

*The Magical Life of*  
**Ed “Pupule” Middleton**  
By Dale Lorzo

Magic can be like a coconut: you have to break through the nut to enjoy the sweets inside. Here is how one came to bear fruit.

Edward Lew Middleton was born on August 13, 1933 in Oakland, California about 15 miles from his Grandfather’s ranch in Castro Valley. Ed’s grandfather, Edward Dudley Middleton was one of the early families in the area, that helped develop Castro Valley, after having moved out west from Tennessee. Even though the ranch has since been sold and subdivided, there is still a Middleton Avenue off of Lake Chabot Road on your way out to the Lake Chabot recreation area.

Ed’s father was Edward Dudley Middleton, Junior and one of seven kids. Ed was named after his two Grandfathers, as he was the first grandchild. “Edward” came from his father’s side of the family and “Lew” from his mother’s side, so there is no E. D. Middleton, III.

Ed Middleton has been interested in, and performing magic most of his life, even though the first decade of his life was “wasted” because he did not find out about magic until he was about 10 or 11 years old. He then started down the road into magic with a “Gilbert Mysto” magic set, which he got around 1944. Magic really grabbed Ed’s attention and he worked at becoming a great magician. As a teenager, Ed took magic lessons from Morcum’s House of Magic in Oakland, California around 1949 or 1950. The instructor was Cas Boxley who gave the lessons upstairs above the magic store. Ed would ride his bike from home to Morcum’s on San Pablo Avenue in downtown Oakland. He later took private lessons at Cas’ home on Foothill Boulevard in downtown Oakland near Lake Merritt.

Caswell “Cas” Boxley was one of the top magicians in the Bay Area, performing with his wife as “Boxley and Mariè – The Miracle Masters” at nightclubs and dinner theaters, when not presenting their illusion show. Cas came up through the ranks of magic and was a childhood friend of Art “Victor St. Leon” Gross, whom the Sacramento, California magic club has since been named after. They both worked as assistants to Arthur “Francisco” Bull in his *Francisco’s Midnight Spook Frolic*.

He was a great teacher and performer that had the looks of a movie star. Cas was a very sophisticated and dapper looking magician (standing over 6 feet tall), but Ed stood just a little taller at 6’ 4” in height. Cas taught Ed

slight-of-hand and the basics of magic, however he was more interested in standup magic than manipulation. Ed then brought over some of his own parlor tricks and Cas would help with presentation and routines. He liked Cas and Marie, and thought Cas was a very good magician and teacher. It was during these lessons that Cas helped Ed develop his Linking Ring Routine while helping to polish and refine Ed as a magician. However, it was Ed's comedic sense of humor that took his magic in a totally different direction over the years.

In 1952, Ed graduated from Castlemont High School near the Oakland and San Leandro city limits. The Middleton home was located on 73 Avenue (which has been renamed Hegenberger Road), about 4-5 houses west of MacArthur Boulevard. When 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue was widened, it ended up as a corner house (near Foothill Boulevard). Right after graduation, Ed enlisted into the U.S. Air Force, as he knew he was soon to be drafted and he did not want to go into the Army. His draft papers arrived about a week after he enlisted.

While he was in the service, most of the magic that Ed had acquired before enlisting was to be stored in his mom's basement in Oakland. However, Ed always managed to carry a few things with him in an attaché case along with a couple of small suitcases while serving his country. As a new recruit he was stationed at the Air Force training center at Camp Parks, in Pleasanton, California, just over the hills east of Castro Valley. They had some planes, but they were based at the Hayward airport about 15 miles west, back over the hills past Castro Valley.

This is where he met his bride to be and future mother of his children, Eleanor "Ellie" Jung. She was a secretary in the Headquarters Building and lived nearby, with her brother and his wife. After a short, and probably whirlwind romance, they were married at the Camp Parks Chapel in 1956. Ed and Ellie's first of three daughters, Becky was born here in "Pea Town", they always called it "Pea Town" instead of Pleasanton. Ironically, when Ed and Ellie revisited Camp Parks a few years ago, the only buildings left, were the Headquarters Building and the Chapel. The base had closed, when the military decommissioned several bases around the country, leaving them as the only two significant structures still standing.

Later on, the Middletons got transferred to the Schofield Barracks on Oahu in Hawaii. Here Ed and Ellie performed magic. Their second daughter, Cynthia was born in 1961 at Tripler Army/Navy Hospital. The act was now on a roll and they did an encore performance at Tripler Hospital when their third daughter, Kathy came along in 1964. However, this was the only magic that Ellie was to ever help Ed with, but how can you top three charming daughters?

