

July 2018 Ring Meeting: Frakson-Egyptian Water Box and more

Posted on [July 28, 2018](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

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

July 2018 Meeting

President Mike Matson brought the July meeting to order. We had 29 in the seats and three guests, Dr. Ken Schreiber, Jim Duel and Bill Jensen.

Bev Bergeron’s “Teach-in” was on his home-made sight gag, the tape measure watch. He showed how to make it and gave us some great lines, “It’s a foot and a half after 3 o’clock”.

President Matson did another of his “Theory and Thaumaturgy lectures on rethinking the Hot Rod force. He explained some verbal lines to eliminate the weaknesses of the technique. He also applied the principle to forcing envelopes.

Phil Schwartz, resident magic historian explained that the day of the meeting, July 18th, was Floyd Thayer’s 144th birthday and showed his book, *The Ultimate Thayer*. He then presented Magic History Moment # 94 on Jose Frakson, The Man of 100 Cigarettes. Frakson was born Jose Jimenez Savilla in Madrid in 1891. He achieved worldwide success on vaudeville and night club stages. Frakson is best known for his cigarette act. Phil mentioned that Bev Bergeron, our club’s namesake, is also known for his own cigarette act. Frakson gained fame from the 1920s to 1950s. Frakson made a fortune only to have it all taken away in the 1936 Spanish Civil War. He fled to Paris, bought a new tuxedo and began his career anew. He became a naturalized citizen US citizen and eventually moved back to Madrid where he died in 1981.

Dany Sanz opened up the monthly show by cutting to high cards and finding all aces. James Bailey transformed a sponge cube to a ball and back again. Dan Stapleton had spectators write their names on billets and one was selected and burned and re-rubbed

the ashes on his arm to reveal the name. Noah had a card selected and revealed it on his iPhone.

Dennis Phillips presented a re-imaged classic Egyptian Water Box, in a full Pharaoh costume with a backdrop. The water box had masking on the sides of the flaps so it could be done without angle problems. Ravelli was the final act with music and a delightful routine of multiplying balls, a giant 3 card monte, genie tube, napkin tear and dove pan finale.





Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

August 2018 Ring Meeting

A secretary overhears an exasperated math professor of Topology swearing under his breath at the Xerox machine in the Math Office.

“What’s wrong, professor?” she asks.

“It’s this frigging copier! I set it for ‘single-sided’ and it’s coming out as a Mobius Strip!”

The Invisible Gorilla :

We think we experience and understand the world as it is, but our thoughts are beset by everyday illusions. Researchers asked participants to watch a brief video of six people passing basketballs to each other. Three of the people are wearing white shirts, and three are wearing black shirts. The white shirted people pass one ball among themselves; the black shirted people do the same. Viewers were asked to count the number of passes the people in white shirts made to each other. In the middle of the video, a person in a gorilla suit walks slowly into the middle of the frame, faces the camera and beats his chest before walking off.

Almost half the viewers did not see the gorilla because they were focused on counting the number of passes made by the people in white shirts. He’s shown the video to his classes, and they miss the gorilla by a similar percentage. By focusing on the white shirts, their brains filter out the black shirts — and the gorilla along with them.

<http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/videos.html>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=vJG698U2Mvo

We assume that when a magician shows you his empty hand , there is nothing in the curl of his fingers (The Ramsey Subtilty). Illusionist Harry Blackstone Sr. and Jr. did a stage trick where duck disappeared from a small house. Actually, they were put in the little house in a small box with wheels and a rope that went off stage. At just the right time, a clown on the other side of the stage would trip and spill a tray ,with props, making noise, and while all eyes were diverted, the little box with the ducks was pulled off stage

in full sight! We believe that we can multi-task but the human mind must always struggle to focus on the total view of reality.

Slydini was a master at diversion by psychologically obscuring one action with another as well as controlling your suspicion and expectations. Just at their peak, he would pause with a comic action or relaxation and you would take a breath and let your psychological guard down and he would do the secret action needed to fool you.

