

November 2015 Ring Meeting

Posted on [November 25, 2015](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 "The Bev Bergeron Ring" SAM Assembly #99 November 2015 Meeting

Club President Craig Schwarz called the meeting to order by noting that most of our Board was not in attendance. Vice President Craig Fennessy was enjoying (?) a snowstorm somewhere in the Midwest, Treasurer and Ring namesake Bev Bergeron and his wife Alouise were cruising, and Secretary Dennis Phillips and his wife, Cindy, were touring in Europe and luckily avoid the Paris bombing.

The club was reminded that of our upcoming general elections in December but that we so far have no new nominations for Board positions. President Schwarz suggested holding over this year's officials while making a list of folks interested in serving in the future who may transition into various posts as the year progressed (to be put to a full formal vote next month). The magicians in Central Florida are looking forward to May 27-29, 2016 for Magicpalooza, the Florida Magic Association Convention being held here in Orlando.

Exciting news was revealed regarding two lectures planned for early next year, Nathan Kranzo on January 20 and Pop Haydn on February 10. The Kranzo lecture will be free to our paid members and Pop's lecture will be \$10 for the same group; both lectures are also open to non-members at a very reasonable \$15 fee.

Local magic events announced included the opening of a new magic shop and performance venue here in Orlando, Your Entertainment Spot; members were also informed that the shop is looking for local talent to perform on the shop's stage. Dan Stapleton gave an update on Magicpalooza coming up May 27-29, 2016. Dan revealed several scheduled performers; the list now includes Shimada, Celeste Evans, collector Mark Horowitz, Ariann Black, John Tudor, and Danny Orleans & Jan, with more to come.

Resident magic historian Phil Schwartz gave a brief review of the 14th Los Angeles Conference on Magic History which he attended. Next, he presented Magic History Moment #73, the Bonus Genius or Vanishing Doll. Phil recounted its history from the 1634 in Hocus Pocus Junior, the first magic-related book written from the standpoint of the magician. The trick was a staple of magic acts for 250 years until Bautier de Kolta invented the Multiplying Billiard Balls trick at the end of the nineteenth century. It was the first magic trick that magic craftsman and dealer, Floyd Thayer, recalled seeing as a young boy. Phil performed the trick using Thayer's "Little Red Riding Hood" vanishing doll. He showed eight other Thayer versions of the trick including a Doughboy, a sailor, a Flapper, a clown, a Scotsman, the Easter Bunny, a Devil and a Native American figure. The latter came with patter from Milt Larsen who called it, "The Vanishing American."

Also included in the evening were a number of magical performances. Dan Stapleton gave a brief teach-in demonstrating several tricks with paper money including a clever bill switch for beginners and a terrific torn and restored bill; Dan later also performed the O Henry card trick with a surprise double ending. The wonderful Bob Swadling demonstrated a Matchbox Mystery as well as a clever 5-Card Repeat, and Greg Solomon performed several items from his strolling repertoire including a fun Tree of Hearts card trick. Mike Matson showed his interpretation of Aldo Columbini's Rope Puzzle as well as a nifty lottery ticket card prediction, and Magnus closed the evening with a dangerous version of a spike-under-cup trick he called American Roulette (with credit given to Matthew Mello for the principle).

All in all, it was a lively, well attended meeting (despite the absent Board members), and we look forward to an equally packed house in December for our annual holiday party and gift exchange hosted by Jacki Manna. David Freeman (for Secretary Dennis Phillips)



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170 "The Bev Bergeron Ring" December 2015

*There is an old saying that I remember from college journalism class
on the rules for reporters:*

"If your mother tells you she loves you, get another source".

I have agreed to serve you again for another year as your monthly scribe for meeting notes and commentary. I recognize that our group is mostly made up of hobbyists and working professionals who also love magic.. I will try to stand up for the kind of magic that advances the art and makes us all proud.

My wife, Cindy, and I returned from a 10 day trip to Europe which included a few days in Barcelona along with a 7 day cruise on the Norwegian Epic, with stops in Naples, Rome, Florence, as well as Cannes and Nice, France. We left for Europe the very day of the Paris attacks. What timing!