Shortly thereafter, Ed and family were transferred to Bunker Hill Air Force Base in Peru, Indiana. Again, Ed always calls it "Pea Ru" instead of Peru. It was during this tour at Bunker Hill Air Force Base, that Ed met a special magician. It just so happened to be his barber, at the NCO Club. This was Bob Kingsley (sic) who performed as "Bob King". Bob invited Ed to the local magic club, where he joined *The International Brotherhood of Magicians* and Ring 168 of Kokomo, Indiana. The Kokomo Ring meetings were less than 10 miles from the base. He officially became member 19942, with his listing as a new member in the December 1964, "Linking Ring" magazine.

A couple years later, orders came through for a transfer to Okinawa, Japan. With orders to leave the country, Ed thinking about his wife and family, moved them back to California to be out of the snow and closer to family. This was their first move to Rancho Cordova (near Mather Air Force Base) where the family settled in and the kids went to school.

Then, in 1967, Ed Middleton went over to Okinawa alone for six months. While in the first grade, their daughter Cindy remembered that he would be having Christmas alone in Japan, away from the family. So, the girls baked some Christmas cookies for their Dad. Ellie packed them in popcorn and mailed the cookies to Ed. (Who later confessed to eating the popcorn also, because he was so lonely for his family!)

Around Cindy's 7th birthday in 1968, after having finished the first grade, the family flew over to Okinawa to join Ed in Seaview Housing. This was off base near Naha Air Force Base where he was stationed (Ed worked on the flight line). They had a blast living off base for two years, even though the "stealie boys" broke into their house one night while they slept! The "Stealie Boys" were young boys, who were taught by their fathers to break in and go through houses stealing things at night. They then moved on the base and lived there for another two years.

While stationed in Okinawa, Ed met several magicians, including Arnold Furst and Bev Bergeron. These performers were working the military bases doing USO shows and appearing at the Officer's, NCO and Airman's clubs. Arnold Furst had a knack for showing up at Ed and Ellie's doorstep right around dinnertime, to "sponge" a meal. The Middletons remember Furst as the guy that always put grape jelly on his rice whenever he ate it. Their daughters will never forget that! Plus, the fact that he always would show up at dinnertime to mooch, and would not leave! Ellie, forever the gracious hostess, always got stuck inviting him, and they really didn't have much extra food to share as the girls recall.

Arnold even came up with the great idea of having Ed help him build a magic trick. Meaning for Ed to build the new magic levitation that he had seen. It was a design of the suspension that Robert Harbin developed. They built two of these on base and Furst even talked Ed into having them shipped back with him when he was transferred back stateside. Over the years, all three of their daughters had the opportunity to float in mid air, on this piece of magic history.

Ed entered all the Air Force Talent Contests on the bases where he was stationed, and won a ton of these local contests. He even got flown over to Japan to mingle with professional magicians a couple of times. Ed never won first place in the inter-base competitions, but he had a grand time with all of his experiences! Maybe this was why he was always entering magic contests at different magic events.

During a national magic convention contest, Ed received a huge compliment from "The Amazing Jasper," the one and only Jay Marshall. Jay was the "Dean" of the *Society of American Magicians* and one of the all around best magic acts and magic historians of the twentieth century. After Ed got off stage from doing his zany Hawaiian act, Jay came running up to him to praise his act! He was impressed by the fact that Ed did his regular "working" act, which was filled with entertainment! Jay asked Ed if he thought he would win? Ed's reply was, "No." Mr. Marshall really appreciated that a contestant would present a "real act" and not a "contest act." Kids came to these conventions to learn, and what Ed did showed them what a working professional's show would really be like! When Ed entered the military contests, he always did his ABC Blocks routine, which blew them away, and he won. Ed was really impressed the fact, that Jay ran over with such enthusiastic praise for his performance.

Ed was always performing and always practicing. Even with his little girl, Cindy sitting on his lap asking him to do the "same card trick" over and over and over, as he forced cards on her! It was hilarious! His daughters had the best birthday parties in the world, as all of the kids wanted to come to their parties, since their Dad, the magician would always do a show!

Then, in 1972, after 20 years in the Air Force, Ed Middleton chose to retire. Middleton retired as a Tech Sargent (E6) from the United States Air Force on January 1, 1973, after 20 years, 6 months and 15 days, serving during the Korean Conflict and Viet Nam War. He was an administrative supervisor; in other words, a 'clerk' as Ed would say.