The principle of self-illusion extends in every part of our lives. When I was in pilot training, we learned to not be distracted from maintaining level wings, altitude and airspeed. Tragic examples of not doing this fill aircraft accident history books. Steven Colbert's two brothers and father died on an airliner, in 1974, with distracted pilots landing at Charlotte. That crash led to the "clean cockpit rule" which demands no non-essential talking, leading to distraction, below 10,000 feet AGL.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Air_Lines_Flight_212 I was a newscaster for WBT radio in Charlotte and covered the story. The crash was less than a mile from my house and both my wife and I heard it early that morning. Again cockpit distraction happened a few years ago https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colgan_Air_Flight_3407

Deliberate illusion is also used outside the magic field. Many do not know that the late Norman "Stormin" Norman Schwarzkopf, the hero of the first Gulf War, was an avid amateur magician. He was friends with Al Cohen, longtime owner of a D.C. magic shop. Warfare has always used "illusion". Schwarzkopf staged a diversionary raid to convince Saddam Hussein that we would do an amphibious assault in Kuwait. Hussein moved many troops there to prepare and instead Schwarzkopf streamed unopposed, far inland, across the Saudi-Iraqi border. General Colin Powell's comment to the press was a quote from Carl von Clausewitz's classic mid-1800s military text ("Vom Krieg" – "On War") "Beware of the vividness of transient events". Powell applied this to the distraction Saddam tried by launching scuds on Israel and as a put down to Iraqi Forces as being so easily distracted and warning that we would not be misled.

We write traffic laws and build criminal cases on the assumption that people will notice when something unusual happens right in front of them. We're sure we know reality, falsely believing that vivid perception and memories are seared into our mind with perfect fidelity. And as a society, we spend billions on devices to train our brains because we're continually tempted by the lure of quick fixes and effortless self-improvement.

Deception includes words. Alfred Korzybski (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_semantics) developed linguistic theories in psychology, that led to Neurolinguistic Programming and modern language theories.

You can see this in Magician Banachek's PK Touches and fellow magician, Kenton Knepper's "Wonder Words". The audience is verbally manipulated to believe something is happening at a specific time and the witness to the action naturally misinterprets the phrasing of the question.

Much of today's politics, business, religion, academia and even scientific interpretation of phenomena, is infused with verbal manipulation of perception, presuppositions and self-deception. Even in medicine, which should be evidence-based, we see the Placebo effect. Why? Possibly because people want myth and fantasy?

The cynic in me says, it is for money, power and wishful thinking. P.T. Barnum's show business techniques: exaggerated and distorted claims, self-serving assertions and deception are well known, even though the phrase "There's a sucker born every minute" did not originate from him.



I was at the SAM Convention here in Orlando and was very happy to have Eddy and Sandra Wade come down from Charlotte to attend the meeting and visit with me. Eddy is an old friend who, as a small boy, watched my Children's TV show on WBTV in the early 1970s. He grew up and went to work for the late Phil Morris (Morris Costumes) before going out on his own performing and running a very successful party entertainment business. In 2014 he bought the magic company, " Magic Methods",

from his childhood mentor, Jerry Mentzer and continues to run it. He has a huge collection magic titles with some of the finest classic magic. Please check his web site.

<https://magicmethods.com/>

I enjoyed attending the SAM National Convention here in Orlando. To me the best part was seeing old friends and renewing acquaintances. I got to chat again with cruise ship magician Fred and Bobbie Becker, Joe Eddy Fairchild, Bob Little (known him since the mid-1960s!), Steve Hart and all the local Orlando and Florida Magicians.

The Convention borrowed by follow-spotlight. I realize that the magic community is shrinking and economics are an issue in an increasing expensive convention business, so the lectures and performances struggled with technical issues such as sound and the Mark and Nani Wilson video feed from California. A proper CAT 6 or 7 video connection ,plus the gear on Mark's end would have been an expense, so they made do with Apple Facetime and used a video camera on the I phone. It is apparent that prop magic acts are on the decline. The final show was mostly juggling and ventriloquism with illusionist Jay Mattioli concluding with illusions.

Congratulation to Bev Bergeron for all the honors given to him at this years SAM Convention here in Orlando. A highlight of this 2018 Convention was a tribute to his work with Mark Wilson on The Magic Land of Allakazam. Bev was here in Orlando, along with Mark's children, Greg and Mike and a video feed through Facetime was projected in the auditorium with Mark and Nani from California.



I will always remember Bev on Mark Wilson's "Magic Circus" TV specials, sponsored by Pillsbury and Poppin' Fresh....

