

## **Phil Schwartz remembers Maskelyne May 2017 Meeting**

Posted on [May 31, 2017](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

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

**Craig Schwarz** called the May Meeting to order with 28 in attendance. **Dan Stapleton** gave a wrap up to the recent **Magicalooza 2017, Florida State Close Up Contest Convention** here in Orlando. The “Day of Magic” Flea Market and lectures is September 9<sup>th</sup>. Admission is \$25.

It will be at the Holiday Inn Resort, 13351 State Road 535, Orlando.

**Bev Bergeron’s** Teach-in featured a bag of lapel buttons from a mid-1960s IBM Convention. He was spring cleaning and gave the buttons away during the meeting. He told a humorous story about the button-maker changing the print for “Rabbit in the the Hat” believing that Bev had made a mistake. **Phil Schwartz** presented **Magic History Moment #84** about **John Nevil Maskelyne ( 1839-1917)** John was later closely associated with his magic partner ,**David Devant**. Born in Cheltenham, England **John Nevil Maskelyne** was fascinated with automata in his boyhood and became a watchmaker. With a friend **George Cooke** , he started a magic club that is said to be the origin of England’s **Magic Circle**.

Repairing a mechanism for a stranger led **Maskelyne** into understanding the mechanical tricks behind **Spiritualism** and he developed an act after he learned how the famous **Davenport Brothers** did their **Spirit Cabinet**. **Maskelyne** and **Cooke** performed before the **British Royalty** and began a long engagement at **St. James Hall** in 1873. He moved to **The Egyptian Hall** and in 1904 to **St. George’s Hall**, the year that **George Cooke** died. The following year he partnered with **David Devant** and retired in 1911. **Phil** also showed a rare poster and some great ephemera.

**James F. Bailey III** began the monthly show by having a person select a famous person and movie and he magically read his mind. **Dennis Phillips** showed a **Chinese Water Bowl** production that he made 50 years ago in High School and demonstrated a mind reading effect using the binary card method. He explained the math behind the method. **Jimmy Ichinana** presented his card miracles. Selected cards appeared at places requested and magically appeared in his wallet.

**Dennis Phillips**



## Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

June 2017

***“I just put an act together of all self-working tricks. Now when I book a gig, I don’t even have to go”***

***-Charles Windley-***

I thoroughly enjoyed Jim Vines routine at Magicpalooza. After he finished I mentioned that I could see touches of the great Bob Fitch in his act and he agreed and said Bob was a big help in putting together his act. I have known some fabulous consultants: Johnny Thompson, Paul Osborne, Bob Fitch, Joanie Spina, Don Wayne, Jeff McBride, Eugene Berger, Max Maven and others. Regretfully the current trend in magic is to call yourself or strive for being called a *‘magic consultant’*. People who make a living creating tricks for, or advising other magicians. Truthfully there are only so many professional performers to consult for, but MANY claiming to have ‘consulted’.

That is a false narrative (a lie). The truth is that most are not paid consultants, even though you assume they must be. Naming no names, some have been caught out in their deceit. Selling their lectures as *“consultant for Dynamo and Criss Angel”* – neither hired them as such. I have known at least 6 “consultants” for David Copperfield. He used their effect and suggestions but never paid them. Jet-setting here and skype session there. The online image draws in admirers who seek to replicate those rewards for themselves. Impressionable young magi tell their parents it’s a guaranteed career path. Dream jobs are real jobs, but there’s an inverted pyramid of interests in the magic business that ensure you are MASSIVELY unlikely to achieve it. Believe me.

The majority express their interests in being a creator. The minority express their interests in being popular performers. There isn’t room for everyone. *“More people perform in magic than create”* I hear you cry. Correct, but Wedding/Event Magicians don’t require consultants for their acts. They’re responsible for their own output and rarely hire help. The disparity is between the number of people who want to be the kind of performer who would require a consultant, and the number of people who want to be a consultant. This over-abundance creates a ‘race to the bottom’. Let me explain...

Put simply, in business you’re either:

- The First
- The Best
- The Cheapest

When you’re the first you have a monopoly on the industry. When you’re the best, your reputation speaks for itself and you’re called upon by a number of artists for your expertise. When someone decides to be the cheapest, it immediately opens the door for someone to be cheaper. Then someone who’s slightly cheaper. Then someone who is FREE. It is another race to the bottom.

You can’t get cheaper than FREE, and now only ‘the first’ and ‘best’ are the ones likely to make a good living.

