

## FRESH FISH SOLD HERE TODAY by Arnold Furst

Arnold Furst died on February 22, 2002 at the age of 83. Furst was best known to magicians as the inventor of the classic "Fresh Fish" paper tear where a strip of paper with the words "Fresh Fish Sold Here Today" is torn into pieces using a comical presentation and then restored.



Arnold Furst's "FRESH FISH" Paper Tear and his performing rabbit, Oscar, took him around the world including a 1946 FISM appearance.

The novelty of the trick was in the patter, which was based on this popular story.

---

A guy, walking past a street merchant, saw on the cart a sign that reads,

*"Fresh Fish Sold Here Today".*

**Guy:** I see you have quite some fish there.

**Merchant:** Yes, they are fresh from the dock early this morning. Would you like to buy some?

**Guy:** No, thank you, I'm just walking by, but I have some advice on your sign.

**Merchant:** Please share. I'd love to make it better.

**Guy:** Well, you don't need to say 'sold'. You're not giving them away, are you?

**Merchant:** No, you're right. (Erases the word).

**Guy:** Actually, I don't think you are selling it tomorrow, so I'd erase 'today', too.

**Merchant:** That's true. (Erases).

**Guy:** While you're at it, I'd also erase 'here' since you're not selling it anywhere else, are you?

**Merchant:** Err... right. (Erases that too).

**Guy:** You wouldn't sell non-fresh fish, either, so 'fresh' has to go, too.

**Merchant:** Ok. (Erases).

**Guy:** So now you're left with the word 'fish', but honestly that's not even needed because you can smell the stuff from a mile away! (Runs away laughing)

**Merchant:** Why you little...!!!

Back in the 1970s, Tim Ellis took the trick and gave the patter a revamp, filling the classic patter with utterly groan worthy fish puns. It earned him the 'Best Teenage Australian Magician' award in 1980.

Does it still work today? Try it out... if you dare!

### **FRESH FISH SOLD HERE TODAY – by Tim Ellis**

I was standing outside the Fish Shop the other day, waiting for SALMON Jack to come along and give me a lift home on their PIKE - when all of a sudden a man came out of the shop wearing a LEATHERJACKET.

Now I recognised him at once as he had big MUSSELS and used to work as a piano TUNA.

He was carrying a SEINE with WHITING on it which read 'FRESH FISH SOLD HERE TODAY'. I told him that his SEINE was totally unnecessary, and when he said he didn't know what I meant I offered to analyse it for him, to take it apart, so to speak.

Take for example the word 'TODAY', I mean it's so SHRIMPLE!

Everyone realises that you're selling fish today, and not yesterday or next week, so 'TODAY' is just not needed.

When I tore it off he looked awfully EEL... as if he was going to FLAKE out on the spot. "Good COD," he said, and call me a great big BASS that did not deter me - I've got GUTS, so on I went.

'HERE' is an equally unnecessary word. I mean everyone can see that you're selling fish here and not around the block or up in Bris..BREAM. *(Reference to the Australian capital city Brisbane. You might need to localize that one...)*

Then, strange as it may seem he picked up a fish and started to FILLET, and before I realised what was going on he swings back and LOBSTER right at me. But I was having a WHALE of a time... so I went on.

The word 'SOLD' is also quite useless since it's common practise to sell fish and not rent them or put them on hire PERCHase.

'FISH' is probably the most useless word of all, I mean everyone can see that you're selling fish and not... army surplus machine guns or surgical appliances. He didn't hear me that time... I think he needed a HERRING aid.

Now we're left with the word 'FRESH' which, on it's own, means absolutely nothing. Unless, of course, you've just painted the front of the shop... or you're out on a date with me.

Actually, my girlfriend loves fish. It was in a fish shop I first FLOUNDER. Now she's gone of with my brother, a fisherman... oh well, am I my brother's KIPPER?

Now at this stage the man looked very CRABby and snapped "Look you FLATHEAD! I've HADDOCK with you! I'll lose my job because of that SEINE." He snapped. He was a nasty SNAPPER.

But I didn't want to get into a deBAIT about it, and I did feel a bit GILLty about his SEINE.

"Keep CARP," I said "Keep CARP, it'll be alright in a MINNOW."

And then... his SEINE was restored.

He took it HOOK, LINE & SINKER.

"Holy MACKEREL!" he said, "Why on earth did you do that?"

To which I replied... "Oh, just for the HALIBUT."