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Local mentalists win award

Jeff and Tessa Evason have been in tune with each other for 14 years.

The Stouffville couple, whose incredible feats of mentalism won them an international award in Minneapolis June 14, have worked together ever since they met. "We hit it off right from the start - we had so many strong connections and had such a fabulous time performing together," said Jeff.

"We used to do a lot of public shows, but we've got away from that over the years." Nowadays, the majority of their bookings come from the corporate world and from colleges and universities.

"When we first met, we worked on cruise ships and that's a wonderful experience." "Most of our work since then has been around Toronto," said Tessa, "but we've toured with the armed forces and our travels have taken us to 28 countries including Israel, Egypt, Germany and even the North Pole."

A couple they met on their travels, who were famous for their acts of mentalism just after the vaudeville era, have also been a major source of inspiration, said Jeff. "There names were Liz and Tommy Tucker and they were from Boston. No one had ever done an act like theirs and they taught us their secrets."

It was one of their Evasons' early shows that first brought the

couple to Stouffville, he explained. "(Local illusionist) Dan Laffey contacted us through our agent and asked us to come and work with the annual magic festival which used to be held here. I'd never heard of Stouffville until then, but when I arrived, I fell in love with the Art Latham collection at the library." They were so taken with the area, in fact, they bought a house on Musselman's Lake and lived there for 10 years before moving into town last year.

Their show, Second Sight, begins with a feat of mentalism or illusion; for example, they may borrow wedding bands from the audience and link them together in a chain. They demonstrate their telepathic powers with Tessa standing blindfold on stage, while Jeff mingles with the audience.

People will give him personal items, such as a driver's licence or photograph, and Tessa will identify them, giving details such as licence numbers and addresses, or the names of the people in the photograph and the time it was taken. "My scariest experience was when I had an image of guns and the man Jeff was with was holding a bullet - he was a pretty scary looking guy," said Tessa.

"If we come across a sceptic in the show, we don't try to change their mind. We tell them to go with their gut feeling," she said. In most cases, however, even the cynics are won over in the end.



Jess and Tessa Evason

And, as Tessa pointed out, "anybody can do what we do some of the time."

"We often ask how many people wake up just before their alarm goes off. That's the kind of thing you take for granted, but you don't know how or why it happens," Jeff said. Despite their perceptive powers, they both acknowledge that they did not expect to receive the Dunninger Memorial Award for distinguished performers of mentalism.

So strict are the criteria for winning, "in a couple of years it wasn't awarded to anyone." Jeff and Tessa are looking forward to a busy summer of resort work and welcome inquiries from corporations, groups and individuals. For more information, call 640-1967.

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