We flew out of JFK to Barcelona. All the security was a lot tighter in Europe. We saw many military armed troops with machine guns and security police everywhere in Spain, Italy and France, but other than longer check points, we had no problems with movement.

By the time we got there, France had reopened their borders on a limited basis, so we had no issues. The guide pointed out rows of massive private jets at the Nice Airport which were all owned by oil sheiks. He said in a stoic voice reminiscent of

Albert Camus and the French Existentialists that, " They own almost everything here; they are here to stay". We were scheduled to stop at Palma, Majorca for the last night but gale force winds came up in Cannes and it took hours to hoist up the six tenders at our anchorage. When we headed south we were in full gale force winds. The Epic weighs 150,000 tons but it was a wine-cork in those seas. Cindy got sea sick. The medical team was handing out Meclizine (Dramamine) and that helped her. I noted that sanitation was fastidious from the beginning of the cruise. There is a great fear of communicable diseases on cruise ships, such as the Flu, MERS, Ebola, Noroviruses and MRSA. We had to go through a written and visual medical screening to get on the ship. Crews were constantly wiping down handrails and sanitizing and many hand-sanitizing stands were around. At every food point was a person with a sanitizer bottle to squirt in your hand.

The port at Palma was closed so we spent a day in the rough seas. I got to watch and meet Spanish comedy magician and ventriloquist, Christian Miro. He was one of the acts on the Epic.

<http://www.elmagoargentino.com/>

Christian was originally from Ushuaia, is a resort town on Argentina's Tierra del Fuego archipelago, at the southernmost tip of South America, nicknamed the "End of the World." He moved to Madrid, Spain in 1993. His personality reminded me very much of Niels Sayers, the talented Central Florida-based Spanish speaking magician. <http://www.nielssayers.com/>. Those of you who remember Senor Wences, know that a ventriloquism act can work very well in a combination of languages.

Miro was dressed in a business suit with the pants made into shorts and the sleeves shortened to elbow length. He was wearing a bright colored open collar shirt and flowered tennis shoes. In the show, he joked that he had just gotten back the suit from the ship's dry-cleaners. The show was done in the ship's "Headiners" Comedy Lounge and not on the main stage in the Epic Theater. So the performance area was like a lounge with a low one-step-up platform on one side and intimate to the audience.

He opened his 40 minute act by blowing up a white balloon and then popping it and in his hands was a bottle of wine. He walked into the crowd and gave it to a male spectator. Returning to the platform he asked for a volunteer in a good mood and said, "Someone who just got a bottle of wine should be very happy." He bought the man up on the platform and did a ventriloquism routine using Axtell's Hand microphone with moving lips. He asked the man what he name was and the man replied, "John". Christian said, "You need a stage name. How about Jennifer?" The lips said "Se". This became a running gag. Miro would say his name "John" and the lips would correct him with, "Jennifer". The routine revolved around teasing John and his wife about spending money and husband-wife humor. We were sitting in front of his wife and she was hysterical from laughing. He next brought up a woman and a man. He had the man shuffle the card deck and had her select and sign a card and he did a series are card to his pants-pocket moves, and even at one point the card the man was holding was her signed card. The routine ended with all the deck in Miro's pants pocket except for one card, her signed card which he was holding in his hand in a "mechanic's grip".

He then brought up a boy, who looked to be about 12. He opened a paper bag and said that it had only one balloon but it was any color balloon that the boy wanted. The child said, "red" and Christian brought out a pink balloon. He did all the standard kid's act balloon-blowing gags such as having the stretched balloon snap back and hit his nose, tying the knot and getting it stuck in his finger and finally him breaking the balloon in two and having both pieces fly off when he handed them to the boy. He asked for another color balloon and the boy said "blue" and Christian again brought out a pink balloon. It flew away while he was blowing up the balloon. Again, he asked for another color and tried to get the child to say pink and finally, to applause, the

child said “pink”. He made a dog out of the balloon and did dog tricks with the balloon, “Stand up” and “Play Dead”. He let the dog fall on the floor and when it was not playing dead enough he stomped on the balloon. In conclusion, he showed the paper bag empty and blew it up and when popping the bag, inside was the restored doggie balloon.

