

## The Horse of a Different Color (That You Rode in On)

by Howard Waldrop

*A few years before Manny Marks (that's how he insisted his name be spelled) died at the age of 107, he gave a series of long interviews to Barry Winstead, who was researching a book on the death of vaudeville. Marks was 103 at the time, in the spring of 1990. This unedited tape was probably never transcribed.*

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Marks: ... I know it was, because I was playing Conshohocken. Is that thing on? What exactly does it *do*?

Winstead: Are you kidding me?

Marks: Those things have been going downhill since the Dictaphone. How well could that thing record? It's the size of a pack of Luckies ...

Winstead: Trust me, Mr. Marks.

Marks: Mr. Marx was my father, Samuel "Frenchy" Marx. Call me Manny.

W: Let's start with *that*, then. Why the name change?

M: I didn't want my brothers riding my coattails. They started calling themselves the Four Marx Brothers, after they quit being the Four Nightingales. Milton—Gummo to you—got it out of his system early, after Julius—Groucho to you. Of course, Leo and Arthur had been playing piano in saloons and whorehouses from the time they were ten and eleven. You'll have to tell me whether you think that's show business or not ...

W: It's making a living with your talent.

M: Barely.

W: You entered show business when?

M: I was fourteen. Turn of the century. I walked out the front door and right onto the stage.

W: Really?

M: There was a three- or four-year period where I

