

A MEL STOVER RECOLLECTION

BOB FRIEDHOFFER
New York City, New York

The late Canadian magician Mel Stover was a close friend of Martin Gardner.

As inventive and clever as Mel Stover was, that's how friendly he was. He would go out of his way to try to make those around him enjoy themselves. I'm honored and pleased that I had an opportunity to enjoy his company for a short while.

He showed me many stunts, gags, puzzles and tricks, but one in particular has stuck with me through the years. We were at Tom Rodgers' house in Atlanta prior to one of the Gatherings 4 Gardner. Not only have I not forgotten it, I've used it with some frequency, even when performing on the stage with the aid of an overhead projector or Powerpoint. It never (except for the instance mentioned below) fails to get a surprised laugh from the audience and the victim.

He started by placing three coins in a row on the table. They were a shiny penny, a nickel and a quarter.

He said, "John's mother had three children. The first (he pushed the penny forward a bit) was named Penelope. She was so cute and bright. They called her Penny."

"The next (he touched the nickel) was a young man who was so cool that he had a pony tail (a la Jefferson on the nickel), They called him Nick."

Pointing at the quarter he said "Now what's the name of this one?"

I like almost everyone, but for two pain in the necks who would not answer immediately, saw the image of George Washington and said "George!"

Mel said I'll do it again and proceeded in the manner stated above but in a slightly louder voice. Since others were looking on with malicious delight, I, flustered like many victims since said "Quartermain!" Embarrassing but true.

The third time he followed the same script with an even brassier voice. This time he emphasized, "**John's** mother, had three children. . .

I finally got it.