

September 2015 Meeting

Posted on [September 29, 2015](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring” SAM Assembly #99 September 2015 Meeting

President Craig Schwarz called the meeting to order and reviewed the local Orlando venues where our members are performing. There are lots of upcoming magic events and

we are looking forward to May 27-29, 2016 for the Florida Magic Association Convention now called the Magicpalooza.

Phil Schwartz, our resident Magic Historian, presented his Magic History Moment # 70, “The Magic Of Philippe”. Jacques Noel Talon was born in France in 1802 and was a candy maker. He devised a lottery for bulk candy and did simple magic as he presented the lottery which led to changing his career into magic. He wore medieval sorcerer robes and a pointed hat during his elaborate show, which was different from other magicians. A young Scotsman named Macalister became his assistant and appeared as “Domingo”. Macalister was clever at building and made many things in Philippe’s show. Philippe toured around Scotland, England and moved back to France.

Jean-Eugene Robert Houdin sought him out to learn his tricks, especially the automata. His big show opened with a dark stage and a pistol shot and suddenly many lit candles on stage. He did the linking rings with 10 iron rings and an several automata. His closing trick was producing goldfish bowls from shawls followed by rabbits, ducks and chickens. Philippe is credited with giving it its nickname, the Morison Pill Box (the ball and vase where the entire ball reappears back in the vase). Phil concluded by showing this classic of magic using a very rare, turned-wood egg vase made by John McKinven.

Dennis Phillips led off the monthly show with a Jack Gwynne classic, the Anti-Gravity glasses. Two glasses seem float against a borrowed dollar bill. Greg Solomon had a card chosen and it turned face up in the deck. An ace of clubs turned to an ace of spades. He did amazing things with a blank deck and ended with a game show with cards. Dan Stapleton did an effect he called “of sight and sound”. He found a selected card by talking to the card and by sight.

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

October 2015

Vaudeville booking agent: “So why aren’t you playing somewhere with your two-man act”

*One guy says: We have sinus trouble”
nobody will sign us!”*

The other guy says: “Yep,

I have known a lot of out-of-work magicians. Failure to earn a living creates a sense of worthlessness. “Nobody wants me, boo hoo.” What follows in some magicians can be a desperate drive to simply rip off some other magician.

Sometimes too much of a need (money from performing) is not a good thing. Pat Boone came to mind. He is a model for what not to do.

Yes, he is a wealthy celebrity but in my mind he was a cheater. He mostly recorded Little Richard songs to make them more salable to white kids. That was just wrong.

Tutti frutti, oh rutti, Tutti frutti, oh rutti, Tutti frutti, oh rutti, Tutti frutti, oh rutti, Tutti frutti, oh rutti, Wop bop a loo bop a lop ba ba!

No doubt the most stirring musical lyrics in history.

Some years later, after he had successfully restored his disappearing hair, and after his pop-music career was over, Boone made a commercial for a reverse mortgage company. Then he became a spokesman for walk-in bathtubs. My Lord! How can someone of his stature do things like that. Then I remembered. He had ripped off Little Richard.

Pat floated a while in the wake of daughter Debbie's one hit, "You Light up my Life," a pretty good tune that was over-exposed but for a while it was fine. I kept thinking of the reverse mortgages and walk-in bathtubs that he pitched and "Tutti Frutti."

I like to eat as much as anyone else, perhaps more than most, but so far I have avoided doing stupid gigs, even for money. Boone may be to blame for that.

But back to the eating thing: I may have to reconsider. I will never try to sell you a walk-in bathtub, or mattress at 85 percent off. Really. Fifteen cents on the dollar. Give me a break. I won't tell you that you can have a car for \$219 a month, without telling you what the car really costs.