This cautionary note about the famous finger-stab in the tummy of the Pillsbury Doughboy.



Test your magic history knowledge :

1. Who invented the Zombie floating ball?
 2. Who starred in a Broadway musical called The Magic Show?
 3. Name a Magician who became famous for floating a Violin.
 4. Who developed and sold the plastic thumb tip ?
 5. What Magician has made the most money performing Magic ?
 6. Houdini had several Brothers, name one who was also an Escape Artist.
 7. Harold Rice is famous for what product he contributed to Magic.
 8. Who invented the “World’s Fastest Flower Vanish” ?
 9. Name a Magician who became famous by changing a white glove into a rabbit named “Lefty” ?
 10. Who invented the ” Appearing Cane” ?
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2. Joe Karson
 2. Doug Henning
 3. Norm Nielsen
 4. The McElroy brothers, earlier than Alberto Vergonjeanne (stage name

“Vernet”)

5. David Copperfield
6. Hardeen, (also known as Theodore, Dash, Theo)
7. Art designed silks and a wonderful encyclopedia on silk magic.
8. Al Delage and made by Horace and Marie Marshall
9. Jay Marshall
10. Russell Walsh.

The French currently have us beat in the visibility of theatrical magic...They have a monthly variety program, “Le plus grand cabaret du monde” , presented by Patrick Sébastien. Many of the magicians can be seen on You Tube clips from the shows.

This sketch, in a very shortened version (just the first part) was just seen on Britain’s Got Talent by another magician.

Like this *single post version* of the Assistant’s Revenge... it is about 3 minutes into the sketch. I never liked the Harbin version.

I think this method originated with Peter Marvey.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=70&v=FqH1udWk198

Now worth \$1 Billion Dollars



<https://www.celebritynetworth.com/articles/billionaire-news/magician-david-copperfield-is-now-officially-a-billionaire/>

Over the years David Copperfield has pulled off some extraordinary and unbelievable stunts. He's made islands, jets and even whole monuments disappear into thin air. He walked through the Great Wall of China. He levitated across the Grand Canyon. David's efforts have earned him 11 Guinness World Records, 21 Emmy Awards, a Knighthood from the French government and "Living Legend" status from the US Library of Congress. Impressed yet? It gets better. As of today, you can add one more extraordinary and unbelievable achievement to his resume: David Copperfield has **officially become a BILLIONAIRE.**

David Copperfield has been performing magic for over 40 years. His first major media exposure came in 1977 when he hosted an ABC special called The Magic of ABC. This appearance led to a series of specials on CBS called The Magic of David Copperfield that aired between 1978 and 2001. As of this writing, David has hosted 17 specials and two television documentaries.

In 2014, Forbes jumped on the Copperfield train and valued his total net worth at \$800 million. By our count, between \$60 million in annual gross income and the global increase in real estate values over the last four years, we can now conservatively conclude that David Copperfield's net worth is at least \$1 billion. Perhaps more if we're undervaluing his art collection.

That makes David Copperfield the world's first billionaire magician... which is perhaps his greatest feat of magic yet. Hopefully he doesn't make it disappear!

Oh, and by the way here's a fun little fact: When he was young and just starting out, David's mom told him "You'll never make any money as a magician"

No magician ever moved quite like Richiardi Jr.

Click and enjoy. His dance style is Pasa Doble and Flamenco. As Carl Ballantine use to say, "Every move a picture! "

A magician was walking along a Hawaiian beach when he kicked a bottle poking up through the sand. Opening it, he was astonished to see a cloud of smoke and a genie appear before him.

“For your kindness,” the genie said, “I will grant you one wish!”

The magician paused, laughed, and replied, “I have always wanted a golden highway stretching from Hawaii to California!”

The genie grimaced, and replied, “Listen, I’m sorry, but I can’t do that! Think of all the pilings needed to hold up a highway over such an immense distance, and how long they’d have to be to reach the bottom of the ocean. Think of all that miles of pavement. That’s just way, way too much to ask for! ...Can you think of something a little more reasonable?”

The magician thought for a second and said, “Well, yeah, I’ve always wanted to know how Criss Angel managed to get his own stage in Las Vegas and headline there for so many years.”

The genie paused, and then sighed. “Did you want two lanes, or four?”



My friend, