

2018 Year End Party for the Orlando Ring and Assembly

January 20, 2019|Archived Famulus



Posted on [December 29, 2018](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring” SAM Assembly #99 December 2018 Meeting Mike Matson, our President brought the December meeting to order. This was our yearend holiday party meeting, hosted by Mike and his wife, Noel. Elections were held for the new board for 2019. Reelected was President Mike Matson, Vice President Craig Fennessy, Sgt-at-Arms Chris Dunn, Magic Historian Phil Schwartz and Secretary Dennis Phillips. David Freeman is the Director at Large and Bev and Eloise Bergeron will share in the transition to a new Treasurer, Tom Parkin. The party fun then began with a table full of potluck snacks and goodies. Ravelli provided tamales for all and no one went hungry. Mike and Noel had a plate of spade shaped cookies. Jacki Manna did the emcee honors during the festivities and began by introducing her comedic geriatric sidekick, Matilda. Jacki is a talented ventriloquist and stand-up comedian. Matilda was full of wisdom and silliness and hilarious lines about ageing. Jackie then conducted a trivia game, for prizes from the gift pool, of “who invented the trick”, and “what is their off stage name” assisted by our magic historian, Phil Schwartz. The generational gap in magic history knowledge was evident but it was still fun. We then had a “sort the M&Ms by colors” game. Finally the pool of gifts were shuffled and opened and some exchanges were made according to the rules. Food and fellowship continued as we gave thanks for all those who helped make the party and 2018 a great year. Dennis Phillips

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring” January 2018 “*Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow*”-Psalms 144:4-

“You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like? For you are a puff of smoke that appears for a short time and then vanishes.”-James 4:14-Again, I face the all too frequent sadness of seeing another one of my contemporaries pass on. I have lost so many, I knew well: Paul Osborne, Charles Windley, Philip Morris, Joe Smiley and Bob McAllister. There were others who I did not know personally but were also a big influence on me. One was Johnny Hart, the English magician well known for his 60s-90s parakeet magic and classy stage act. He was 75. Now you know where I copied my sequin tailcoat wardrobe style from: He was a great act. My Johnny Hart inspired sequin tailcoat

See Johnny Hart: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tnlopTpbF8> Johnny Hart was born in Lytham St. Annes, England on August 29, 1943

Although he worked hard at school and was working towards being a research chemist, he was always practicing his card tricks during and after school and would use his talents to entertain classmates. Johnny was a member of the Preston Magic Society, Blackpool Magicians Club and The Modern Mystic League in Blackburn.. By the age of 17 he was on the bill at the English Electric Co Ltd children's party at the old Public Hall in Preston. Foregoing a potential career as a research chemist, Johnny instead turned to conjuring up magical concoctions of a different kind. He was the first winner of the Magic Circle's Young Magician of the Year competition in 1961. Johnny was famous for producing parakeets from thin air, and bought the birds from a local pet shop and breeder. His magic act also consisted of producing endless fans of cards from his empty hands as well as a live dove, cockatoo and a cat. At the end of the act the cat and cockatoo would vanish from a large box. All of these animals were his pets and were lovingly looked after during his career.

Johnny worked all over the world and had many seasons in the USA, including two years at the MGM Grand Hotel in Reno before retiring to England. Johnny Hart's funeral was on December 21 at St. Michael and All Angels with St. Mark Church in Ashton-on-Ribble. Johnny Hart always looked like he was having fun and that he loved every one of his birds. His smile and facial expression pulled you into his magic and he filled the stage with excitement. Hart at his peak Johnny Hart's final days

D'Angelo's Touch is different and uses a single person. Available from Penguin Magic. Here is a fun and different take on Banachek's Psychic Touches. Here is the original version fully explained. <https://www.freemagictricksandillusions.com/invisibletouch.html>

