for two years and in 1993 ventured out on her own as Magic Jeanne. She enjoys sleight of hand tricks and says they are grounded on two concepts: misdirection and angles. Even after she tells you this, she'll turn a purple silk into





Jeanne Fields tells her students that magic is all around them if they open their eyes.

"I'VE BEEN IN JAIL. I HAD A DUI. I WAS A CON PERSON. I LIED. I CHEATED. I WAS JUST NOT A GOOD PERSON BECAUSE MY EMPHASIS WAS ON DRINKING OR WHEN CAN I DRINK NEXT. NOW I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING RIGHT WITH THIS GIFT."

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a candy-striped walking cane, or a dollar bill into a gift card, right before your eyes — and you'll never see it coming.

The profession has had some surprising perks for her, too. Now she has what she calls her "magic mind," which has helped her fix everything from computers to garbage disposals.

"It's an investigative way of thinking," say Fields. "I will not give up. I won't take no for an answer. If you shut a door in my face, I'm going to find another door."

Her magic mind has unlocked something else: a stage for her to share her story.

"I've been in jail. I had a DUI. I was a con person. I lied. I cheated," she says. "I was just not a good person because my emphasis was on drinking or when can I drink next."

"Now I've got to do something right with this gift," she said.

She's performed for countless senior centers, Alzheimer's units, children's hospitals, homeless shelters, underground domestic abuse shelters and for those in drug and alcohol recovery. The latter is a journey Fields knows all too well. She says she grew up with an alcoholic father who was a traveling salesman.

"We could never have slumber parties at our house," says Fields, "because when my dad was home you'd never know how he was coming home. So I swore I would never be like my father."

"So what happens? I end up just like him," she said.

There is one important difference between Fields' story and her father's. Fields stopped drinking and found recovery from alcoholism 34 years ago through Alcoholics Anonymous. It's a story she often shares with her audience if she thinks it will be meaningful.

"I just constantly put myself into the shoes of my audience," says Fields. "I could be the one in the burn unit. I could be the one with dementia. It's all about, I think, feeling their pain."

Her magic stands in stark contrast to her days of living with lies. She agrees

that performing magic gives her a platform to honestly misdirect people. Despite the colorful zoot suit she wears to every performance, and the trunkload of props she brings, she isn't simply trying to trick her audience.

"I really want honesty in my life," she says. "Looking the part, like I go dressed up, doesn't make me the part. It's just the image. And images are a façade. Many times people are just crushed inside or they're hurting inside and they're dressed and smiling out into the public that everything is great — and they're croaking."

These days, Fields spends most of her time teaching magic to children through after-school programs at Ocean Shore School in Pacifica and other schools in Burlingame, Foster City and Marin County. She also teaches magic camps in the summer. She teaches concepts that help kids both on and off the stage.

"Things go wrong all the time," she tells them. "If something goes wrong, you drop something, something doesn't work, you move onto the next trick."

And despite her years of training in misdirection, she still believes that real magic does exist and is possible to achieve. It's the most popular question the kids ask her and she tells them that Houdini was performing real magic by the time he died.

"I think it's the unknown and something that can happen from nothing. That's really what magic is," says Fields. "It's the unknown."

She tells her students if they open their eyes they'll see that magic is all around them.

"I look at this world of the ocean and the trees — it's magic. Someone didn't plant a little pond and it grew into an ocean. Someone didn't plant a little seed and it became this huge mountain."

The trick is understanding that anything is possible.

"When you're dealing with a magic prop and you're showing things that happen that are impossible," says Fields. "Well, the kids are reaching into that impossible. You did the impossible. Can I do the impossible?"

"Yeah," she says, "you can." **PACIFICA**