

July 2017 Meeting packed with performers

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

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

Although it was in the heat of the summer, our July meeting still saw twenty five attendees at the meeting. President Craig Schwarz called the meeting to order and introduced guests Patrick Goldberg, Tom Parkin, Don Carpenter and Nick Coomis. Schwarz then announced the upcoming (annual) Orlando Day of Magic to be held Sept. 9 at the Holiday Inn Resort-Lake Buena Vista. Only \$15 for admission and two lectures...quite a deal for the day. Bev Bergeron gave a review of the combined SAM/IBM convention in Louisville and Dan Stapleton plugged the 2018 SAM convention to be right here in O-Town next summer.

Phil Schwartz presented his 86th Magic History Moment on the subject of Magic Restoration. He defined the meanings of restoration vs repair as well as a magic collector's philosophy of doing each with antique magic apparatus. He showed a photo of a Thayer billiard ball stand that someone repainted in bright green and red. Then he showed the same piece after it had been restored to its original black and gold colors. Phil described the ways to preserve magic ephemera, antiquarian books and how to properly frame magic lithographs. He displayed examples of each with Thayer promotional pieces in 4 mil mylar and other acid-free materials, a 1739 book in an acid-free container and a framed Leon Herrmann window card museum mounted behind UV Plexiglas.

Phil also did master of ceremonies duties for the second half of our meeting. He introduced eleven performers using classic one-liners from Robert Orben, Sid Lorraine, Jimmy Muir and Terry Seabrooke.

And then it was time for the magic presentations, usually submitted by only a choice few, but this month we had ten performers showing their “chops”. Phil Schwartz was MC with his new/old one-liners, many of which still gain laughs along with a few groans. Ventriloquist Jackie Manna was up first showing a few of her newest additions created by artist and magic engineer, Chance Wolf. Jackie introduced her magician-puppet, “Marvelo” and had fun with her “skunky”. Bev Bergeron performed his sponge ball routine ending with his wonderful impromptu vanishing glass (while standing) with two spectators on his sides!

Nick Coomis, from his weekly performances at Sleuth's Mystery Theatre, showed the group his Linking Rings-to music with some beautiful moves. Mark Fitzgerald performed a slick card spelling revelation. Greg Solomon commanded his little balloon mouse to jump through a hoop of sharp daggers in meeting his fate, only to be miraculously resurrected appearing in a paper bag. Josh Arroyo performed a very nice routine with acrobatic cards...very smooth.

Tom Parkin must be an inventor in coming up with a digital/video of finding a card, on screen. Dan Stapleton performed the world's fastest card trick that lasted three minutes. It actually took two seconds but nearly three minutes to get there. Terry Ward is a true professional and cracks up every audience, this time with a fun card trick revelation with the help of a magnifying glass. Really fun. Michael Madsen, from The Great Magic Hall, was very entertaining with his three card trick that contained large holes, looking

absolutely impossible. Closing the show was the star of the recent Penn & Teller television show, Jimmy Ichihana, who again, amazed us all with his amazing skills with a deck of cards. Jimmy is truly an up-and-coming star of magic.

Report by -Dan Stapleton (Secretary Dennis Phillips was away on a family trip to Virginia)



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

August 2017

“Hypotheses non fingo “

-Issac Newton-

Massive internet exposure continues and it is good that most lay people do not care:

(I am just reporting the facts and offer no reasoning other than that we live in a “Post-Modern Magic Era”)

[https://brightside.me/article/the-fascinating-explanations-behind-six-classic-magic-tricks-](https://brightside.me/article/the-fascinating-explanations-behind-six-classic-magic-tricks-41605utm_source=fb_r69f58&utm_campaign=2a68c0ad80ab&utm_medium=cpm)

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It really is the end of the classic style illusion show of the Modern Magic era.

The end was brought about by several factors:

*The Internet and instant ubiquitous secrets ,as well as unlimited handheld amusement and shorter attention spans.

*The Mega destination resort where the audience moves and the complex show stays. These killed the smaller amusement attractions.

*The economic and social collapse of small towns and rural areas along with the dissolution of “community” which destroyed the marketing base.

*Competitive Capitalism without regard for local culture and art. Also seen in the end of local non-news TV programming and local radio.

