



THE IDEA MORGUE

By Rich Strelak
R&J Productions
Las Vegas

Many times in various articles and internet posts I have expounded the virtues of rehashing and revisiting information to glean new insights as your needs change and evolve. This requires a habit of re-watching videos, rereading articles and posts; a habit I not only profess but actually practice. Along those lines I would like to share a creative technique I have employed for over thirty years...the **Idea Morgue**!!

During the late 70's I worked at the world's first indoor amusement park/shopping center, Old Chicago. There were some very creative people in and around the facility. I was able to utilize a concept most modern teens either do not understand or fail to take advantage of, being an apprentice. No I am not talking about being a contestant with Donald Trump, I mean a real *apprentice*. It is a process much like an exchange of services. An apprentice attaches him or herself to a master craftsman. The apprentice provides free labor and the craftsman teaches the apprentice his craft. It is an educational process that is centuries old. Today, kids know nothing but want immediate compensation.... but that's a different topic!

I first worked with the creative/technical director of the facility. While he was able to teach me a lot of technical and construction techniques, I learned more creatively from William. He was a master sign maker. Everything from simple hand painted signs to hand carved signs to three dimensional creations. Remember, this is way before the advent of computers! If you needed a certain font you didn't just log on and choose from 1,500

yours, you have several different perspectives to help in the design.

One might say there is no need for an Idea Morgue with the internet. You can search the internet anytime you need an idea or image so in essence the computer and internet become your "Idea Morgue". While that may be true to a degree, it is not all encompassing. Searching the internet for specific images is *research*, you already have an idea such as wanting to build an old style radio so you search for those specific images. The true nature of the Idea Morgue is to collect information that you *don't* need right now. While researching for old radios I came across other images. Those are images that I may never have thought of or even seen had it not been for that research. I placed them in my computer Idea Morgue for future use. And make sure you do it immediately!! How many times have you remembered something but can't remember *where* you saw it?

The Idea Morgue has to be a habit. If you find a cool picture in a magazine, clip it and put it in the Morgue. As you search the internet and run across a cool image or a cool site, save the image or save the website address. If you have an idea for a prop or room in a totally unrelated conversation STOP and right it down! Even if it is just a piece of an idea, write it down. I also have a habit of carrying a small notebook and pen in my pocket. One of those little spiral bound pocket books you can pick up anywhere for like 79 cents at any stationary section. If inspiration hits, you want to make sure you are prepared.

Years ago as a performer I was with family on the way to see Ringling Brothers Circus. Unrelated conversation inspired an idea for a comedy routine. During the ride I worked out all the details and it was funny! Not wishing to be rude, I merely went over the idea a couple of times in my head since I did not have anything to write it down on. With all the excitement and activity of the afternoon, once we got back home all I could remember was that I HAD an idea!!! To this day I have never remembered that routine. So it has now taken on mystical proportion! It has become the preverbal "one that got away". In reality who knows how good that routine really was. Had I been able to write it down, I would have had at least had a chance to rework the idea and build upon it. So that is why I carry my own notebook!

The only drawback to the Idea Morgue is.....you have to USE it. Just like any video or printed material that you own. It is no good just sitting on the shelf collecting dust. If you are looking for a new scene in your haunt, check your Idea Morgue *first!* Just as I have stated over and over again in reference to videos and other educational materials, ideas will only present themselves when you are *ready* for them! There are ideas I have put in my Morgue that have taken years to see reality. There are probably some that will take another few years and of course there are some that may never see the light of day! The point is that they are there! Many times I have been looking for a specific idea. I search the Idea Morgue and maybe I do not find anything that exactly fits the bill, but searching the files may help spark an idea that I *can* use!

Many of you have heard the theory of brainstorming. You start vocalizing about an idea and you write down everything without censoring it. So it is with the theory behind the

Idea Morgue. If you have an idea, write it down while it is fresh in your mind as detailed as you can. The Idea Morgue may even save you money in an unusual manner. It may help you NOT build a particular prop or room.

I have had ideas that at the time seemed plausible. Instead of immediately running off and building it, I work it out as detailed as possible for the Idea Morgue. Then I file it and move on. Now I wait anywhere from a few weeks to a few seasons and then revisit the idea. Viewing it with fresh eyes I will either have a viable new prop or room idea or wonder what in the heck I was thinking about!!! At least this way I have not spent time and money building something that may not work as effectively as anticipated.

So here is a concept that you can take, modify and make it your own. It can be a very useful tool. It is totally adaptable. As a performer I have used the Idea Morgue to log and categorize skit and joke ideas. As a writer I have used the Morgue to log conceptual ideas. As a business owner I used the Morgue to capture various business ideas and concepts. As a Haunt Owner I use the Morgue for Room, Prop, Effect, and business ideas. Like any tool it does little good sitting on a shelf. It is most effective when it is being utilized. So create and start using your own **Idea Morgue** today. Besides, in our business it sounds much better than just using an old idea file!

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