You ask the volunteer to close their eyes and ask them if they felt anything. They will swear that they felt taps even though the audience, those who are watching see nothing. Some versions use thread loops and I have seen Invisible Thread reels used on stage. One area of magic/illusion that seems to remain is the outdoor stage show. Fairs, Festivals, Picnics and Park events remain as venues for stage magicians. Locally, Steve Marcus and Co. does a great job with festival work. I believe that Jeff Eaton just retired and Joe Eddy Fairchild is from that outdoor background. Still working is Philadelphia's Al Belmont and he is a fixture of the yearly Tampa fair. My first experience with illusion magic was with Joe and Georgi Smiley, a delightful classic illusion act in the 1960s. I have mentioned him before and my Virginia friend, Gary Ponton, knew them well and kindly sent me photos that I did not have of their work in the 70s and 80s. These photos were made at Ocean View Amusement Park in Norfolk. Joe and Georgi were from Central Pennsylvania and toured the East Coast as well as doing theater work. I will try to give you some tips on working outdoors, if you ever face that challenging environment. Know these things when you sign a contract!– can you act be done surrounded and if not can you get partial shielding from minimal stable backdrops.– can be performed in any kind of lighting situation. Can you bring some lighting and have access to electric power. (notice Joe Smiley's homemade flood lights above)– can pack down small and

be easily moved on and off elevated stages and if not, do you have easy access to your travel vehicle.– do not require a “pre-load” that the audience cannot see. That may require enough solid flats to have a “loading area” near or as part of the stage backdrop flaps– will wind and rain destroy your act. Big silk production props that can blow over are not to be used. Because you probably cannot control exactly where people are seated or standing during your show, you never will have the perfect angles to do illusions that rely on them. Of course, full black art is out but some limited black art can work, as Ralph Adams demonstrated in his outdoor shows. Some Fair performers like Al Belmont, Jeff Eaton, Joe Fairchild and Lance Gifford simply towed a trailer-stage combination, opened the sides and were ready to go with only the audience area preparation needed. In some cases, they made extra money by letting the Fair use the stage for other shows. What big props to use? You can stay with the older classics: Temple of Benares, Cutting a Girl in Sixths, Sub Trunk, Sword Basket, Chair Suspension, Broom Suspension. All of these can be done surrounded with just one assistant. The key is to think and anticipate your playing conditions and be prepared for the challenge. A magician seems to do “the Supernatural”. Is that really a good definition? I propose that it may be unhelpful to use that word in terms of magic and elsewhere. I prefer using the word “Mystery” and seeing the unexplainable as a process that is pointing toward the infinite of unknowns rather than a puzzle to be immediately and anxiously examined and explained. If we could explain everything in terms of predictable-scientific “cause and effect”, we would live hopeless trapped in a dull universe without freedom. Imagination and Intuition would be eaten up by pure math formulas and, as a math discipline, Statistics and Probability would no longer be needed. We could simply compute the future. There would be no uncertainty and you would know, today, the very day and hour you will die. Not even Mathematicians accept that concept of determinism. Kurt Gödel, established his Incompleteness Theorem which denies that Math can “know everything”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6del%27s_incompleteness_theorems

My understanding is that, historically, there was not nearly the bifurcation between the “natural and the supernatural” in western natural thought until the Enlightenment and the rise of modern science. Thomas Aquinas in his (1285) “Summa Theologica” Book 4 seems to suggest that a magician was using natural means to trick you. He did postulate a “Natural” and Supernatural” to explain church theology in terms of “reason”. His whole goal was to show that religious faith was not in conflict with reason. His synthesis was severely tested in Christianity (and all religion) in the 1800s and that led to the Christian Existentialism of Soren Kierkegaard and later Karl Barth(and others) , when the break between faith and reason was complete in popular thought. This is much of what Kierkegaard’s “Leap of Faith” and “Barth’s “God is totally other” is about. Some who rejected this uncertainty became, in the Abrahamic Faith group, Fundamentalists, who find certainty in their perfect religious texts. If you think about it. In the thought process , the “Supernatural” is just an upper story of the Natural. Literally the world means “beyond natural” (“Super” implies “above” or “over” which is typically interpreted as “an extension of”! This is where the understanding goes off the rails) . Aquinas would not have asserted that you can understand or manipulate the supernatural but it was the beginning of a disastrous direction the Western philosophy/ theology. The Supernatural becomes an extension of the Natural and thus can be manipulated just like the Natural. All “Mystery” (read this as “uncertainty”) disappears. The world is merely God’s Cosmic magic trick on you. God knows the secret but you don’t. Well, maybe you can buy the secret, find it hidden in mystical religious texts or work to find it in a laboratory. Recall the CERN