For his ventriloquism finale, he brought up a woman and three men and had them stand in a row. He said that he was going to give them all a different voice and instructed them to open and close their mouth when he tapped on their shoulder. In order to prove that he did not use a pre-recorded vocal track he asked for the audience to give him two words with three syllables. He got back “chimpanzee” and “banana”. He then introduced he voices. The woman had a deep voice. He tall man had a high voice. Another man had a goofy voice and the last man had a baby voice. He then had the sound technician play, “When the Saints Go Marching In” and each voice sang a stanza with the words “chimpanzee and banana” replacing some of the words.

He thanked the audience and concluded the show and explained that the following morning at 11 AM in the theater he would teach some simple tricks that anyone could do. I was surprised, but the theater had several hundred people ready to learn magic. He used a video wide-screen to teach. He taught the apparent “Bending Spoon” after-dinner effect and then a card prediction using the crisscross force. He actually did a high quality magician’s lecture explanation of all the psychology needed to make the force most effective. He then ended with the vanishing pencil and coin using the pencil on the ear misdirection to vanish the coin. He explained that he just barely had the time to do a simple card trick but did not have time to explain to explain it but if you wanted the explanation, he had a DVD for sale for \$20 that explained it and 20 other tricks they could do. It was an excellent ploy to sell DVDs and the line was long when I left the theater.

Miro carried no more than an attaché case with a folding table base and the audience thoroughly enjoyed all that he did. His winning personality, multi-lingual talents and ventriloquism made him a popular variety act. He was in a line-up of shows that included” Burn the Floor, a ballroom dance show ensemble, The Broadway and movie story: Pricilla Queen of the Desert, Soul Sensation: Motown Tribute and a Beatles Tribute band. The quality of all the acts and the production values on the Norwegian Epic was excellent.

I think that Lawrence Larouche (after 3 good tries) finally got his Steampunk version of this sawing-a-woman illusion done in the best way possible... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QC0jLKWrAxQ>

I keep trying to understand the current evolution of “the art look” of illusions... We went through Modern (Harbin-Wakeling-Gaughan- Steinmeyer), through Post Modern (Don Wayne, Mendoza, Bill Smith, Peter Marvey) to now Post-Post Modern,

which to me looks like Steam Punk or an odd Gypsy/Pirate look. (Dani Lary et. al.) Here is an example of a current look: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otesAp0QdUs>

Certainly, things are eclectic at this point in art history...until a prevailing art-look finalized the overall look that represent our age.

If you are into art and humanities, you will understand that all “Ages” have a “look” ... It is difficult to know what the “look” is until the Age is almost over! Take a look at fashions, design, architecture, politics, religion, economics etc.

I believe that we are moving into a different historic feeling... The pendulum of human history is swinging...

Here are the seven factors changing the face of magic as we knew it:

1. The Internet. The slayer of everything from print to brick-and-mortar stores is the go-to place for illusions. Neighborhood magic stores can’t compete. There is little understanding of all the subtleties of a live show.
2. The Internet, part 2: It is the medium of choice for those who can’t keep a secret. Hundreds of videos explain how tricks are done for the curious with no interest in the art of magic. The Web is robbing the magic from magic.
3. Lack of practice. A great act requires hours and hours of practice, a price few young illusionists are willing to pay.
4. One-hit wonders. Kids will buy a trick, fool their friends and immediately show them how it’s done. They’re pranksters, not magicians.
5. Amateurs trying to make a few bucks on the side turn the art into hokum-pocus. Famous acts continue to draw crowds, but magic’s popularity starts at the birthday-party level, where poor performances can resonate for years.

6. Pirates. An inventor can spend years developing an illusion, only to see knock-off versions all over the Web at half the price. China, Italy (and the 3rd World) share some blame, as well as customers happy to snag a cheap, if pirated, trick.

7. Reluctant magicians. Given the failing state of magic, experienced magicians prefer to keep their prized illusions to themselves, and designers see no profits in creativity and thus depriving future generations of the secrets and innovation needed to advance the art.

Dennis