

Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring”

August 2016 Meeting

President Craig Schwarz brought the meeting to order. Attendance was 18 which is a bit slim due to August vacations and a few member who were attending Magic Live in Las Vegas. Ben Mason and Dan Stapleton filled us in on

their plans for next May’s Florida State Close Up Convention here in Orlando. There will be some big case prizes for the contest winners.

Bev Bergeron’s Teach-in was an effect he called “Stargate” and he said it was originated by the late Terry Rogers from England. It is an ingenious effect based on mathematical topology. A card has a window flap cut from the center. A spectator holds on to the flap with two fingers and the magician folds and flips the card through the window and it reverses while they are holding it. The effect is also done with a dollar bill.

Phil Schwartz, our resident magic historian and Thayer collector and expert presented Magic History Moment #78. This month’s topic was Magic Stands, Racks and Easels. Phil said that when Bautier De Kolta created the multiplying billiard balls in 1898 magicians had a problem with how to display them. They would roll if placed on a table and not be visible if dumped in a hat. Enter ornate Billiard Ball holders and stands first made in Germany by Carl Willmann or by Conradi-Horster. Phil displayed a couple of rare antique stands.

Floyd Thayer, from Los Angeles worked in wood and he had his own solutions which were made beginning about 1905. He showed four Thayer ball stands plus a one-of-a-kind Thayer card stand and card easel. Phil showed a 1905 photograph with Russ Walsh with a Thayer Card Easel

.Finally we saw the rare mechanical 1916 Thayer Peerless Billiard Ball Stand which is breathtaking in its mechanism and look.

Mark Fitzgerald was first up for the monthly Ring show and he had a blank card signed and was able to put a regular sharpie through the card with no hole seen! Dan Stapleton did one of his favorite effects. He called “The Computer Card Trick.” An audience member called out a number and the deck was counted off to that number. Eventually a card that Dan predicted was at that number. Greg Solomon wrapped up the show with an encore of his “Tates” Compass routine. It’s a story about a compass that does not know which way is North.

Dennis Phillips



Phil Schwartz, our resident Ring historian, with a collection of priceless Thayer antiques on display at the meeting. They included the gold Peerless

Billard Ball Stand.

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

September 2016

John Lennon once said, “The people in the very back, feel free to applaud. The rest of you, just rattle your jewelry.”

I came across this the other day. Read it all, it’s quite interesting. See the flyer below.

(Thank you Larry Thornton)

In reading a book or two, as a kid, on the life and career of Houdini (with one being William Lindsey Gresham’s classic, *“Houdini, the Man who Walked through Walls”*) I remember reading two things:

1) some (if not all) of these so-called “challenges” were actually hyped-up creations of the great escape artist himself and

2) when “challenged” (*wink-wink*...or not) it was said that Houdini demanded the right for his “crew” (or main man Ted Collins) to examine the packing case, supposedly

to “assure that it was genuine and not “tricked out” with secret extra-long hidden bolts, or welding, or whatever.

KESNER'S PACKERS WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPOSE HOUDINI

New York City, July 16, 1912

Mr. Harry Houdini,
Hammersteins Roof Garden,
New York City.

Dear Sir:-

A few days ago we challenged you to escape from a specially constructed packing case, and you succeeded in doing this after we had nailed you in. On close examination of this case we find traces of some heavy instrument made use of. Had you permitted us to thoroughly search you and to have removed the concealed instruments, we feel certain that you would have failed to escape from this case.

We challenge you again, to escape from another case, first allowing us to thoroughly search you, and to remove your clothing, and have you dress in an athletic suit, which we will furnish, so as to make it impossible for you to conceal chisels, jimmies, or any such instruments to aid your escape,

Awaiting your reply, we beg to remain,

Very truly yours,

Shippers and packers of

J. L. KESNER CO.

THE NEW DEPARTMENT STORE

6th Ave., 22d & 23d Sts.

W. CONLEY
O. P. ROBERTS
J. JAMESON
J. FARRELL
J. F. MURRAY
S. J. KOURY

NOTE:— Houdini accepts the above challenge and the conditions of same, and further agrees to forfeit \$250. to anyone who may find any concealed instruments on him when he enters the case. The test will take place on **HAMMERSTEIN'S ROOF GARDEN** **FRIDAY NIGHT, JULY 19th.**

examining the case, and unknown to the case provider, Houdini's man (or men) carefully removed some of the regular (longish) nails and replaced them with identical but much *shorter* nails. The owner of the case would then meticulously recheck the box to make sure it had not been monkeyed with; and... satisfying himself that it was still unchanged, he allowed the challenge to be carried out. The challenge was to be acted out on stage, after some weeks of publicity to draw an audience.