scientists finding “The God Particle”! We found the Higgs Boson , the “God Particle”. All it did was lead to many more uncertainties along the asymptote of human thought. A healthy mind should embrace “mystery”. A healthy imagination and appreciation of awe and intuition is good. Also, we should not automatically reject the experience that information can come to us from a seemingly external and unexplained source. Young mathematician Ramanujan is a fascinating example of this https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Srinivasa_Ramanujan His life was dramatized in the movie, “The Man Who knew Infinity”. I propose restoring Mystery. Mystery is like an asymptote. It is a process, a vector that points in an unknowable direction. It is not necessary to follow it to the end because if you grasp the direction, that tells you enough. Our finite-observation limit, restricts our ability at quantification and qualification. A perverted understanding of the “supernatural model” of Aquinas has no mystery. Aquinas would reject it and so should all thinking people. As finite creatures humans cannot fully grasp the totality of the physical world. We live in our own physics “locality”, between the seemingly infinitely small and the seemingly infinitely large. Spacetime itself (I am using a term from Einstein-Riemann-Minkowski-Poincare) needs a better way to be understood in basic thought by those without a higher Physics education. The GPS in your smartphone can not use Newtonian-Lagrangian-Hamiltonian mechanics. It is so Spacetime sensitive that the algorithms of the satellites and the software in your cell phone must use Einstein’s Relativity Field Equations to be anywhere near accurate enough for you! This is the differential equation (an equation that uses multiple “rates of change” and “amounts of change”) . The space curvature tensor is on the left (expressed in “R” which is in Ricci Calculus) the energy -stress tensor is on the right. GPS works by triangulating the Spacetime of satellites to your position. The trigonometry of the relationships, corrected to the Spacetime changes, reveals your precise location within feet. Our awareness of the infinities, on either side of our “locality” keep expanding. We used to not think the universe was so big/old (get the “Space time” connection?). On the other end of infinity, we did not know that things could be so small! Now we know there are smaller things that make up atoms, fermions and bosons. Time can be so small that it is Planck Time which relates to Planck Length which is so small that it makes a “New York Minute” seem like an eternity. Our inability to grasp the concepts is why we use math models. Careful math analysis reveals that everything operates like a wave on the smallest level! (the de Broglie hypothesis) Paul Dirac implied that all spacetime is always coming in and out of being! This is a dazzling insight! https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dirac_sea Is the fundamental physical reality just vibrating strings? Because much of my undergrad work was in engineering and math, I

frequently use math concepts as guidelines. Photo of Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein discussing Physics Take Heisenberg’s “Uncertainty” principle. The word “uncertainty” is a misleading German translation of what should be “unsharpness”. It says that you cannot know the position and velocity at the same time when dealing with waves. Fourier analysis with some fundamental calculus demonstrates this issue. I wish most modern people could look at performing magic like they embrace music or painting, sculpture, poetry, a play, architecture. It is not , at first, a presentation to be deconstructed into the methodology but the totality of an emotional impact that leaves a revelatory impression. Aristotle, in Poetics 1 explained the purpose of the play was to drive you to an emotional catharsis and balance your hubristic extremes. (control both slothful pride and heroic pride. Both are different sides of hubris). Magic should help audiences feel “humble” and not challenge them to the arrogance of trying to explain the expression of mystery, which is precisely the opposite of the demands of “The Masked

Magician". We as performers ask people to give us their valuable time. In some way, they should be better, more "human" when we have completed our performance. Do they feel better? Do they learn better? Are they more linked to others? In some cases they may identify with the heroic nature of the magic performer who makes national monuments and jet airplanes vanish and transverses cultural landmarks, like The Chinese Great Wall or does the person feel like they have been linked in an identity with a Messianic figure who comforts the poor on the streets, fills coffee cups with loose change, makes dead birds come to life and survives physical ordeal like 40 days in the Wilderness (or in a glass box or encased in ice). The magician/illusionist who can cultivate such mythic proportions and probe inward into your awareness and worldview (weltanschauung) moves closer to the ultimate role of "a magician" to enchant you to be a more fully connected constructive human and away from puzzles and tricks. So, this is my way of encouraging you to embrace the Abrahamic Traditions of Hanukkah and Christmas. On a child's level they are stories of the miraculous and adults should see so much more value in them.

