

April 2016 Ring Meeting

Posted on [May 1, 2016](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring” SAM Assembly #99 April 2016 Meeting

President Craig Schwarz brought the meeting to order. He reviewed all the magic happenings around our vacation town. Dan Stapleton explained the all-star line-up at the upcoming Magicpalooza, this Memorial Day weekend, at the Doubletree Universal Twin Towers.

Bev Bergeron’s teach-in continued his theme from last month on the “Trick that Fooled Einstein”. This time he used cards and could always predict that he would have 5 more cards than the spectator who had a free choice to cut to as many cards as he chose.

Phil Schwartz presented Magic History Moment #75. The topic was the magical life of Omaha’s David P. Abbott. He was born in 1863 and lived until 1934. He is known for his original magic inventions and methods such the Floating Ball and Spirit Paintings which were used by many of the top stage illusionists. Abbott had his own private home theater called the Mystery House. Floyd Thayer marketed his Whispering Buddah effect, based upon Abbott’s idea, where voices would come from a statue and answer questions. This was done before radios were introduced and used an induction coil. David Abbott’s version used a talking tea kettle. kettle Abbott was fascinated by spiritualists and mediums and wrote a book exposing their methods. In 1977 a book manuscript that David Abbott wrote, which was lost for 50 years, was found and printed.

Dennis Phillips opened the monthly show with a comedy Wayne Dobson effect, it is a risqué play on words where a spectator thinks they are answering a description of a word they selected. Jimmy Ichihana showed some slick and entertaining card effects. A card penetrated a box and then no matter how a spectator wanted the cards in the box dealt, Jimmy could do. James Bailey had some genuine shock magic. He had a spectator select one of three envelopes with something he would pledge to do. The envelope selected was to run an acupuncture needle through the palm of his hand! He did it slowly, for real!

Dennis Phillips

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

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‘Unless a reviewer has the courage to give you unqualified praise, I say ignore the bastard.’

-John Steinbeck-

I am known for being opinionated and sometimes critical in reviews that I write, but that is only when the art of magic or an audience is being abused. I appreciate creativity and honest effort even when the magic may fail. Every performer has an off night,

or an off audience, so I am pretty forgiving. I know that I have done shows when I was short of trained assistants, and props malfunctioned and an electrical storm took out the lights and sound. You carry on and simply do your best. Audiences are forgiving.

One of my pet arguments with magic publications is that they are always filled with unqualified praise of performers, commercial props and even dealers. I realize that the commercial magazines and house organs want to sell advertising and encourage amateurs to spend a lot of money and portray magic in a positive way. The performing arts are an ego driven endeavor. I have read flowery reviews where the performer was said to be the best act since Dante only to have seen the act and been underwhelmed. But then again, I am an old guy who has been around magic since the Troglodytes were stoning guys who did the Cups and Balls. So, I am suffering from magic fatigue. Over the years magic has been blessed with a few honest magic reviewers, "Senator" Clark Crandall (1906-1975) was one, Bev Bergeron is another. Crandall was not only honest but a treasure of humor. The "Senator" could slice up an act that he thought was terrible and everyone knew he was telling the truth and took it in humor. Bev related a Crandall story at this past month's Ring meeting:

Crandall was leaning over the counter at Joe Berg's Chicago Magic Shop and looking at some of the new magic props when an ash from his lit cigar fell off and landed on top of one of sheets of flash paper laying out on the counter. In a flash every sheet went up in flames. Apparently Crandall let out quite a loud yell as the paper went up in flames causing Berg to rush back into the shop to see who was there and what all the commotion was about. He found Crandall in front of the counter with a very startled expression on his face. Berg's attention quickly shifted from Crandall to the now empty counter tops. Turning back to Crandall he asked, "*What happened to all the flash paper?*" To which Senator Crandall replied, "*What flash paper?*"

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." Every blistering comment or review that Crandall wrote was absolutely accurate even if he used hyperbole. He wasn't really "mean".

So, why this discussion of "reviews" and how you review magic that you see? It is because Magicpalooza is coming up and I hope you attend and take in the wealth of entertainment. Dan and Ben are peppering the show schedule with all types of magic along with a healthy serving of variety arts. We all know that in any Vegas, Branson or Pigeon Forge full evening magic show, the Ventriloquist or Juggler is the guy who brings down the house. So as you watch the magic acts be kind, be honest and remember that we all want the magical and variety arts to prosper in the public's eye.

Dennis Phillips