*Complex Theatrical technology which makes everything else obsolete and mundane.

*The only economically viable magic market: Walk around and street magic.

I watched most of this happen during the 1980s to 2000.

In my show markets, of small towns, as local factories, the economic base evaporated , downtowns died and only the regional Walmart survived.

The pace quickened with the 2008 Great Recession and Malls began to die. Middle class and small town America has not reverse the downward trend since the 1980s

In the meantime, more jobs are headed off shore, more social division, more Malls and stores close, there are less stage magic shows....

Sadly for magicians, *America may never have great stage magic again.*
Perhaps one reason is that most Illusionists perform the same dozen illusions. This seems to be a sad fact. I realize they may not have the ability to pay for creative consultants or cannot make their own unique illusions.

Spend one hour on YouTube and view videos and you will find this to be true: Same illusions, same choreography, same movements and same presentations

Here are 12 illusions that are too commonly seen in programs of illusionists worldwide:

Origami

Interlude

Packing Crate Sub Trunk

Fire Spiker

Suspended Animation

Fire Cage

Modern Art

Wakeling Sawing

Mini Kub Zag

Chair or Broom Suspension

Snowstorm/ Snow Animator

Floating Table

The last two are not illusions but they are larger stage effects and almost everyone performs them.

So what drives this uniformity?

1) Convenience. It is easier to buy a stock illusion prop rather than to create, prototype and fabricate an original illusion.

2) Illusionists want no risk. They would rather invest in illusions that are proven. Seeing another illusionists success with an illusion makes it easy to feel assured of the same reactions from the audience.

3) Illusionists feel confident with the illusions. Their judgment is compromised because they believe they will succeed with that illusion.

4) More than a handful of illusionists do not care that they are performing the same (and pirated) illusions because they feel their audience reacts well to those illusions

5) Technology has made the world flat and the Internet & YouTube allow media to be shared worldwide at the click of a mouse. Illusions are also more accessible to illusionists from different parts of the world because of the Internet.

Illusionists say: “it is not what you do, but how you do it!” That is true, but only if you do something different. Just because you use a different piece of music or smile instead of act dramatic or add a costume change at the illusion does not warrant enough of a difference.

The people who do matter, educated clients, agents, show bookers , the media know the difference. If you want to make it to the top, you need to not be the “best” but be “the only” and that means a lot of originality.

My wife keeps telling me about “Chicken Soup for the Soul” articles. Reader’s Digest Warm and Fuzzies, I call them.

I think she subscribes to online “Chicken Soup for the Soul” articles.

I always considered them, as good as they may be, stories that appeal mostly to women. In fact, I'd hazard the guess that if there were only men in the world (hah!) that the multi-million-dollar "Chicken Soup" industry would have been dead in the water from the get-go. Yes, we men are sentimental, but not THAT sentimental! — Not enough to build an "emotional empire" on it, anyway. Oprah was built on female appeal. Nothing wrong with that. I am just taking a realistic look at marketing and audience demographics.

Here is humor for a limited market but it would probably be a loyal one:

"CHICKEN SOUP for the STARVING MAGICIAN" Byline: For the magician who is having trouble putting FOOD on the table — they'll always have CHICKEN SOUP!"

Note the byline: So I looked for "Chicken Soup for the MAN'S Soul" — *it doesn't exist!* And just how BIG is this industry? It's astounding: <http://www.amazon.com/Most-Popular-quot-Chicken-Books/lm/R381X3M8XAEUV>

I had an old friend years ago who had been a music director on Broadway. At one point, Liberace flew him out to Vegas to interview for being Liberace's Music Director. My friend said, Liberace told him, "My secret is that I PLAY TO THE WOMEN! They are where the money is!"

All marketers know this... Copperfield's biggest demographic was late 20s women with a kid or two. There has never been a successful general public magician or illusionist whose main appeal was not to women.

I am not sure that some of these gender classifications work anymore. David Blaine and Cris Angel do not seem like Fabio type guys, although Angel has recently glammed up his image. Lance Burton and Copperfield may be the last of a kind.

Most of the magic acts on America's Got Talent seem more geeky or bizarre than with the sophistication of Channing Pollack, Norm Neilson or Marvin Roy.

Consider that in your career planning.

Dennis Phillips