*****Have a great New Year everyone!Dennis Phillips

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[November 2018 Meeting: A Lady Floats!](#)

Posted on [November 28, 2018](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 "The Bev Bergeron Ring" SAM Assembly #99November 2018 Meeting Mike Matson gaveled the meeting to order. Several visitors were present: Mark Gagnon from Vermont, Joshua Stenkamp and Mark O'Brien and ,son, Alexander. Mark lived in Orlando and performed on cruise ships, Busch Garden, Circus World and Nickelodeon TV before moving to the New York area. We had an interesting discussion about the magic illusions in the stage show at the old Circus World attraction here in Central Florida. Bev Bergeron had a story about Owens and Les Smith providing the illusions, Dan had stories about working there as the illusionist and Mark O'Brien also performed there. The biggest mystery is that no one is sure what ever happened to several truckloads of illusions when the show closed. Bev Bergeron added more to his last "Teach In". It was how to use notecards with slate moves to achieve some incredible effects. He showed how to make writing appear on what seemed like empty cards and a three card monte. Dan Stapleton did the magic history of Sneaky Pete Remco magic sets. He showed the first, second and third sets and some history of each. Mike Matson's "Theory and Thaumaturgy" topic was "Repeatability" and how many effects do repeat themselves but each action should build up the tension. He used Cups and Balls, Linking Rings and Card's Across as examples. Sebastian Mitdtvaage had a mini-lecture on his card magic. A card morphed and three cards that were merely thought of were revealed. Sebastian explained lots of the subtleties in getting the best out of the presentation. Dennis Phillips opened the performance portion of the meeting with an Abbotts Super X Levitation, assisted by the lovely Marah. Trey Talo revealed a spectator selected card with a snap change followed by a spelling reveal. Bob Swaddling enchanted us with his British humor and style . He had a delightful card effect built around special times of your life and what the cards mean. He also did a clever Three Card Monte. Bryan Sullivan did an extended one-rope routine in the style of Tabary. Ends of the ropes and knots appeared and disappeared. Paul Hallas also enchanted us with his polished British style. Two spectators selected

cards and Paul introduced a special pair of glasses where he could see the cards people selected. Eventually, the spectators could see the cards too.

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170“The Bev Bergeron Ring” December 2018“Advertising is to a genuine article what manure is to land, – it largely increases the product.”

— P. T. Barnum, [The Humbugs of the World](#) Okay...Christmas 2018 and the statute of limitations has long since expired and confession is good for the soul. This is about what I got involved in during much of the Summer of 1969. I was out of college for the Summer. AFROTC classes were finished. Kids my age were going to Woodstock. I was traveling around the Mid Atlantic with what was essentially a Carny Promotion. The late Phil Barr (professionally known as Phil Chandler) was a Dayton, Ohio magician, illusionist and mud-show Circus Ring Master. His last years were with the Hoxie Circus. Somehow he got linked up with a promotions outfit out of Toledo to run their road operation. They had bought a straight box rig “Reefer” Truck (Trucking term for Refrigerated Unit) and had opening panels fitted on the sides along with doors. The idea was that they would sell their 3 day weekend promotion to car dealers and shopping centers. The truck would be set up and they would heavily advertise that they would “Freeze a Living Woman in a Block of Ice for Three Days!” and you were invited to witness the marvel if she survived. They would buy 4 30 to 60 second remote cut-ins on the local Top 40 or Country Western Station for 3 days. Recall that weekends are the slow commercial time for broadcast radio so the time was cheap. I would usually do an interview on the Friday Morning show and then do all the live cut ins from the car dealership by telephone line. On a couple of occasions we used a “Marti Unit” which is an FM voice quality radio link. Phil was using his wife (his first wife, Cathy) as the lady frozen in ice. A couple of years ago I relinked with Phil’s daughter Lauren, who now lives in Sarasota and I filled her in on some details that happened in her childhood while her parents were away. Lauren grew up to be an attractive woman and helped Roy Huston with illusions in his final years. Before you get freaked out about the ice stunt, it was a set up that happened long before David Blaine made the same stunt one of his. Phil’s wife was actually inside a white-silver Styrofoam and metal insulated casket 30 inches by 30 inches by 7 feet with a foot square viewing window and it was equipped with a heated ventilation system, telephone, two way microphone system, and alarm. The ice was slabs a half foot by two feet by three feet that we froze in rubber molds. We froze a few to be only one inch thick and those went on top and the side where the viewing window was. So... On Friday afternoon we set up the gaff and left the lid off the top and briefly opened the side of the truck when the crowd was ready and I introduced Phil and did the short radio commentary. The woman climbed into to casket and he and an assistant slid the lid and then ice over and she was sealed in. The big side doors closed and we opened the access doors with stairs so spectators could walk up and through the truck and see her in the casket window. We had a fake medical monitoring panel supposedly showing breathing rate and pulse and a recording that played somber slow ethereal music with a male voice that cut in every minute and said “Everything is A-OK”. That was a line borrowed from the NASA Astronauts. There was a lot of wonderful psychology in the whole promotion. I would do the cut-ins in my announcer voice inviting people to come down and advising on her medical condition. “We have a call into our medical staff advising on signs of hypothermia.”, “Her heart rate has slowed. We don’t think we have to bring her out.” The question everyone asks is “Did she eat and use the bathroom”... Of course, she did! We would close the door when the crowd was low to “put down some salt and saw dust because the truck bed is slippery” and she would climb out for 10 minutes, go in a port-a-potty on the other side of the ice block and have a hamburger and fries. Phil also had a medical bag

