

Senior Spotlight

By Nan Mahon

DR. Solar prescribes laughter, good times, and sunshine. Its old remedy that almost always lightens the heart and this doctor wants to serve up a large dose to audiences in Northern California.

Dr Solar and his traveling medicine show have been bringing his brand of entertainment to children and their parents since he was a child himself.

A little ragtime music please, and Dr. Solar appears in top hat, tails, and ribbon tie. The tall man with a gray goatee is actually Terry Robinson, award winning magician, ventriloquist, and puppeteer also known as Dr Solar. His, he says, is a truly Americana presentation that encourages moral values, self-esteem building and personal empowerment.

"Look for me in all things forgotten, is my credo," he says. "This is due to my constant perusal of antiquity, be it an object once held and beloved by forgotten souls, or various forms of art and theatre, my love of delving into history, and a penchant for nostalgia."

A quiet, shy child, Robinson became fascinated watching ventriloquist Jimmy Nelson and his dummy Danny O'Day on the Texaco All Stars television show during the 1950s.

"I started talking without moving my mouth," he recalls. "I was good at it."

When he was 8 years old, his parents gave him a Danny O' Day dummy for Christmas. He spent hours practicing the art of ventriloquism.

"After that they couldn't shut me up," he said.

By the time he was in the fourth-grade, Robinson was performing on stage with a new dummy, Ducky O'Neil.

"I became the major fundraiser for the YMCA, going to service clubs to raise money, he said. "I also performed at school assemblies and birthday parties."

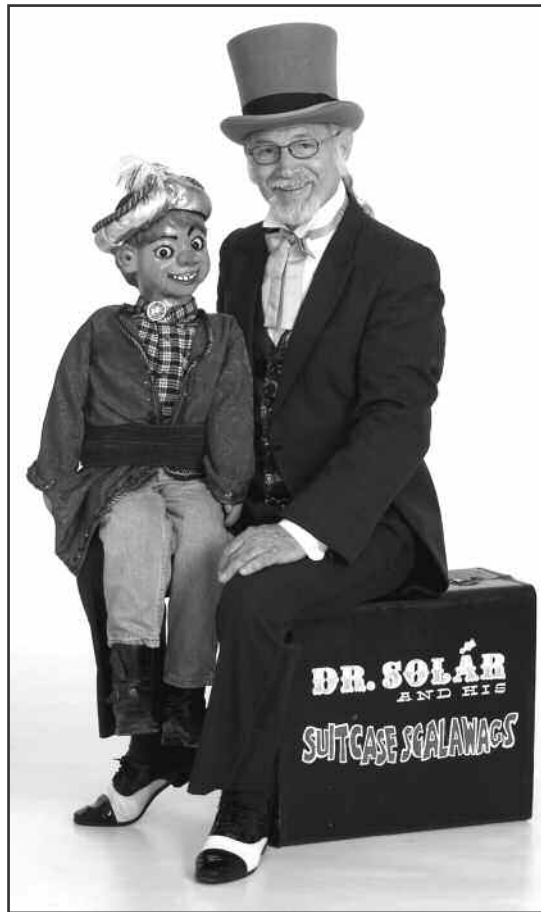
All through his school years in Redwood City, Robinson earned money as a performer. But his dream was to become a visual artist, an ambition that was realized when he was hired to run the graphic arts department for a local company.

"My first task was creating the graphics for the control panel for Stanford Lineal Accelerator," he said.

Sometime later, Robinson opened his own business and created silk screens for Atari Video Games. But when his father fell ill, Robinson stepped up and took over the family hardwood floor business. Entertaining was put on the back burner of Robinson's life during those years.

Retired now, Robinson moved to Citrus Heights six years ago and revived his old love of putting words into the mouths of dummies and puppets. He also became concerned about the environment

DR. SOLAR aka Terry Robinson



Dr. Solar poses with Ducky O' Neil.

and is an advocate for solar energy.

"Thus the name, Dr. Solar," he explains.

Performing for schools, libraries, fundraisers, variety shows, corporate events, retirements, and private parties all over the Sacramento Valley and beyond, Dr. Solar says that adults as well as children enjoy his message. His knee-pal Ducky O'Neil is a typical sassy kid smarter than his age, but there is also an older dummy, age 84.

"Adults get a kick out of him," Robinson said.


Dr. Solar, Wizard of the North, winds up his old Victrola and plays music of the 1920s, pulls real rabbits and doves out of hats, and does a little flim-flam in the tradition of a vaudeville show.

"My goal is to bring joy and laughter to as many people as I possibly can in my lifetime; to be the mantle, the torch, of good, clean, wholesome entertainment for families," he states.

Robinson writes his own scripts and tailors the show to his audience. He prides himself on keeping his show affordable.

"My hope is to entertain as many people as possible," he said. "You never know who you will touch."

Perhaps there will be another child like the shy eight-year old Robinson who watched Paul Winchell and Jimmy Nelson and changed his life. Dr. Solar hopes he can influence this generation of children to follow a dream.

Visit www.drsolar.com or call (916) 524-1176 to book a show. 

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