There are legitimate products and services. If you watch the national news at 6:30 you can learn about which of the many new drugs for problems you've never heard of are least likely to kill you. There are remedies for restless leg syndrome and dry mouth. Viagra and Cialis are good but call your doctor if the side effects last more than four hours. And on and on it goes. We do lots of things for money. We don't have to do anything for money. Maybe this is just the artist talking in me?

Here is one show that I never want to be seen on. I talk nothing away from Kostya Kimlat, Mac King, Eric Jones and the other great magicians who have appeared on the show.

In spite of some excellent performers and great routines, I hate the P&T Fool Us show. In fact, I hate watching most of what magic on TV has become. If it is not "fooling you", then it is another Magic series with 90 second clips with no character development which invites you to only ask yourself, "How did (he or she) do that?" Or it is slick camera moves with stoges which could never be done live.

The problem with the P&T show is that more than any other show in the history of televised magic, it puts the focus on the very worst part of magic; the barrier that we try so hard to overcome when we want to entertain people and to create a connection.

It is harder than getting ice in Hades to entertain a cynic and critic who is only focused on trying to figure out how you do your effects. They are so busy focusing on catching you they can't be entertained. I am sort of that way with card tricks. "Ah Ha, I saw that move! It was the reverse Schmooser bottom deal with an Elmsley double push off!" I saw it! Now what the heck is this trick about and what was the card he forced on me with a Hofzinsler under spread? I forgot it!"

The focus in magic should not be about fooling. Standup comedy is a fantastic example. The equivalent show would be called, "I Bet You Can't Make Me Laugh."

So many mental disconnects for me on "Fool Us". How does (obnoxious magic salesman) Jay Sankey who taught the effect in his lecture and sells the DVD on how to do it, go on this show and fool Penn & Teller? Of course P&T are not the brightest bulbs in the magic history chandelier. Some guy came on "Fool Us" and did the "Exchanging the chicken and duck head effect" and Penn said, "I have read about that trick but I have never seen it. It has not been seen since the turn of the last century...." No so! Copperfield did it on one of his CBS network specials. I remember it well and Copperfield called it "Poultry on Motion".

Almost every day, someone shares a video on my Timeline from this show. To me, it symbolizes everything that is wrong with post-modern magic.

For those of you who perform magic for a living, or even the occasional trick for friends, you'll know that the very worst type of audience is the person who sits with their arms folded and tries to figure out how you are doing your 'trick.'

And as an audience member, the very worst type of magician is the guy who has zero personality and tries to fool you with some awful twelve-phase rope trick or a 52 phase card trick with a memorized deck.

'Fooling', by itself, is not magic. It's not even the major thing in magic. The best performers do not fool, they entertain. They do not trick, they create a connection.

I have no interest in fooling people. If I am doing a strolling gig and I encounter that guy with folded arms, who wants to catch me out and figure out the trick, the very last thing I do is try to fool him.

Nothing about my stage shows emphasizes "fooling you". I tell stories. I create visual excitement and wonder. If my main focus was fooling you, I would go into politics or work on Wall Street and make a lot more money.

Finally, Matt Franco is an enthusiastic and likeable winner of America's Got Talent but his TV special was a big disappointment to me. Boring magic...mostly card tricks.... Many impossible to do without a TV camera. All to hype his Vegas Gig.... I stopped the DVD at 3 minutes in and erased it... didn't want to waste the disc. I can only lament the lack of variety entertainment on TV. The Neil Patrick Harris variety show was awful. No one wanted it to succeed more than me. NBC seems committed to it. I hope it improves.

The problem is there is no more Borscht Circuit pool of talent, very few good comedy writer, no more Supper Club performers, no older Vaudeville acts. There is no place to be bad and get good. Today you hit the ground running and so does your video editor.

Not enough people know how to do variety any more. The 50s and 60s were the heyday of variety entertainment. They are gone. They will not return.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Phillips presenting Jack Gwynne's classic effect, The Anti Gravity Glasses. Jack perfected this trick about 1940 and it became a feature in his full evening illusion show.