and white lab coat and would hang a stethoscope around his neck and I would tell the crowd, we needed the doctor to go in and talk to her through the intercom and look at her skin color. She seems a bit blue. The inside of the casket had a blanket and drinks and all the comforts of an RV bunk bed. The stunt was all in the perception. Final Day... We had a big coming out ceremony. Music would blare, she would struggle to get out. The assistant wore the doctors coat, faked like he was listening to her heart. She would sit in a lawn chair with a blanket as Phil recounted that a record has been set and we would take her to be checked out at a medical facility, but she appeared to be okay, maybe a little dehydrated. (This is almost identical to the David Blaine stunt) We once had an irate old guy who came up to Phil after the stunt and said, "That whole thing is a fake!" Phil tensed up. Then the old guy said, "She wasn't in here for 3 days!" Then he said, "She went in Friday ay 3PM and got out at 3PM on Sunday. That's only 48 hours, which is two days." Phil lowered his voice and head like a Preacher talking to a repentant sinner in church and said, " Dear Brother, Jesus was crucified on Friday and arose on Sunday before dawn! The Bible calls that 3 days! We all believe that was three days! Do you want to argue with God?" The old guy looked like he had been punched in the stomach and said, "Oh, I see! I had it wrong, Bless you sir!" I almost fell over laughing to myself.... I love a good con! Phil Chandler (Barr) magician, stage illusionist and circus ringmaster. Philip E. Chandler originally from the Dayton Ohio area, acquired his enthusiasm for magic at age 7, after watching Harry Blackstone Jr.'s stage show. After graduating high school, Phil joined Dr. Franklin's illusion and spook show which played fairs, theatre and drive-ins. After which he toured with a circus and hosted horror movies on local television stations. (WHIO-TV) and did a children's TV show. Phil then toured with Jack Baker's (Dr. Silkini) for eight years and stated "I loved every minute of it". After leaving Baker, Phil started his own and framed an illusion show which he toured it in the United States, Puerto Rico and Santa Domingo. In 1973 Phil and his wife Linda joined the Hoxie Bros. Circus where he served as ringmaster and his illusions were featured in the performance. Audiences attending the circus in the centennial year of 1975 will not have forgotten the opening production were the dapper Phil, in his top hat and red tates sang "It's a Grand Old Flag". Phil toured in the early eighties as Merlin the Magician on Allan C. Hill's stage production of "The Amazing World of Magic". Later in the eighties Chandler opened "Merlin's Magic Den" in St. Augustine Florida. He later work with Bob Childress' Hendricks Bros. Circus. Philip E. Chandler passed away quietly on October 10, 2002 in Gibsonton Florida, after completing the season with Bob Childress' Hendricks Bros Circus. Phil's two daughters: Lauren and Natalie today: I remember when "Caravan" was the theme song to every night club magic act. Bill Neff and Jack Gwynn and others used it. Now the name "Caravan" is the beginning of a political argument. Go figure. The familiar brass tune starts at :58 into the cut.. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TS-G4UQTfUo> Magicians take note... this is a great classic magic track. I was please to be a part of the November 10th Circus Picnic Show. Cast bows from last week's Circus Fan of America Tent #137 circus picnic show, Polk City, Florida. Produced by Dan Stapleton.

l-r Juggler/sword swallower Ted Campbell, Ringmaster Chris Connors, balancer "Csaba", Mimi (silks), Lydia the elephant, Dennis Phillips (plate spinning), Dan Stapleton (magic). It was a coming true of the promise at the end of all circus shows, "May all your days be circus days!" We lost another icon of magic on November 24th. Ricky Jay. He was a trend setting and influential to today's style card magic. Jay also acted in films and TV shows such as "Boogie Nights," "House of Games" and "Deadwood," died Saturday in Los Angeles. He was 72. He appeared in several David Mamet movies, including "House of Games,"

