

## Edgewater Magician Carries On Casa Bonita Tradition

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### Family interest in magic led Gerald Robinson to achieve professional goals

*By Mike McKibbin | Jan.3, 2024 | Neighborhood Gazette*

Like most Colorado natives, a young Gerald Robinson and his family enjoyed meals, cliff divers and magic shows at Casa Bonita. Now, the adult Robinson is part of the tradition at the recently reopened Lakewood restaurant.

Robinson, 24, of Edgewater, now works as a magician at Casa Bonita. He works part-time — on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday nights — performing tricks at tables while customers wait for their meals or for small groups who gather at a table where Robinson sits. He hopes it helps him reach one of his primary goals: To appear at the famed Magic Castle in Los Angeles.

“We went there in July and it would just be a dream to perform there,” Robinson said.

He described magic as “kind of like solving a puzzle. And that’s something I’ve always liked to do.”

Robinson said he sometimes “disassociates” from himself during a performance. His ability to picture himself performing magic is a kind of magic in itself for him.

“It’s almost like I’m watching myself perform a magic show and I get a rush because I know I’ve worked so hard to get to where I am,” he said.

Coin and card magic are Robinson’s specialty because “they make you so approachable,” he added. People watch his tricks up close and personal, compared to magicians who appear on stage.

### **A lifetime love of magic**

Born in Boulder, Robinson grew up in a family of magic fans.

“We’d go to the Pearl Street Mall and watch the magicians, so I’ve been interested in magic since I was about eight,” Robinson said.

Family members would learn card tricks and collect coins, so slight of hand tricks were natural.

“They were pretty easy to learn so I’d do shows for family members when I was a kid and now it’s kind of a tradition,” Robinson said. “I was an only kid so I could spend my time practicing by myself.”

When Robinson was in his early teens, he and his dad attended a magic convention in Fort Collins. They met Richard Nakata, an award-winning magician who has practiced magic for nearly 60 years. Nakata was born in Tokyo, Japan, came to the U.S. as a child and grew up in Aurora. Nakata agreed to teach the aspiring magician.

“I took lessons between the time I was 13 and 15 about once every two weeks, mostly coin magic,” Robinson said.

Nakata said he has taught around 500 or 600 students, including Robinson, who has also helped him teach magic. After several lessons, Nakata said he could see Robinson “on the cover of some national magic magazine in time.”

“I could see he had something special,” he stated. “Not everyone can do magic, but he sure could.”

“I was a little bit jealous when he got the job with Casa Bonita, to be honest,” Nakata added. “That will be a great place for him to learn and develop his skills.”

Nakata introduced him to another magician, Dave Neighbors, who is considered one of the top coin magicians in the world.

“I learned some really fantastic tricks from (Neighbors) that I still use today,” Robinson said.

### **Going pro**

Robinson’s first professional magician job in early 2023 was at the recently closed Enigma Bazaar in Denver, described as “a mystical, immersive art bar and performance venue” on its website. It featured artistic events

such as live music, burlesque, theater, circus, magic, and tarot and astrology readings.

“They booked me monthly, sometimes more often,” Robinson said. “It was a huge hit so I decided to try to make it as a professional magician and started branching out and booking myself.”

Private parties and non-profit events made up most of his bookings, where he entertained guests with card and coin tricks while walking around.

As the Enigma Bazaar began to close down, its owners recommended Robinson to Casa Bonita and he was soon hired after an early December audition.

“It’s been a really good reception,” he said. “They also let me try out new routines from time to time so I think this will be something to really help my magic.”

Robinson earned a math degree at the University of Colorado Boulder and is also an acoustic engineer and musician to help make enough money to get by, he said.

“But I hope I can continue to find places where I can do my magic,” Robinson said. “I want to try to do this as well as I can.”