



FULL COVERAGE BELOW . . .

COVER STORY: MAN OF THE YEAR

“Just because something’s imaginary, doesn’t mean it isn’t real.”

— Mergel Funsky
Frontispiece, “Who is Mergel Funsky?” (unpublished)

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MERGEL FUNSKY:

TIME: This is the first time that we’ve ever chosen an imaginary person to be Time’s “Man of the Year.” How do you feel about that?

MERGEL: It’s about time!

TIME: You mean, finally imaginary people are being recognized?

FUNSKY FACTS

Born: March 4

Occupations: Contractor, Dance Champion, World’s Greatest Detective, Magician, International Spy, Artist, Tea Reminder

Hobbies: Marching; Playing my Trombone

Favorite Food: Pickles (half sour)

Favorite Color: Blue

Favorite Number: 6

Favorite Songs: Yes, We Have No Bananas; 76 Trombones

Recent Triumphs: Building Ginny’s building; starring in my Magic DVD’s

Recent Failures: Simon beat me at Monopoly (he must have cheated)

MERGEL: No, I mean you should have picked me last year! That was the year I ran for President.

TIME: But, with respect, we understand you lost that election. In fact, according to our research, out of the entire country, you received only two write-in votes, both in Illinois...

MERGEL: There would have been three, but they wouldn’t let me vote, just because I’m imaginary.

TIME: Well, we chose you this year, so let’s put that in the past. Judging by the sidebar, you’re a very busy man. I see you claim to have built the new 40 story skyscraper, corporate headquarters for Sidley Austin. But didn’t I read that Turner Construction was actually the builder?

MERGEL: Don’t believe everything you read. Ginny hired me, as a consultant, and I helped her approve everything. That’s why the building has doors – that was my idea. And I was the one who recommended removing the boxes before the toilets got installed; you can ask Ken the Architect. And my name is clearly displayed on the building.

TIME: Could you tell us where? We may have missed it on our tour.

MERGEL: Ginny wrote my name on this gigantic beam, that went on top of the building. I have a photo that shows it, if you sort of squint. And my mural will be in the lobby, if Ginny ever gets around to hanging it.



TIME: I notice that, in listing your birth date, you’ve omitted the year. Are you reluctant to reveal your age?

MERGEL: No, that’s Simon’s fault. He forgot to imagine that part, so every year on my birthday I just pick a different age. This year I picked 61 ½, and last year I picked 104.

TIME: Does that cause problems?

MERGEL: Not yet, but I guess I have to be careful not to pick an age when I would be dead. And it’s important to be at least 35, or else I couldn’t be president. But even when I was 104, the government refused to give me Medicare or pay any money, because they said I needed one of those dumb social security numbers.

TIME: Why would imaginary people need money?

MERGEL: Hey, there’s no such thing as a free lunch. You just try getting ice cream bars from the vending machine. And the doors can be expensive, even at Home Depot.

TIME: So what do you do, to earn money?

MERGEL: Sometimes I’m a consultant, and I get paid \$ 2 a week. And Simon and Ginny give me an allowance. But mainly I play Monopoly, and I keep that money in my closet. And now that Simon got me



a credit card, it's even better than money.

TIME: I see, among your other occupations, you list "International Spy." Do you think that's wise, to reveal that side of your career?

MERGEL: Huh? I didn't write that part. It was, uh, disclosed by an unnamed highly placed source.

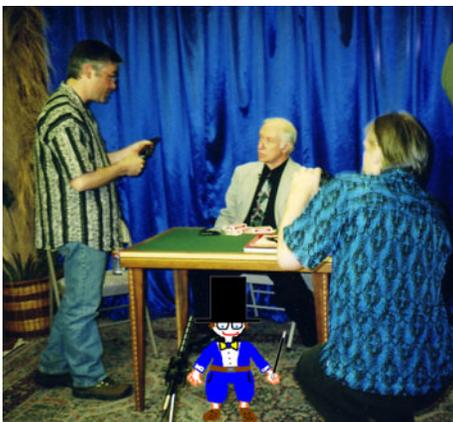
TIME: Didn't Simon help write that?

MERGEL: Yeah, the dummy. His imagination sometimes leaves something to be desired.

TIME: Speaking of that, can you tell us, what's it like to be imaginary? This is, after all, a rare opportunity for our readers to learn about your unique perspective.

MERGEL: It all depends on who's imagining you. So, it's unique from both sides. Like, with Simon, he sings a lot, and hums to himself, so it's noisy in there. Sometimes I wish he imagined a set of ear plugs for me. (That's one more thing I could use money for.) And Simon doesn't sleep very well, he's always thinking or worrying about stuff, so I can get real tired. And sometimes, it's boring, but at least he's not a lawyer any more. But other times, like when he's thinking about magic, I can peek into that secret part and see how it all gets done. That's how I got to be such a good magician.

TIME: I notice you say you starred in some "magic DVD's" – aren't they really about Simon's magic?



MERGEL: Oh yeah, Simon and Ginny have a few walk-ons, but I'm the guy who made it all happen.

TIME: How did you accomplish that, when the audience couldn't even see you?

MERGEL: Haven't you ever heard "Now you see it, now you don't?" Well, that second part is me! Besides, they could hear me, sort of. I'm the "magic word," that makes all the magic happen. Simon even put me in the credits for that. Without me, he'd still be searching through the deck, trying to find their dumb cards.

TIME: I notice that you're heavily into the performing arts. In addition to magic, music and dance seem to play a central role.

MERGEL: Yeah, the Funscky is named after me. I'm teaching it to Mari, Simon's dance teacher, so pretty soon it should be a national craze. And I took my trombone to Europe on our vacation, so the Vienna Opera House will never be the same. I had my own combo on the streets of Vienna, probably because no one will let them indoors. Simon says we're avant garde, but lawyers like to use big words, so that probably doesn't mean anything.



TIME: So, what's in store for Mergel Funscky's future?

MERGEL: I'm working on my own TV program, sort of an unreality show. I tried to rehearse by going downstairs to the building lobby. I danced in front of the building security camera, but Simon says he couldn't see me on our TV. (I'm worried, because that's a real lapse in the security level in our building.) So now Simon lets me practice in front of his video camera, while he practices his magic. There are still a few bugs to work out, but once I'm visible, we're taking it national.

TIME: And finally, will the public ever see your book?

MERGEL: Ginny keeps collecting all the emails I sent her. She must have hundreds. She shows them to her friends, and they mumbled something about not quitting her day job. So I guess she'll have to write the book at night.

TIME: Er..., right. Well, Mergel Funscky, thanks for an imaginative interview.

MERGEL: Don't you want to hear me play my trombone ...?



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