“The Spanish Prisoner,” “Things Change,” “Redbelt” and “State and Main. ”In the 1997 James Bond film “Tomorrow Never Dies,” Jay played a cyber-terrorist to Pierce Brosnan’s Bond. He also provided the narration for movies such as Paul Thomas Anderson’s “Magnolia.” His one-man Broadway show, “Ricky Jay and His 52 Assistants,” was recorded for an HBO special in 1996. With Michael Weber, he created the Deceptive Practices company, which provided solutions to movies and TV productions such as the wheelchair that hid Gary Sinise’s legs in “Forrest Gump.” They also worked on films including “The Prestige,” “The Illusionist” and “Oceans Thirteen.” I am also sad to lose my friend, Richard Robinson. He published a book, 20 years ago, by Dick Biow and me on the Jarrow Bill in Lemon effect and he was known for his All Magic Guide Website. Richard ROBINSON-

Died on November 15, 2018 at home in Manhattan. Robinson, born in New Britain, CT, was a graduate of the Loomis School and attended Yale University until several months before graduation, dropped out to join a rock and roll band. After moving to Manhattan in the late 1960s, he worked as a record executive at Buddah Records, had a syndicated music column with the Bell McClure syndicate, was a late night disc jockey on WNEW-FM, and hosted a syndicated radio show. Additionally, he directed early videos for The Ramones and Blondie, produced albums for the Flamin’ Groovies, Lou Reed and David Johansen, wrote 13 books — including “The Video Primer,” books on music, kung fu and magic, and co-authored Dick Clark’s autobiography. He was a contributor to Creem Magazine and edited the rock magazines Hit Parader and Rock Scene. In the late 1990s, he quit the music business to perform as a magician and run several magic web sites . He is survived by his wife and author Lisa Robinson.

THE SECRET TOOLS MAGICIANS USE TO FOOL YOU(Source: NEWS 360 online)You’ve probably seen magicians pull playing cards from thin air, make silk handkerchiefs change colors, or cause cigarettes to vanish. What you likely didn’t notice – assuming the trick was successful – were the secret gadgets and modified props, called “gimmicks,” used to fool your eyes. From fake thumbs to silicone eggs, they only work by evading detection.

Louis De Belle exposes them in his new book Disappearing Objects. Many of the 32 gimmicks he spotlights belong to magicians in Italy who let him photograph them under the strict condition he not actually give away their tricks. “I made a vow not to break the number one rule of magic,” De Belle says, “though it’s not hard to google how a thumb tip works. ”Magic tricks, like the famous cups-and-balls routine, can be performed by simple sleight of hand, but magicians have also relied on gimmicks for centuries. In one mischievous monk’s 15th-century vellum notebook, he described how to attach a thin strand of hair to a hollow egg to make it look like it’s moving on its own. Today, amateur magicians share how-to’s on YouTube and buy cheap, China-made accessories on Amazon. Rigged decks make it easy to cut to the right card; thumb tips hide away hankies and coins; and “funkenrings” let you shoot fireballs from your hand, just like Iron Man. This world of illusion entranced de Belle in the early 2000s, when endurance artist David Blaine was busy pulling stunts and making headlines underwater. Though impressed, De Belle was more enamored by the old-school magicians working on street corners and in parlors to deceive spectators mere feet away. “It’s a pretty paradoxical act,” he says. “You’re aware of being deceived, yet you want to be fooled. ”The subject struck De Belle as a natural follow-up to Besides Faith, his prior exploration of Italy’s \$5 billion religious paraphernalia market. Last year, he began visiting

magic shops by day and venturing out at night to the unmarked basement venues in Milan where magicians perform. At first, they shunned him. But after studying enough magic to talk the lingo, he gained access to a supportive circle of people who continually traded tips about which gimmicks might improve their acts. "Illusionists don't only spend years practicing, they also change and customize their tools," De Belle says. "I wanted to celebrate this enormous yet invisible work, by giving these marvelous tiny creations a chance of being seen." The magicians preferred to remain anonymous but allowed De Belle to borrow their gimmicks between shows. He carried the objects to his studio, where he shot them against a plain backdrop with a Canon 1DX and large soft box for even lighting. His favorites? The fake body parts and flesh-toned contraptions fitted with tiny metal switches and pulleys – especially those customized to fit the performer's hand. "To me, they represent the ultimate secrecy, since they're used right before the spectator's eyes," he says. De Belle preserves the mystery – likely to the consternation of some viewers. The images become themselves a kind of magic: "We know it's a trick," De Belle says, "but we still don't know how it works." Dennis

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[Halloween 2018 Ring Meeting and Show](#)

Posted on [October 30, 2018](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

President Mike Matson gaveled the October meeting to order. New Member Joe Fox was welcomed. Bev Bergeron did his Teach-in with a Seance theme. He made Houdini's signature appear on a card and a pair of handcuff spring open.

