



Jeff Scanlan

FORMER PROFESSIONAL MAGICIAN Jeff Scanlan will never reveal how he creates “Bottle Magic,” the art of placing everyday objects through the narrow neck of a glass bottle. He’ll only divulge the four rules of the art form: The bottle must come from a grocery store shelf; the bottle can’t be heated, cooled, cut or manipulated; every item must pass through the bottle neck; and the item must still be usable once inside.

Scanlan, who moved to the Valley from Chicago eight years ago, was inspired to learn the tricks of the trade after reading a 1996 article about the late Harry Eng, an amateur magician who made “Impossible Bottles.” Initially, Scanlan spent three and a half years learning the secretive art form, starting with bars of soap and playing cards. “I broke hundreds of bottles and ruined hundreds upon hundreds of decks of cards,” he says.

Since then, Scanlan has bottled everything from golf balls and padlocks to scissors and packs of cigarettes. Depending on the subject matter and the amount of detail, Scanlan can spend up to 15 hours creating an art piece. To date, he’s fashioned close to 700 bottles.

More recently, the illusionist has added “dimensional decks” to his repertoire, a process that involves intricate cutting of individual playing cards with an X-Acto knife, giving the deck a three-dimensional look when stacked together.

When tackling a new project, Scanlan contemplates his approach for about a month before diving in. His next challenge? “I’ve always wanted to put a Major League baseball inside a gallon jug,” he muses. “Things that we think are impossible really aren’t.” See his work at bottlemagic.com.

— Marilyn Hawkes



1 The magic man employs tweezers, hemostats and many other tools to create his whimsical bottles.

2 To stain wooden objects for custom bottles, such as miniature baseballs and bats, Scanlan uses Minwax Wood Finish.

3 Scanlan uses his magical mindset to squeeze Converse All Stars and a tennis ball inside a gallon jug.



4 Opaque paint markers come in handy when hand-decorating items to put in bottles.



5 An X-Acto knife gives Scanlan a clean edge when cutting playing cards by hand. He goes through about eight to 10 blades per deck.

6 The Queen of Spades deck in 3-D takes about eight hours to cut.

