

February 2015 Meeting Notes

Posted on [February 1, 2015](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring” SAM Assembly #99 February 2014 Meeting

Prior to our official meeting, member Wallace Murphy presented a lecture on card magic with handling tips and defining card worker’s terms.

President Craig Schwarz gaveled the meeting to order and first up was the program opener, William Green. Green presented some excellent balloon animal magic. He regularly performs at The Entertainment Spot on I-Drive in the tourist section of Orlando.

He borrowed a dollar bill and turned it into a two-dollar bill and finally into two one-dollar bills.

The business meeting opened with a list of where magic can be seen locally and upcoming events. We had one guest, David Stahl from Minneapolis invited by Phil Schwartz.

Bev Bergeron did his mini-lecture with an impromptu Copper and Silver coin effect with no gimmicks. It was an oldie-but-goodie and Bev explained all the moves.

Phil Schwartz presented Magic History Moment #64, “What is true and what is a hoax”? Phil presented a mystery and left the listeners to make up their own mind. He began with S.W. Erdnase’s book, *Artiface, Ruse and Subterfuge at the Card Table-A Treatise on the Science and Art of Manipulating Cards*. Of course, the identity of Erdnase remains magic’s greatest secret. Phil then said a book was recently discovered in the Cecil Green Library at Stanford University by Canadian close-up performer Tyler Wilson. It was dated 1877, 25 years before Erdnase. The title is *The 52 Wonders-Cards Manipulated by Science*. The author is C.H. Wilson. It is thought by some to be connected with the Erdnase classic. Phil then gave claims about the book and problems with authenticating the book. Some say the book is a hoax. After an excellent job presenting all the evidence, Phil left it to each person to decide.

Mark Fitzgerald began the monthly Ring show. Three black and three red cards changed their orders in piles. He concluded with the rope effect, “Soma” which is a fabulous Professor’s Nightmare type effect on steroids. It accomplishes things that Bob Carver’s effect cannot.

Dennis Phillips presented a puzzle where he could tie a knot in a rope while holding both ends but no audience volunteers could tie it. He followed with his version of “Quarte” by Gaetan Bloom. It was themed as a horserace prediction. Instead of playing cards, horserace tickets with big numbers were used.

Robin Dawes, a guest from Canada impressed the crowd with some great card magic. Selected cards turned face down and were found at different locations in the deck. He concluded with a silent effect using an audience member. It was called “Mirror image” and the volunteer mirrored everything the performer did using a different color deck. Miraculously, both selected the same card from a shuffled deck.

Finally, Ravelli closed the show with some juggling, knots in a rope and a ring-and-rope routine. He called up an audience volunteer and had him hold sticks and Ravelli spun 5 plates on the sticks.

Dennis Phillips, Secretary

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

March 2015

I kind of thought that stand-up comedy would suffer from the Internet because people seem to know more about the craft of stand-up than ever before. I thought it would seem trite. Kind of like if you know more about magicians, you wouldn't love them.

– Jerry Seinfeld-

Before the Internet, people knew almost nothing about magicians (even before seeing any bad ones) and they still didn't love them. Who “likes” anyone who fools you? Magicians were linked with hack Card Monte crooks, egomaniacal hypnotists, geek street jugglers, and every other obscure novelty entertainment format you can name.

The TRICK is to not become TOO famous as a magician. As soon as his fame was established, Doug Henning was ridiculed by comedians. Copperfield, Siegfried & Roy, Penn & Teller, have all become the object of jokes and disdain –on the Internet, on late night talk shows, and with a public who knows diddly about magic. Magic was blessed to have Johnny Carson (who was a magician and respected the art) hosting one of the last variety formats and he never made magicians the object of ridicule and score as David Letterman did. The public likes comedians who may do magic and they respect competent magic entertainers. They don't love any of them. They don't swoon over magicians.

When dance aficionados talk rapturously about dance as an “art”, or actors refer to their “art”, the people will accept that as a given. In fact, recently the United States Congress did declare magic to be an art and that was welcomed by magicians as a step toward making grant money easier to get. But the public's perception of MAGIC automatically devolves into images of “kids playing with tricks” that they were expected to abandon when they grow older and “mature”; and weird eccentrics in outdated formal attire making spectacles of themselves on the stage; and by YouTube videos of magic which are turned into an embarrassing hash by either incompetent amateurs “exposing” tricks (either deliberately or through incompetence) or magic dweebs “talking shop” under each clip for all the world to see. Such a firmware impression, built into the American

Mindset, made it easy for Carl Ballantine to get laughs or Johnny Thompson and Pam or The Amazing Jonathan and now Ed Alonzo. To the public all magicians are comedic idiots until they prove otherwise.

Sometimes I ponder these concepts...

“19th Century Magic in a 21st Century World: Why?”