Mike Matson did another of his Theory and Thaumaturgy mini-lectures on the importance of theming effects and a show. He used a theme with the Professor's Nightmare. Dan Stapleton announced the first Magic History and Collector's Conference in the South. September 6-8 in Orlando . Open Registration begins January 1. More details coming. Nathan Coe Marsh opened the meeting show with a small white handkerchief that disappeared while wedged in a stem glass and covered by a blue handkerchief on top. He followed by producing a shot glass of whiskey from the blue hank.

Dr. Ken Schreibman presented a clever cell phone effect where a selected card appeared for a short time in the eyes of Houdini on everyone's cell phone. Ryan Steiner told a haunted story about a haunted cancer ward in what is now a resort hotel. He knew who had selected a diamond out of several other stones in a bag. Roger Reid showed a homebuilt themed Square Circle with a Jack O' Lantern as the outer circle and a tube on the inside, Greg Solomon had a clever gag with a rubber ear that he uses when a child asks if he can pull something from his ear. He then showed a three rat monte where spectators could not find the one that squeaked after they were shuffled. Michael Flanigan presented a math trick and was able to predict the total of several random numbers called out by the audience. Dan Stapleton did a couple of eerie effects where ashes appeared on a spectators hand and a voodoo effect when a spectator burned cigarette hole in a paper hand drawing and it matched the locations of a blister on his hand. Brian Sullivan did a rubber band effect where two bands melted into one and then a series of coins across with coins ending up in a folded dollar bill.

Dennis Phillips concluded the show with a car key that vanished in his hand and a medical explanation of the disease of porphyria which he said is the historical basis for many vampire stories. He then did the classic MAK Magic Vampire Block release after a wooden stake is driven through the block. Dennis Phillips Bev with mysteriously opened handcuffs

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring”

November 2018

Two ladies were hanging out together and one was depressed. “What’s wrong?”

The depressed one replied, “I’ve been married four times and every one of my husbands has passed away.

The other lady asked, “What did they used to do?”

The depressed lady replied, “Well, my first husband was a millionaire, the second was a magician, the third was an evangelist, and the fourth was a mortician.”

And the other said, “Oh, one for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go.” Here is a blast from the past. 1983 to be exact. There was a local part time illusionist, J.L. Harding., whose big show that he produced every year was a fund-raiser in Apopka (at a Methodist Church). He got many volunteer acts. That year Michael Ram and Nadine, Wallace Murphy, Gary Kornfield and I were on the show. You can see Mike’s homebuilt mirror Sword Box and Sub Trunk and his night club table. During the heyday of Malls, Michael ,and his wife Nadine, had a busy route playing Mall shows.

He did a great job with their husband and wife act. J.L. moved to Atlanta with his wife “Stardust”. His day job was as the warehouse manager for Goodyear here in Orlando. He transferred to Georgia (early 90s) and disposed of his illusions at a one day garage sale. I recall it was more like a “What can you give me so that I do not have to haul the stuff to the landfill”.

He did have some nice home built pieces. J.L. had a good heart and his yearly fundraisers were a benefit to the community. On this show ,J.L. was doing his Illusion act, so he wanted me to be the Escape Artist of the show, so I did my Comedy Siberian Chain Escape and wiggled out of a Strait Jacket.

The World War One Flu Epidemic and the Decline of Vaudeville Typically, magicians and illusionists blame the decline of Vaudeville on the rise of radio and talking motion pictures.

