

Ring Report March 2017 Meeting and Dennis' Deliberation

Posted on [March 21, 2017](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

Ring Report Ring #170 "The Bev Bergeron Ring" SAM Assembly #99 March 2017 Meeting

President Craig Schwarz brought our monthly meeting to order. We took a moment to remember the late Jim Zachary who recently passed on. Dan Stapleton did an update on this year's Magicpalooza, the Florida State Magic Convention. This year called the Close-Up Conference and Competition held May 12th -14th at the Orlando/Maitland Sheraton Hotel

Member Marty Kane, announced the release of his new book, "Card ChiKanery" which is loaded with great card magic. The Bev Bergeron Teach-in was the classic "Coin Through Handkerchief" which can be found in the Bobo book.

Phil Schwartz presented his Magic History Moment #83, a look at his collection of letters between Charles Carter and Floyd Thayer. Carter was a Pennsylvania born illusionist who began touring the U.S. in 1906. He was trained in the legal profession and had an elegant writing style. He bought and later sold to Houdini, the Martinka's magic business in New York and moved to San Francisco and lived in a grand house. Carter avoided the competition in America and toured his illusion show overseas on five tours until his death in Bombay, India in 1936. Carter had his illusions built by Floyd Thayer's company in Los Angeles. Phil is a 40-year long Thayer collector and wrote the Ultimate Thayer, a comprehensive history of Thayer's magic company. In addition to showing us, the correspondence between Carter and Thayer, Phil also showed an original Carter Egyptian theme poster nicknamed "Carter on a Camel." It was startling to see the low prices that Carter paid Thayer for illusions back in the 1920s and early 1930s until Phil explained that we must multiply the amount by 17 times due to dollar inflation.

Dan Stapleton led off the meeting show with an effect he learned from the late Stanley Lobenstern. Random dates of spectator anniversaries are added together and Dan had predicted the total. He followed by being able to locate a selected card from a mixed up deck. Greg Solomon did the "Ken's Mother had 3 Kid's" riddle, made magical coin changes on the back of his wrist and showed an impressive Cups and Balls effect done in rhyme. Jimmy Ichinana did a future award-winning effect which took the "Any Card Called For" premise to new heights.

Dennis Phillips showed his "Water from India" props from his stage show. This was a popular "running-gag" in many old illusions shows: A never-ending source of water fills the vase which is dumped periodically into a large urn. At the conclusion of the show, the urn is turned over and shown empty. P.C. Sorcar used this, as well as Kalanag and others.

Photo by Craig Schwarz .Dennis Phillips with "Water from India"



Dennis Phillips

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170
“The Bev Bergeron Ring”
April 2017



“What? Two months dead and not forgotten yet? Why, then, there’s hope a great man’s memory may outlive him half a year!”

Act 3, Scene 2– Hamlet.

Sadly we lost another great in magic, Daryl Easton, known professionally as Daryl and born Daryl Martinez. He was based in Las Vegas. He died in a dressing room at the Magic Castle in Los Angeles. He used the title of “The Magician’s Magician”. I certainly hope that his memory and great work lives on. We all have touches of his work in our routines. His video instructions will be around for a long time.

Articles online say Daryl killed himself accidentally. And he was found in just his underwear. Others said, he was wearing blue jeans and it was a deliberate suicide. So — do these two statements indicate an actual deliberate suicide, as Jamy Ian Swiss alleges in his eulogy? We have to ask: Why would a guy elect to hang, or strangle himself, with rope, when there are far easier ways to commit suicide? Guns are easy to get in the United States. An overdose of drugs would be easier and less painful.

So it doesn’t quite make sense in my logic — that the man deliberately ended his life with a rope. If you are in a jail cell and the only method is to braid shredded bedsheets, I can understand hanging, but here I find it implausible as a method. And if he did do it that way, why would he strip down to his shorts before doing so, as the first reports from TMZ indicated? It doesn’t make sense. Other reports say he also had a plastic bag over his head.

My contention, then, is that Swiss has cherry-picked the story as he wants it to be. I realize the counter argument is that I may be trying to read more into the event. Perhaps in this day of “Alternate Facts” I am not cynical of everything I read and don’t know whose version to trust.

