

Holiday Party and Fun

Posted on [December 28, 2017](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev Bergeron Ring” SAM Assembly #99 December 2017 Meeting

President Craig Schwarz gaveled the December Holiday meeting to order. We had 38 people attending. The only official business was to elect a new yearly board in accordance to our state corporate charter. Outgoing president Schwarz opened the floor for nominations after reading the nominating slate by the board. There were no nominations from the floor. Bev Bergeron made a motion that the slate be approved. Phil Schwartz seconded and the vote was taken. Here are the new and returning elected board members for 2018: President – Mike Matson, Vice President – Craig Fennessy, Treasurer – Bev & Alouise Bergeron, Secretary – Dennis Phillips, Sargent of Arms – Chris Dunn. Schwarz also made a motion to establish the non-voting Committee several positions. It was seconded and approved: Chairman of the annual Ring Day of Magic and Webmaster. Schwarz will take that position. Financial Assistant to Bev and Alouise, Josh Arroyo and Lecture Chairmen, Craig Fennessy and Jimmy Ichihana. At the conclusion of the business meeting, outgoing President Craig Schwarz passed the gavel to new president Mike Matson. The gavel had the date June 5, 1962 which was the date of the Ring formation and used by the first President, the late, Don Masters. The entire FAME group thanks Craig Schwarz for his years as President and for all of his efforts to make us a great magic group.

We also collected funds for Carrie, who was our hard working IHOP waitress for many years of club activities. She is moving to Tennessee and we wanted to give her a great send off.

Jacki Manna returned again as the lively emcee and featured entertainer for our party fun. Jacki had three fun activities: The first was a gift wrapping contest, where teams of 4 competed to see who could gift wrap the most boxes in the fastest allotted time. The second was our annual gift exchange where everyone brought a gift and drew numbers to exchange this. This year some excitement was added by also rolling dice to create for excitement and less certainty in the exchange.

Finally, Jacki invited everyone to play a Magic Trivia game. The questions contained a lot of magic history and Phil Schwartz , our resident magic historian and Bev Bergeron were standouts with answers. Jacki made it all fun. It was a great evening for all.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

January 2018

“Be so good they can’t ignore you.” – Steve Martin

Remember: Steve Martin never said, “Be so original they can’t ignore you.” We know the source of the trick this guy does, and it’s done by a lot of magicians. The Beatles did everyone else’s hits when they started out (their first album is full of them) — and still they climbed out of obscurity to become great and later “original” (with the help of George Martin)

<http://www.flixxy.com/australian-magician-james-galeas-unbelievable-trick.htm>

One tiny bump in the road: You’ll notice when the guy accidentally left one card on the table, he had to fan through the cards and cut to the right place to put the tabled card back. A good sleight of hand worker has more courage than a naked guy swimming through a tank full of hungry piranhas....

Don't you think that any reasonably intelligent KNOWS it is done with a stacked deck?

Yes, this is a clever variation and done well.

I did a close-up gig years ago after Bill Malone had popularized "Sam the Bellhop" and at the gig one of the other magicians was doing "Sam the Bellhop"... He did it well. The ONLY comments I heard was about how "cute" the story was and how "The guy is great at setting up the cards"... They did not know how or anything about false cuts but they intuitively knew it had to be done with a stacked deck.

Years ago, when I was using a stacked deck in a trick for lay men at conventions, , I would just ask the people at the table, "Have you see a guy named Sy Stebbins at this convention?" They would say, "No" and I would say, "I want to give him back this deck that I borrowed from him. This is a borrowed deck." Once I did have a magician come up and tell me that he about fell over laughing when I pulled that line."

I rarely get into the topic of Hypnotism, but here goes:

First watch this video: https://youtu.be/1RA2Zy_IZfQ

I over the years I have been friends with several guys who have done stage Hypno acts. Paul Royter has been a friend for 45 years and his mentor was Peter Reveen.

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

And yes, up until the 1980s, I did a Hypno act, as another of my Variety offerings. I cut way back and eventually ended because of Liability Insurance costs and limited venues. It has been increasingly difficult since the mid 80s to get booked... And now, it is almost impossible. Why?

Much of America has drifted into an irrational superstitious and anti-science mindset, especially in the rural areas, and the Fair markets (mostly in rural areas) dried up and that was about all there was in terms of venues. High School Proms used to be big and a lot of fun but School Boards stopped that due to parental complaints and lawsuits.

Hypnotism is basically “crowd and individual manipulation” The individual participant wants to please the crowd and the performer. The technique seems identical to a modern religious Faith-healer. I don’t want to set anyone off here on a fight over religion. Certainly the mysteries in life and our experiences and convictions, both individually and communally should be respected. My purpose in writing is only for analysis and comment and not a comment or criticism of religion or anyone’s belief of causality or authenticity. I am a man of faith and active in my church.

I grew up watching Faith-healers so I thoroughly know their manipulative techniques and the amusement value. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOWKEyz6cNM>
The whole performance begins with “Expectations”... The Faith Healer says, “Expect a Miracle!”. The hypnotist says: “Expect to see people prance like chickens and talk to their shoes like they are kitty-cats and act like their pants are on fire!

The hypnotist need banners, posters and a line of pre-event hype about how great he is. Loads of publicity pictures of people slumped over in a lines of chairs. Remember “Expectations!”

The show event begins with 20 minutes of loud pop rock music... with frequent announcements calling for volunteers to help. “It will be fun! We need some of you to come up who wants to have fun. The experience of a lifetime!” In the case of Faith-healers, it is religious music from lively to somber and a call for the congregations to be in prayer and expectation.

You bring up 12 to 18 people to sit in the chairs and you begin the “induction” , which is simply finding out who is going to play along, listen to directions and be your most active and energetic volunteers. In a Faith healing service, they line up in wheel chairs and with walkers and canes hours before the service in desperation for a miracle.

As you do the induction exercises (I did between 8 to 10 demonstrations), you winnow down the people and send those unsuitable back to their seats. On the TED talk video, the girl that failed, next to the guy on the end would be sent back by me , unless , as in this case, the guy was her boyfriend and he left her up on stage to egg him on. I did that occasionally but I did not like anyone on stage who I was not controlling.

You then rationalize away and dismiss those who don't cooperate.... They go back to their seat. You dismiss them by thanking them for being good sports.

If you are a faith-healer, those who do not "get their miracle" simply lack enough faith to claim it. The problem is their faith and not the basic premise. In my thinking that is emotionally devastating to the sick and dying person and reduces healing their sickness and sorrow to the level of a crass Carnival Sideshow or Hypnotism Act. In the worst case it delays or stops proper medical care.

After you get down to between 3 to 6 really good cooperative people, you go on with the silly and humorous exercises and demonstrations.

All the words you use are identical to a Faith Healer... minus the theological part and demonstrable permanent cure.

Here is the bottom line: In my opinion , after dozens of shows... Stage Hypnotism is an emotional/ imaginative state of hyper-suggestion. You get them focused and simply command them to follow directions.

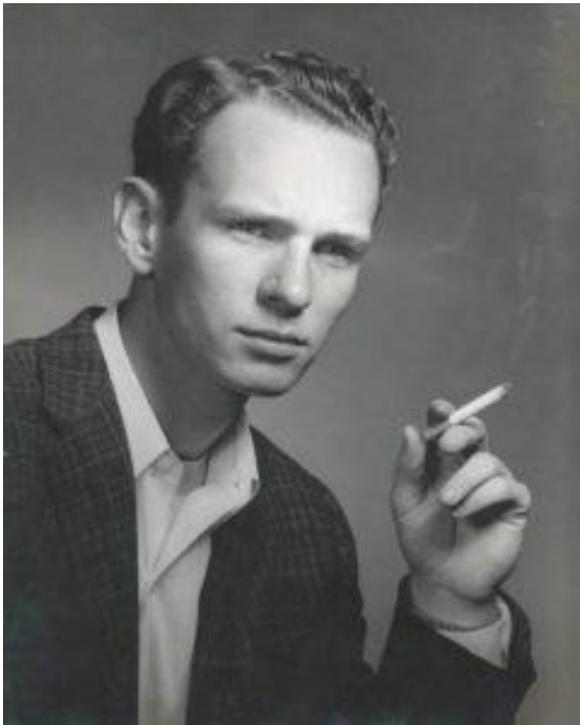
I am not attacking anyone's religion. I actually believe that some people do find relief from pain and psychosomatic sickness and , in some cases, the emotional state can lead to bodily healing. I will leave pronouncements of a supernatural causality to others and their faith. Endorphins (contracted from "endogenous morphine") are power natural substances. We do not fully understand the connections of influence between mind and body. Look at an printed paper insert that comes with medication and read the statistical double-blind test results. By Federal law the results of taking the drug must be better than a placebo but sometimes not by much! That is why some drugs are removed from the market. In a cost to benefits analysis, the drug's helpfulness does not statistically outweigh its side-effects.

