Updated Crystal Ball Reading

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In the past, there have been a number of devices for feeding the "medium" the names and questions collected from spectators. These devices have been hand held, mounted into the stand supporting the crystal ball, mounted into the table, mounted into a polished aluminum "crystal ball", and even transmitted to the medium using induction, direct connection, or wireless transmitters/receivers. All worked - sort of.

There is a much better way using commonly available technology.

I am currently helping a couple friends put together a special event as part of a Halloween fund raiser. Others might also be interested in adding a "crystal ball reading" feature to their shows by using this new method.
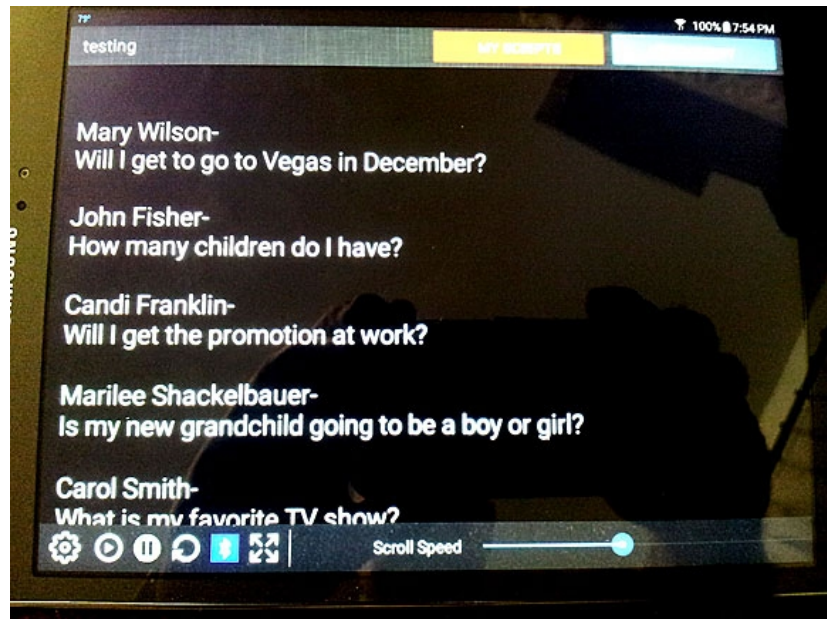
The plan was to have spectators write their names and a question to be answered by the medium on a piece of paper to be burnt in full view. Near the end of the show the medium would gaze into the crystal ball to devine the names, questions then respond with an answer.

I already had a large crystal ball with a base to lend them. We just needed to come up with a way to switch the names/questions for fakes to be burnt and a method for getting the contents of the paper slips to the medium - all while the audience is watching. My task was to solve these problems.

The paper switch was easy. I chose to make a switching box from the Corinda book.

Rather than a paper scroll for the medium to use, I decided to utilize a smart phone running a teleprompter app called "Teleprompter Pro". We installed the app on an older smartphone no longer used with any service (chip out).

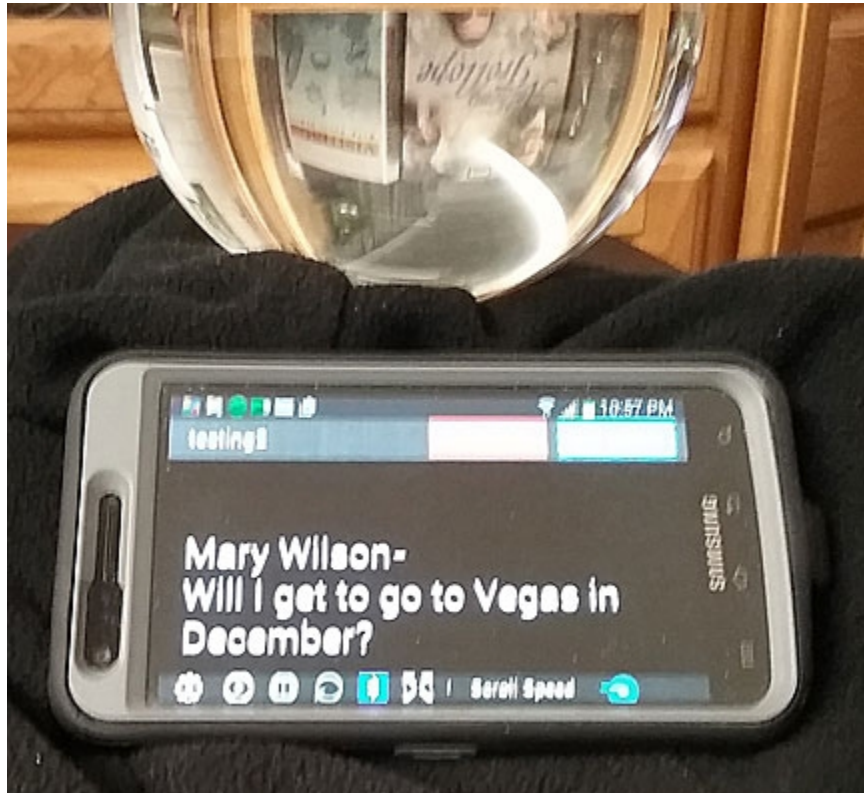To the right is a picture of a phone screen with the app running. This app allows the scroll speed varied, font size adjusted, font color changed, and easy text editing. Touching the screen stops or starts the required scrolling.

As things are coming together, we decided to collect the names/questions early in the act and switch them immediately. Backstage the assistant enters the text into the phone during the body of the act. When it comes time for the crystal ball reading, a table is brought out, the ball base set on it, black velvet draped over the base, and the crystal ball placed onto the covered base. The already on and app running phone is secretly placed behind the ball hidden by the black velvet.

The medium can easily start and stop the scroll with a touch to the screen. Answers are impromptu by the medium.

The rest is costuming and presentation. Perhaps this idea will work for others too. It should be a natural for a performer who likes to dress up and have fun with an audience.

Here is a pic of the apparatus in position behind the velvet.

If this is of use to you, please send me an email to let me know.

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