Further investigation (if there IS such a complete and exhaustive investigation) may yet reveal the unpleasant or maybe embarrassing details. His wife said that he suffered from Depression. Was he on medication? Had that been recently changed? Was he in the throes of a bad marriage? Was he constantly on the edge of starvation through not being able to make a decent living out of magic? Was he facing bankruptcy? What was his over-all mood like in the last day or two before his life ended so abruptly? Was there a note or any indications he was not figuring to be alive much longer. Some people preparing to die sell everything they have. And why, if he wanted to end his life, would he choose to do it at the Magic Castle? —And thereby, throw a pall of deep embarrassment and humiliation over such an august and respected institution? Did he secretly hate what magic had done to him?

Was he in poor health? Did he just get news from his doctor that he had cancer or some other terminal disease? Was he suffering from the earliest stage of dementia or Alzheimer's disease at age 60? We were told that Robin Williams committed suicide from Depression and he found out the medical diagnosis that he suffered from terminal Lewy Body dementia. Early symptoms resemble Parkinson's disease.

In this country a terminal illness can pretty much bankrupt you, especially if you are a self-employed entertainer. That alone is a terrible guilt. I have known a lot of people, like this, who lost everything and left their families destitute due to medical bills. This happened to my long time magician friend, who now is in the final stages of Alzheimer's. His wife is destitute. He has just been institutionalized under the Florida Medicaid program which the Florida State Government wants to keep very lean.

Unless one is suffering from extreme never-ending pain, or a deep and incurable psychological illness, or a dreadful terminable physical disease, I could never see suicide as an option. And leaving loved ones behind like that, is hard to fathom. I would probably never have the where-with-all to kill myself,— for those who do, it seems to me, to be a hurtful way out. The living become the victims with collateral mental and emotional damage.

The initial reports in TMZ, a show business site suggested that he died the same sort of death from the same activity that killed , Kung Fu star, David Carradine . Carradine was 72 when he died. Daryl was 60, so age does not have to be a limiting factor for such activity. Where did TMZ get their information? Is it just "Fake News" created to get readers and make money?

There are far too many questions in the Daryl death. I think Swiss created more questions than answers by trying to take away the rumors that he found so obnoxious and would never clarify, before all of the facts are in. If, indeed, the true facts will ever come in... Then again, maybe all this is none of our business. But Daryl meant more to magic than merely a clever performer and creator. He was a respected star among any informed magician.

It was also reported that he had no life insurance and a “Go Fund Me” campaign was started to help his wife with final expenses. So my guess would be that he pretty much died broke, since she said that she intended to keep selling his magic routines.

When I talked with Daryl a few years ago, I asked him what percentage of his livelihood came from magicians and how much from the public purse, he confessed that he made his living on a 50/50 basis: About 50% from the public, and 50% from the magic community (lectures and his dealership). Magicians are cheap and magic is a struggling business now that the Second Golden Era is over, so maybe he did have a long and hard financial struggle at this point in his career. We may never know.

I have no idea of any of the details. I think that Daryl’s Professional work still stands strong regardless of how he died. I do not know anything about his personal life. In any suicide the psychological path you go down trying to find the root cause leaves you in distress. The Magic Castle location is odd and out of character with someone who loved magic. Maybe he grew to hate magic?

The life of a professional “fool”... (magic-variety arts) is anxiety filled. Few full time professionals end up with any money or happy. I have seen dozens drink themselves to death, grow bitter and die broke and in misery. “There is a broken heart for every light on Broadway”.

I always loved the Sands of Egypt trick and recall Doug Henning reintroducing it on national TV in one of his late 1970s specials. Our own Dan Stapleton has a great presentation. Luis de Matos, Jon Pendragon also have great versions.

I recall being at a Kirby Van Birch illusion show in Branson Missouri at the old Wayne Newton Theater and in spite of many illusions, spectacular dancing women, leather. fog and moving lights, the only thing that people talking about when leaving the theater was the “dry sand” trick.