Hypnotism for smoking cessation, removing phobias, giving up illegal drugs and weight loss does work, for some. So does religious faith! Again, it is allowing the hypnotist to manipulate the patient toward positive thoughts and behavior. There is a close parallel between Hypnotism and faith healing and that may be why all faith-healers are against any form of hypnotism. Often, psychologically an addictive personality merely substitutes a less harmful addiction for another one. It like the old joke: "I finally gave up cigarettes! I joined smoker's anonymous. Now every time I crave a cigarette, I call up a fellow member and they come over and have a drink with me!" .

Speaking of Smoking. I hope no one reading this does:

Chuck Windley once joked with me many years ago and told me: “When I came back from South America in 1979 I decided to cut down to one cigarette a day. So far, I have been successful. This morning I had my cigarette for July 14, 2329.”

Charles “Chuck” Windley died of cancer last week at age 75. The young Chuck pictured was 20 years old and the old Chuck was 75.





I have known “Chuck” since 1958. That is almost 60 years! (He detested the name Chuck after he reached middle age, and insisted on being called Charles) We both grew up together in Norfolk, Virginia. I was there because my father was in the Navy. Norfolk produced some big names in Magic. Bob McAllister, a Norfolk native and then of New York TV’s Wonderama fame. Dick Oslund, Mike Rogers and others came through with the Navy. The center of magic was Earl Edward’s Magic shop. That was where I was introduced magic.

Charles worked behind the counter, as a High School kid. I was 6 years younger than him and with me being 10 and him being 16, there is a world of difference in maturity. To Chuck, I was always the pesky little kid, even the last time I talked to him at my age current age of 69, he still pulled rank with age. But it was a warm friendship and I appreciated having him as an old brother in magic. I still remember holding his derby for him in his 1960 act at Virginia Beach’s “Frontier City”, a Western themed amusement park. Our paths kept bumping into each other over the years and we never lost touch. He was off to New York and Hubert’s Dime Museum and worked as a side-kick to “Congo The Jungle Creep” and did magic. I moved with my family to Pennsylvania, in 1963 to finish High School.

He found a wife, Sher-lee and had an instant family. She had two photogenic teenage daughters. At 20 he married, Sher-lee an older, and gorgeous mid-30s, mature woman (pictured holding the dove) and she managed their show. Al Cohen, of Washington, D.C. Magic Shop fame was his accountant. Few know that Al Cohen is also a skilled book-keeper and accountant. He then had a daughter with Sher-lee and after some early 60s work playing side shows and Circuses, he settled down with Sher-lee to a Mid Atlantic School Show Route and summer amusement park gigs. He did well with it, enough so that Chuck bought a nice suburban home in Bel-Air at Bowie, Maryland just outside of Washington, DC. Chuck always lacked all concepts of managing money, but good luck shined on him



Chuck lived about a block and a half from me during my college years from 1967 to 1971. So, I was frequently over at his house building, repairing and maintaining his props. In the Summer I would watch his house while he did a month or two at amusement parks.

The summer of 1968, he had a gig at Charlie Wood's Gaslight Village in Lake George, New York. It could arguably be called America's first East Coast theme park, preceding Disneyworld. Knotts Berry Farm in California was before Disney World. He wanted to do the Ducks from a Tub and Where do the Ducks Go. It is a classic routine and I recalled seeing Joe Smiley perform it. So I set about making the props for him. I kept telling him he needed two ducks and should practice. The props were finished, and I

was using throw pillows for ducks. I also made a wooden crate to carry the ducks. He loved the props. Still no ducks. Finally, the night before he was going to leave for New York with his Econoline Van towing his travel trailer, he realized that he needed ducks! Baltimore Ed Sparrow was visiting Chuck and Sher-lee and Ed had his wife and family with him. It was a good-bye party for the Windley's. At 9 pm Chuck looks at Ed and says, "I need two ducks!" Ed and he had been also having a slow and enjoyable conversation with Jack Daniels and Jim Beam. So, Chuck and Ed pile into the Van and go looking for ducks. The hours roll by and Ed's wife and Sher-lee are in a panic at 3 am when they were still gone. Finally, close to 4am the van pulls in and out stumbles Ed and Chuck soaking wet.

According to them, they searched every pond for miles in Maryland and eventually ended up at the Pentagon which had a lagoon nearby. There they tried in vain to catch two ducks. They even found an all-night grocery store and bought a loaf of bread as bait. Finally, they lured two ducks but they had to jump in the water to catch them. Stop and think, the only ducks that you can get close enough to are the friendliest ducks and because they are used to being fed by people, the result is that they are the fattest. They had stolen two of the fattest ducks I have ever seen and had been chased by the Pentagon police who thought they were two Russian spies. But, they were just two drunks in a green Falcon Econoline van with a couple of quacking ducks in the back. The van had been trailing smoke from burning oil rings all around the Pentagon parking lot. Chuck ran the engine on half STP and half oil. No Russian spies would leave a smoke trail.