You're probably way ahead of me here. Houdini also had himself chained and padlocked within the packing case for extra drama, and having had his body examined and put into the challenger's own "athletic suit" as per the conditions stated on the above poster — he proceeded to make his escape. Of course, a large screen was placed in between the case and the audience for privacy. Music may have been played to heighten the drama, or more probably, to help drown out any small noises caused by the following:

Houdini would get out of his body restraints first (likely gimmicked for easy release), and then with sheer muscle power, he would have no trouble opening a side of the box (or more likely just a few consecutive boards due to the short nails). He might have used his fist or pushed the boards out with a simple leg press. Upon securing his freedom, Houdini obtained a tiny crowbar or miniature claw hammer (hidden somewhere on the stage) with which to remove the short nails, and replace them with the original long nails.

I'm presently reading Penn Jillette's latest book, "*PRESTO! How I Made Over 100 Pounds Disappear and Other Magical Tales.*"

It practically reads itself. In it, he dissed heavily on performers who actually take risks, and mentions geeks who "hang by their nipples from helicopters" and such (without mentioning you-know-who Blaine-Angel). He claims it is downright immoral to take any risks whatsoever, and sites Penn & Teller's Bullet Catch as being rock-solid safe, with their having done over 4,500 performances to date; while mentioning the dozen or so magicians who died performing the trick. (Johnny Thompson is mentioned as having "begged them not to do it," but then decided, if they're going to go ahead and do it anyway, he might as well help them develop it.) Penn then goes on to say that if there is anyone who goes to their shows "hoping or expecting to see them get injured or killed," he *doesn't want any of these kinds of morbid lurkers in his audiences!* And he adds, "It's just a magic show, not NASCAR."

I agree with him. Magic should be solely about creating the illusion of risk, with no risk whatsoever actually being involved. It's all a friendly con, folks, or should be. And further (according to Penn) audiences should be mature enough (and he grants that they are) to believe it's just a trick! Otherwise you'd have people at every show screaming that it should be STOPPED. (He neglected to mention the many young-and-stupid escape artists who *died or nearly died, taking unnecessary risks...*).

David Blaine does a card trick, (a very good one!) and then explains how to do it even better than Elmsley could explain it.

The Card Trick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQCaxoQlSIw>

But I'd bet my life — that not ONE person in that room will ever bother to do the trick.

And I'd even bet my clock (and whatever body part rhymes with that) — that nobody in that room will even remember how that trick was done for more than five seconds, even with Blaine's very meticulous dead-clear explanation.

And the simple reason is: *people don't give a flip!* They're just not interested in really knowing how magic is done, let alone interested in doing it themselves! They don't have the *motivation* of any actual magician or amateur magic nut.

So.... what was *Blaine's* motivation in showing how this trick was done, and MORE — allowing some cat to video it and then (whether Blaine knew it or not) put it out on YouTube?

We see that the video had One Million, Five Hundred and Eighty Four Thousand, One Hundred views. And so that's 1,584,000 people that also don't give a flip. Now I know what you're thinking, "What about the 105 people that you missed?"

I didn't miss them — what I did was "go out on a limb" and assume that perhaps as many as 100 people out of that total of 1,584,100 viewers would be magic fanatics who would learn the trick. But even at that, we can bet our glasses if not our (whatever body part rhymes with that) that less than a dozen of these 100 bozos will ever actually put that trick into their repertoire and fool lay people with it on a regular basis. ...To be fair, some will master it just long enough to pull it on their magic pals; and a few may show their long-suffering magic-weary parents, or their kid brother or sister — and that's about it.

And so, we ask once again: *why did Blaine explain the trick????* Makes no sense to me.....unless it is to revive a Failing career... More publicity... magic doesn't matter, keeping your name in front of the public does.