“Can Magicians Survive in the World of High Tech Magic: iPhone app trick fatigue?” (I am there already)

“Basic Magic Psychology: How to Float a Lightbulb in an LED world”

“The Top Five Anachronisms of Magic”

Dealers, Clubs, Magazines, Conventions, and Social Media

“Magic on YouTube: Way Too Much of a Good Thing?”

“Can we fooling the Aliens”

Extraterrestrial Technologies verses Magic- My thumb tip against your photon torpedo

Can Sentient Computers Be fooled by Magic?

I am told that Apple's Siri has Tarbell, Annemann, Steinmeyer and Osborne Plans in her data banks and can answer all your questions about them (In your dreams)

“Senator” Clark Crandall was a kind of Don Rickles toward magicians but always kind to volunteers. One of my favorite Crandallisms was his reference to “a fellow who had joined the local magic club to find out how the breakaway-wand worked”.

If there's anything I detest, it's an over-the-top You-Tube video “demo” of magic or mentalism. This is especially true when they try to make it a Hollywood Movie with 5 minutes of soundtrack using Carl Orff's Carmina Burana “O Fortuna” (used in 90% of Hollywood Preview Trailers). A Hollywood-type, deep-voiced God-sounding announcer says, “In a world where anything is possible, everything is possible, even the impossible...” Oh Please! Give me a Break! Am I watching a demo or am I watching a magic trick? Then there is the other extreme. A dry-as-sawdust dealer's presentation such as you see at a local magic convention, whereby the routine we see is completely missing its potential drama. But in this case the cardinal sin is that it is being shown before a lay audience of YouTube watchers. Let's heighten the argument of my revulsion by going ‘all out’ with about the most dramatic piece of (unfortunately fictional) magic

imaginable: We see a YouTube clip where several zombie-like spectators, completely devoid of any emotion whatsoever (hence the ‘zombie’ appellation) are witness to a bizarre-looking magician who slowly, slowly, slowly, rises into the air... and then, before what SHOULD be totally astonished eyes, he melts into a ghost-like apparition of himself, and in the twinkling of an eye — *is no more*. Now of course every person seeing this YouTube clip will just go “meh...” in the sensible belief that it was all just a bargain-basement Video Special Effect. This opinion is strengthened by the stoic NON-reaction of the spectators IN the video. But even if it had actually been done ‘live’... why, then, are the spectators in the video looking like utterly bored members of the ‘walking dead’? In the case of that Russian Roulette spike effect (we magicians have seen it often) we could imagine the performer giving a preamble at the start of the video (not shown here, I’m making it up) and that does not have any spectators on the set yet, that would run thusly:

[Magician addressing the camera] “What we are about to witness is something quite astonishing. I will be presenting a magic routine that has all the emotional power and drama of the most incredibly impossible thing you could ever witness in a magic act. BUT!! — Beyond the trick itself... for it is, after all, only a trick...you will see some spectators up beside me who will participate in making some selections without prompting or mental coercion of ANY kind. And yet! As the trick commences to its startling conclusion, you will see NO EMOTIONAL REACTION WHATSOEVER from the people up beside me. It will seem as if these people were occupied with wishing they were, oh, I don’t know — at home... at the beach... or even over at *Farmer Jones’ Used Car Lot watching the chrome rust*. — ANYWHERE in fact, but up HERE on the stage beside me. ...To that, I ask you in all sincerity, ‘What would be more puzzling — the utterly astonishing magic routine itself, or the *totally zoned-out NON reaction of the volunteers?*”

In the case of the spike trick (and in the very best mentalism) the over-the-top *reactions* of onlookers (and participators!) is every bit as entertaining as the effect itself. Unlike conventional stage illusions where a polite audience doesn’t ever “freak out”, mentalism demands something more. Or should I say, CLOSE UP mentalism demands more. What got everyone (critics included) excited about David Blaine’s first TV Special was that he exploited that insane reaction to the fullest extent. The home viewer was entertained as much (if not more) by the goofballs going ballistic with stunned disbelief, than by the trick itself. ... And so a piece of “deadpan mentalism” on a YouTube clip totally undermines what it COULD be, and SHOULD be, an out-of-this-world *entertainment experience*.

Of course, the whole problem is that there is a limit to this emotional voyeurism. It gets old really fast and demands a new magician personality frequently. That is because the star is not the magician but the random people.

Which brings me back to the point that magicians are just not loved by an audience the way a singer is. Darren Romeo, when he played Busch Gardens, in Tampa, a few years ago, tried to get teens age girls to pass out and scream their brains out like they did for The Beatles and big pop music acts. How did he try it? By being both a singer and magician. So far all that got him was a contract in Pigeon Forge Tennessee playing

second fiddle to a white tiger and performing for the gray haired, bus tours and families on vacation. “Daddy do we have to see the magician, I want more ice-cream and can’t we see some more bears?”

Hans Klok ,the blond Aryan god, who can do 15 illusions in 30 seconds played Vegas and the producers hired Pamela Anderson as the main attraction.

No one really loves a magician.

Dennis