I believe that this is only part of the story and possibly not the death-knell of vaudeville. The continuation of the vaudeville era after the devastating and socially destabilizing years of World War One was problematic and greatly affected by the massive 1918 influenza outbreak, that killed millions worldwide. The forced closing of places of public gatherings and its effects on live theatre are all documented. Vaudeville never recovered the six month shock because the revenue stream was too marginal to maintain nationwide chains , with touring acts ,in both the rural and urban areas. Urban theaters began to become ethnic, as newly arrived small town and rural World War One factory workers formed urban isolated communities. This was all a result of the industrial buildup of World War One. The Harlem Revival (“Cotton Club”) and Jazz and Swing resulted. The country began to lose mass culture. Motion pictures were cheaper to show and by 1920 free radio and phonograph records were beginning to occupy the public’s time as a cheap alternative. And then talking movies finished off the last of the Vaudeville circuits as the owners converted the theaters to movie houses. Vaudeville spanned fifty years of American history and yet few deal with the effects of the Great War and Influenza. The most popular form

of entertainment got battered by the encroachment of technology in the form of movies, radio and ultimately television and until medical science began to understand and be able to treat epidemics, there was much fear in public gatherings, especially during the winter Flu season, which was when the shows operated in the days before air-conditioning. In the 1920s , America began the slow shift to an economic

and culturally polarized nation. I noticed a marked decline in the costume rental business beginning in the mid-to-late 1980s with the rise of the HIV epidemic. Many people were fearful of trying on and wearing used costumes even though they were all cleaned and sanitized. The shift in the costume business was to pre-made and packaged sale costumes (made off shore) . This fear , combined with the economic decline of Middle class incomes and political polarization led to a less happy cultural climate. The party atmosphere , that we know as the 70s Disco Era, was ushered in by the end of the Viet Nam War and mature Baby-Boomers and the monetary bubbles created by easy credit and optimism. That faded in the mid to late -80s as a series of periodic credit collapses (S&L late 80s, Dot Com 1990 and the 2008 Financial Great Recession) Coupled with this is the revival of Tribalism, Nativist Exclusion and the death of Mass Culture. Show Business does not work well without Mass Culture consumption. The Music Business relied of the mass culture of AM Top 40 radio and Broadcast TV on a limited number of channels in the pre-cable world.

Technology replaced all those and today we have only Niche markets, few of which generate enough impact to have a Mass Culture. David Copperfield was the last of the Mass Culture Magicians. He rode in on the late Disco exhilaration and datedness of Doug Henning's look and style with an 80s subdued sophistication. Rainbows and brightly colored props gave way to the black paint and chrome of the David Mendoza, Bill Smith , Willie Kennedy Industrial look for Copperfield. David used the final days of the dominance of network television and yearly specials of vanishing, manipulating and exploding cultural landmarks to develop a mass following that he used to sell tickets to his touring show. His era collapsed in the mid-1990s with the rise of the Internet, many TV channels and cultural cynicism and anger. He was replaced by grunge magic and a more intimate close -up magic. Vaudeville in a limited form only survives in some places in Europe and destination resorts, like Las Vegas and cruise ships.

Magic is often a lot like this: Art for art sake. Equivoque is the word that most magicians recognize as "A Magician's Force". This is the technique of making the spectator think that they have a free choice by you know what you want them to choose and manipulate them to take what you want. I was recently talking to a couple of professional magicians and we were talking about the technique. I told them that I always explain it to magicians as the same thing as asking someone to choose which current author of mentalism books they prefer, Phil Goldstein or Max Maven. The PATEO Force is usually credited to Roy Baker. It stands for (P)ick (A)ny (T)wo – (E)liminate (O)ne. One of the great examples of this technique was when the deep voice of Eugene Burger combined with a Robert Neal story. Eugene laid many cards face down on the table and said that people were dying in the small Medieval town and people began to accuse others of being responsible for the deaths. Eugene had a spectator pick two cards and he turned over one. It was the Queen of Diamonds, the town's seamstress. Was she a witch? No soon she died. All the cards had a profession in the village. It got down to the only card that was not dead and Burger turned it over and it was the one who brought the plague, the ace of spades. I thought that this was a great example of storytelling and the PATEO Force. One suggestion on Equivoque: If you are doing it multiple

times, break up the way you ask them to choose so your method is not obvious. Like Max Maven's B-Wave, the application of Equivoque can be simple and yet powerful. Combining Ballroom Dance with Magic <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ANzuljx5oE> Be a part of magic history as Magicpalooza presents the first Magic History and Collector's Conference in the south. September 6-8. Open Registration begins January 1 but you can reserve your room now at the lovely Holiday Inn Resort Orlando-Lake Buena Vista (five minutes from Disney World). Rooms only \$99...mention Code: MHG when booking your room. It's FLORIDA! Make it a vacation!

Dennis Phillips