Blaine is a study in strange contrasts:

He drinks lethal fluids, fasts to the point of terminally endangering his health, swallows and regurgitates frogs, and "performs" all kinds of geek carney stunts and supposedly wild physical and emotionally-draining deprivations that stretch the credulity of even the deepest thinkers —

And yet! — his intense love for card tricks and crummy small-scale magic seems endless. The question is — Which form of these two categories of "human dysfunction" is providing him with his greatest amount of over-all of fame and wealth?

This Middle Eastern magician has posted many hundreds of short You Tube exposures and building instructions!

The series opens with an AK-47 firing... It seems that he wants to destroy Western Magic! Anyway ...watch.... They are all informative, some are clever.

Losander Table <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNT4SV3Z6ok>

This one shows that he has some skill...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYCFoonzuS4>

Recall Murray Sawchuck and Danny Cole's CD routine, here is the explanation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp9Gb1L11Lc>

Don't miss this one! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6Mo6k4XgjU>

He is explaining in his language that the thread is just a strand out of a woman's black pair of theatrical tights or panty hose. "Wooley Nylon" thread at Jo-Ann Fabrics also works.

You can put some beeswax on the end of the thread and stick it on a wedding ring and spin it and have it come down on your finger.

Who needs an IRT Thread Reel? I think that was the late Jon LeClair's point many years ago (The book, "The Art of Invisible Thread")?. Get a copy!

Looking at his You Tube collection will keep you up all night!

In my discussions with Canadian Magician, Larry Thornton, he says and I approve:

I hope American stage magic, as I knew it, gets healthy again, in my lifetime but I am afraid that we have passed the point of No Return:

Technology is racing like the proverbial bat-out-of-hades, providing stupendous entertainment possibilities in the future that already make the magic that I knew horribly out-of-date.

One example is phone apps and iPad magic.

Here is what we can expect:

1.Virtual Reality [VR] (currently an isolated system but with limitless horizons)

2. Augmented Reality [AR] (blurring the demarcation between the physical world and our subjective reactions to it)
3. A hybrid melding of VR and AR (highly addictive, socially alienating, and destined to lead to mass psychotic dissonance)
4. Holography (still in its infancy but bringing up the possible specter of a Star Trek-like “Holodeck”)
5. 3D Movies (married to any or all of the four technologies above, in conjunction with electronically-enhanced contact lenses [already in advanced development] that are destined to replace the present goofy 3D glasses)
6. Psychotropic Drugs (A paradigm-shifting extension of former hallucinogenic chemicals, but safer and more reliable due to specific targeting of bio-chemical receptors)
7. Universally Connected Brains (Imagine being plugged into the Internet, such that you feel as ONE with it? Not only that, but you feel a Zen-line connection to any other human being on, or *off* the planet. In short, we are talking about the artificial creation — and strictly through technological means — of several kinds of what used to be paranormal phenomena, including mind reading, telekinesis, psychic powers... and more.)
8. CGI-enhanced Stage Magic (Already available, as was seen recently by at least one sleight of hand magician (Mat Franco), illusionists, dancers, and jugglers on the current season of *America’s Got Talent*. When you can’t tell the difference between “old school” conjuring and the high-tech wizardry of projected technological illusions — *what then?*)
9. Nanotechnology (The near-magical control of matter, time, energy, and space will render all forms of “old school” magic *obsolete*. Conjuring principles of the past will survive only marginally, and at that, only as a form of “looking fondly back” at a quaint age when the hand was erroneously thought to be “quicker than the eye”, “box magicians” employed tried-and-true principles that took advantage of human visual and cognitive imperfections, and when magic was thought to be useful only for fooling children at birthday parties and baffling idle passers-by on the streets...)
10. New Processes and Discoveries not yet Invented or Imagined (Some far-sighted scientists and technologies [and not just the geeky “techno-utopian” known as Transhumanists and Singularitarians] foresee a day when brand new discoveries and inventions will usher in a world that will seem utterly unfathomable by TODAY’S standards. ...Who could have imagined a slab of glass smaller than a deck of cards that would give you access to ALL THE WORLD’S INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE COLLECTIVE! (And it would be continuously updated) that you could carry with you anywhere? And as an even greater mind-blower, that same small slab (that could be carried in a back pocket) was also a futuristic communicator, games machine, music player, camera, video player, and much, much more. When you can literally hold MAGIC in the palm your hand, you begin to realize how utterly profound the universe can be.

Dennis