So Ed and his kids stayed over for the night to see the Windley's off in a few hours. Chuck told me later that Saida, his daughter by Sher-lee, caught the chicken pox that night from one of Ed's kids.

About the time that I graduated from college in 1971 and moved to Roanoke, Va. to work in Television, Chuck and Sher-lee broke up. I am not sure if she just wanted more financial security. Her new husband owned several profitable gas stations in the Bowie area. Once I asked her what drew her to Chuck and show business and she said, "I guess I was just a bored housewife". Chuck said the blended families of Sher-lee and her new husband became "the new Brady Bunch thing".

I think that Sher-lee got the equity from the house when it was sold and Chuck ended up doing some cruise ships and managing and owning a magic bar in Miami. When I moved to Charlotte from Roanoke (1972), Chuck moved back to Virginia and Roanoke! He married Liza (standing next to the fire in Chuck's hand). He found his way 2 years later to Charlotte, where I was living and went to work with Phil Morris on one of Phil's touring shows.



I moved to Florida in 1975 and opened up a costume shop which I owned for 34 years. Chuck moved back to Norfolk where Liza sadly died young of an illness leaving him a widower. He never emotionally recovered from it. She really was his one soul mate. In the mid 1980's he opened up a magic and costume shop and absorbed the old Earl Edwards Magic shop and later expanded to another satellite store in Virginia Beach. Again, he found a great and organized woman to run the stores. They did not get married. Eventually in the late 90s most costume business migrated to seasonal super stores and that spelled the end of local year around costume stores as well as brick and mortar magic shops, so Chuck began the slow process of divesting himself of his magic stock from a warehouse in Norfolk for a few years.

Age caught up with him and he began to write his memoirs. His step-father was wealthy, and Chuck inherited an income from rental properties in Washington, in his later years. His step dad (Said Hadad married Betty, Chuck's Mom) owned ABC Demolition Company ,was a legend in the demolition business and the prime contractor for

government demolition in D.C. and was the company that cleared the rubble from the 1968 King Assassination riots in Washington.

In his time in New York in the early 60s Chuck had helped Chang as well as Bill Neff. I put Bill Rauscher in contact with Chuck while Bill was writing the book on Neff, "Pleasant Nightmares". I am also mentioned in the book because Neff was from near where my relatives lived in Indiana, Pennsylvania and my uncle, a Teamsters Union worker, in New York knew Bill and Evelyn when they lived in Manhattan and lived in a hotel in the 50s, and very early 60s. My uncle sneaked me into one of Neff's shows in the late 50s and I had never seen such sights. I was probably a little too young to see women dressed the way Neff's assistants were. But at that age, the magic was all that I wanted to see.

I will let history and others sort out just who was Neff's successor. Both Chuck and Roy Huston claimed to be. Certainly, Neff influenced Chuck and you can see Chuck's version of the Neff (Sherms-built) Upright Noma Blade Box below. I believe that Roy Huston had hopes that he would become Neff's successor and did manage to salvage the old Neff truck with the much of the gear from a Manhattan parking lot. But at that point Neff was back in Indiana in poor health existing in a perpetual alcohol stupor. Chuck seemed to be only the loyal stage manager but he did preserve many elements from Neff's show, which Huston did not: The Haunted House of Drury Lane, a Sherms Broom suspension, the Neff Rope trick and Pigeon Catching and the Duck Routine.



At one point in 1966 to 1968, Chuck drove an emerald green Econoline van, and kept around several matching gallons of green paint. I painted all his wooden crates, that I made, with that green paint and cut a "Windley" and IATSE stencil and stenciled them in black and white. He would say to stage crews: "The green crates go in the green truck!" "Chuck said the color was from Fu Manchu's show (David Bamberg) and the reason for the logo for IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees , Union) was to please the union help! They would see the logo and treat him and his props with extra care. He said that many times the logo prevented problems with locals.

I am getting to the age where I know far more dead people than living. I recently lost Phil Morris and earlier Bob McAllister and so many others. These friends still live in my memories and I hope my stories have kept them alive for you. History is a living thing and if you know more than I do or can correct my memory, please do.

Dennis





my
Gene Lavigne
of
Buffalo N.Y.

WINDLEY
Buffalo
at Mass.

June 2007, 1501 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10016



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