The Middleton's wanted to retire in Hawaii, so the Air Force moved the family back to Hawaii where they lived in Kailua, on the island of Oahu (at 1202 Manulani Street) for about a year and a half. Ed commented that the Middleton's were lucky, as they were usually able to stay on base in the sub-stand military housing. Actually, some of the base housing was very nice and it really helped out when trying to raise a family! While in Hawaii, he developed his act as "Pupule" and the World's Worst Magician! In Hawaiian, "Pupule" means crazy or silly like in a nut case. If you ever saw Ed perform with his magic words, "*Hanakokolele... which means your mother wears army boots*", you would never forget the memory.

After retiring, Ed worked at JC Penny's at the Ala Moana Center in Honolulu, as a salesman in stereos for a while. He was very good at it, but alas, he could not afford to stay in the high priced Hawaiian environment. So, on November 1, 1973, they moved back to California. Now living at 2705 El Segundo near Mather Air Force Base, which was later to become the city of Rancho Cordova, he continued to expand his magical services to the local communities. This is also when he joined Ring 192 of *The International Brotherhood of Magicians*, in Sacramento. Even though Ed worked a time for Vernon Advertising Specialties, Radio Shack and Bell Hardware, his main interest was always in the field of magical entertainment. He was very good at it, maybe a little off center while being comedic, but always very good and entertaining!

One can say that Ed has literally performed for children of all ages, as most of his magic shows were performed for children, family and adult center audiences. Shortly after the move to the Sacramento area, their daughter, Cindy, met and married local magician and puppeteer Jim Jayes. Ed in time would also add puppets to his act. His Punch and Judy, Winnie the Pooh and Little Red Riding Hood puppets were all hand made by his son-in-law.

Jim and Ed really hit it off well when it came to magic. Working together, they developed some great new ideas for Ed's Hawaiian act, from the production a carved Hawaiian "Tiki" to the ending with a giant palm tree. This fit Ed perfectly, with him in his Hawaiian shirt and straw hat.

It must have been Middleton's military experience as an administrative supervisor, because his magic case was one of the most organized setups for magicians that you ever saw. In his tables and show equipment, every prop had a place and a purpose. Each nook and cranny was designed and labeled for anything Ed might need during a show. This made the shows flow smoothly, and made it easy to make last minute changes to adapt to a show's situation.

However, even with a knack for organization, things did not always go as planned. Ed has always been one to perform at the magic club meetings and to volunteer to help with the club's shows for the community. One time, the local Ring arranged to do a fund raising show for the Woodland Opera House. This is a marvelous old Opera House in downtown Woodland, California. A pleasure to perform in with its old raked seats, trap doors and dressing rooms under the stage. Several other members also volunteered to perform and to help out back stage as needed.

The show was a huge success and a fun event for the club. But, when Ed was doing his act, he just was not on as much as usual. He felt it, but the audience was never aware that he felt that something was amiss. Ed just could not figure out why things did not go as smoothly as usual. It was not until afterwards, when viewing the videotape of the show, that he realized that with everyone helping to put the show together, what the problem was. It was just a little thing, which went on to make a big difference.

When the stagehand helping to set the props, set Ed's table on stage, he set it stage left instead of stage right of center. One might think this a little thing, but Ed was now working from the opposite side of his table than was normal. Now, when Ed went to reach for something, it was just a few inches off of where he was used to it being. It was in its proper place, but what one might say is backwards, so reaching for a prop took just a little bit extra effort. This just goes to prove, that one can be organized and rehearsed, when a little thing can change a performance by no fault of your own. This is when experience pays off too, and the audience is still entertained by a great show. It took a while, but the mystery was solved.

A memory that Ed's daughter, Cindy likes to share, happened about Thanksgiving in 2000 when Ed and Ellie went back to Minnesota to spend the holidays with family. By now, Jim and Cindy's family and her sister Becky's family, all lived near Austin, Minnesota. The next day, their son-in-law Jim, went in the hospital to have an emergent surgery and ended up in the Intensive Care Unit for 8 days. The family still remembers that one. However, Jim was so very worried that he would have to cancel his show for "Christmas In The City". This is something he did every year in downtown Austin, the day after Thanksgiving. Well, Ed stepped up and filled in doing Punch and Judy with Jim's puppets. Cindy had never seen her dad do a puppet show before; she had only seen him do his magic. As Cindy tells it, "I was crying and laughing so hard! He was hilarious! I couldn't even tell Jim until years later (as I did not want to hurt his feelings) that Dad did a better Punch and Judy! I didn't even know my Dad had that in him! What a talent!"

Ed has always been willing to give of his time and talents, to help others in magic, and IBM Victor St. Leon Ring, #192 in particular. We are all better off for having known Ed Middleton, and for Ed sharing of his brand of magic with us. Thank you Ed for being a wonderful entertainer and a great friend!

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**MAGICIAN**

**ED "PUPULE" MIDDLETON**

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