My problem with a family show is that the effect is pretty but it does not relate to the real world experience. Colored sands is not a common experience. Then I saw this clip! The magician put the colored sand in flavored Kool-Aid container. Suddenly the effect had meaning! I like it. Please no Jim Jones jokes. The punchlines are too long. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azeok7hoRPw>

Ariann Black had a disastrous performance a few years back on America’s Got Talent. She and her assistants accidentally exposed Jim Steinmeyer’s “Interlude” Illusion.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SFOU2p8Gq4> (00:57 into the clip)

Black has been mystifying people with magic for the last twenty years. In spite of doing good work, she's been mostly unsuccessful at imbedding herself into the top tier in the Vegas magic scene. She has had a slot in the variety show Splash... And now as her age pushes 50, I think that you can see the pattern. I believe that she does have talent but has not been able to translate it and her good looks into the shining career she seems to want and possibly deserve. It is probably that the times and Vegas conditions are just not right. For all the talent that the late Peter Reveen had, he just never quite succeeded as an illusionist. Both he and Black had their best chance at being top acts in the 80s. Those glory days are gone.

The disaster with Ariann Black and The Interlude probably was worth it because it did get her recognized and disasters are quickly forgotten.. As sarcastic and snotty as Howard Stern and the rest of the AGT panel, they seemed baffled at trying to understand what she was trying to do.

The problem is actually, the Illusion she was trying to present, Jim Steinmeyer's Interlude.

A clever but not spectacular illusion. It is where a magician steps into an upright frame and is covered in the middle and a woman crawls through his body. It is another one of Steinmeyer's puzzles like about 50% of what he creates. The slightest mistiming or body position and the method is painfully obvious.

No one has greater respect for Jim Steinmeyer than I do. He is the single most prolific creator of illusions in the last quarter of the 20th century and he continues to create. But like most thinkers and inventors, not everything he creates is great. One great illusion he created was the Origami Box, another is Modern Art. It virtually made Harbin's Zig-Zag obsolete.

P.T. Selbit (P.T. Tibbles) , the genius of the early part of the century, also had a ratio of failures. I think that like Selbit, many magicians performed his lesser illusions out of respect rather than merit. Both Virgil and Levant abandoned Selbit's "Mighty Cheese". It was a novel idea with a giant two-foot high cheese wheel (cylinder) which could not be turned over by a group of spectators.

The secret was a large internal gyroscope which was spun to high speeds by an external electric motor or bicycle method. Like all gyroscopes, it resisted any forced movement through its vertical plane of rotation. For all you math geeks, like me, its used Precession. It is a change in the orientation of the rotational axis of a [rotating](#) body. It can be defined as a change in direction of the rotation axis in which the second [Euler angle \(nutation\)](#) is constant. In [physics](#), there are two types of precession: [torque-free](#) and torque-induced. Enough of that! A gyroscope can be mysterious and I am sure it

was more so at the beginning of the 20th century and to Selbit's audiences. But just a puzzle is not a good magic trick.

"Interlude" is just not that great of a magic trick. The only way the Interlude sort of works is with a virile male in the box and a gorgeous female passing through such as Charlotte Pendragon and Joanne Spina. Siegfried and Roy added a surprise ending by backing it up to a Million Dollar Mystery mirror tube and producing a black panther out of Roy's middle.

The illusion always seems to take on a sexual metaphor. (Not to get too Freudian, here) It has a tinge of masochism-domination as the guy gets penetrated by the female, For some this must be a male and female fantasy. I will just leave this line of commentary at that point.

"Interlude" works as a throw-away for a big box show when used this way. Copperfield helped his performance with the remote controlled rotator. The Pendragons were all beef and flash. The boxes were irrelevant except as shock and awe.

One other performance I saw with it had merit. It John Hiraokawa (The guy in Honolulu with the hotel dinner show) <http://www.magicofpolynesia.com/>

I seem to recall that his Interlude split in two down the middle! . It was themed in bamboo with vines and at the end were tiki torches that he held on to as he was sacrificed by an island shaman to have a slender Hawaiian Goddess pass through his heart. It clam-shelled open to let him in and then closed. The plot dominated the trick, as it probably should with this illusion.

But for me and most others to do this effect would come off as kinky... Ah, the pain of growing old (and knowing it). Apparently Ariann , as she ages, has increasingly become garish in her looks and looked harsh and old on the AGT clip. She is not aging as well as Heather Locklear, who is also now beginning to look ragged. Ariann, like Melinda, was very attractive in her youth and still appealing today but in a different way. I believe she can do well but she needs to take a different direction with her magic and her business model.

Dennis