So forget consulting, you're going to make yourself rich by selling magic to the masses of magicians? WRONG. Talk to Steve Duchek , Bev Bergeron or John Cornelius. I'm not looking to squash your dreams. I'm looking to turn them into a certainty by shining a light on the darkest parts of our industry and allowing you to create a realistic action plan. Outliers exist in any field. Some push the envelope and seem to succeed despite the odds, but that chosen few doesn't represent the majority of amazingly creative people in Magic. Sustainable success for the masses in this industry isn't found by being a consultant who's required twice per year, or a creator who has one good release per year. The reality is far more mundane and your career depends on more than luck. (Portions of this came from ideas from England's Geraint Clarke)

<http://geraintclarke.com/free-stuff/>

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Every once in a while all of us wand wielders sit through a magic show that is so awful, so revolting and so stomach turning that we leave the performance and want to rush home and burn our equipment. At best, we have to spend all the drive back home with our spouse explaining how the show wasn't really all that bad.

One of my most memorable stories was when I lived in the Carolinas in the early 70s. Back then; a person could make a fair living doing school shows, service club shows, Cub Scout meetings and birthday parties. The hills of Western North Carolina were filled with little mill towns and each town had a company and community spirit.

One such enterprising performer was a bit of a local legend in that area. For purposes of this story let me call him Luke Porter. That is not his real name but I have every desire to let the dead rest in peace. His wife was Opal. Luke was a rather rotund character with thinning gray hair on the sides and patches of hair in the middle. His face was deeply wrinkled and resembled fifty miles of bad road ahead. He had a pencil thin moustache. His massive hands looked like they belonged to a plumber. In fact, his whole personage resembled a country plumber and that would be complete with a big potbelly and a belt that allowed it to hang over. Luke wore a tailcoat outfit that had been homemade by Opal. The store-bought black pants did not match the shade of black on the tailcoat! The tailcoat had actually been constructed by cutting down a black suit coat and merely tacking on tails made from black cloth. Are you getting the idea that this was not your class act?

Opal was very grandmotherly. Her gown was homemade out of lavender satin and she barely fit into it. It was sleeveless and allowed a generous hanging slab of arm flesh to flop around. She wore loads of powder that accented her wrinkles and bright red lipstick that was the popular shade in 1954.

Luke had a bit of a speech defect and could not say the sound of "r" very well. He also had a curious shaking in his hands. He moved like an elephant. To his credit he did have a warm smile and enjoyed what he was doing even though he was clueless as to how he looked and acted to the audience.

Luke and Opal traveled to shows with their son-in-law, Theodore. “Theo” was very thin country fellow about 40 years old. He had a receding chin and a bit of an overbite. His eyes were droopy and nose long. He wore a blue velvet sport coat that was two sizes too big and white pants and shoes and a long paisley necktie. Theodore was a frustrated Pentecostal evangelist. He had all the hand motions and staccato speech pattern with a deep breath between every 3 words. Theo carried props on and off stage and did his own specialty act in the show. Luke paused the show for a special word about each person’s soul and where they would spend eternity. Evangelist Theodore came out with an easel and some flannel pictures and preached a down home sermon.

The team rode and carried their props in a converted step van, better known to most as a bread truck. It had been painted white and Luke had free hand lettered the name of his show on the side. It said, “Luke and Opal Magic Shows. The best in magic shows. Call 704- xxxx” (The number ran down hill, as did the whole lettering)

Luke made almost every prop in the show. He must not have known about such things as sandpaper or a square or putting an undercoat on plywood before he painted. He made an attempt at creating a fabric backdrop by using plumber’s pipe. The backdrop fabric had huge gashes in it. After the show I asked him about the gashes and he said, “It allows the wind to go through it so it doesn’t blow over when we do outside shows”. His stage lighting was a pair of outdoor floodlights mounted on a square of plywood that sat on the floor.

The show opened with a very scratchy instrumental playing on a phonograph record. Luke plodded out and tried to do the gloves to spring flowers. He tossed the gloves into the air and they fell to the floor as he was trying to get the spring flower packet to open. Bautier DeKolts, the inventor of spring flowers, would have had a stroke watching this. During the course of the evening Luke burned himself doing Grant’s Devil Canister. He dropped the can. The borrowed ring did reappear. He nearly strangled an audience volunteer doing the Grandma’s Neckless rope trick around the boy’s neck. His Square Circle Production finale used silks which had not been ironed since Thomas Edison invention the electric flat iron.

My wife commented on the way home that as low-class as we thought the show was, the audience enjoyed it ! I had to agree. I was laughing during the show for a different reason. It really does not take a lot to please an audience if they can connect with you. Luke and Opal knew their audience and who am I to criticize them?

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How is life like a magic trick.....?

1) Life is like a Zombie Ball. The problems of the world can seem heavy and burdensome, but with the right attitude/faith they can float away and be light as a feather!

2) Life is like Professor's Nightmare. Although people may appear to be different, when you look deeper we all are pretty much the same!

3) Life is like a Die Box. Just when you think you got it figured out, you don't

4) Life is like a double lift. The important things are just below the surface.

5) Life is like a thumb tip.. You are usually the most effective when no one notices you.

Dennis Phillips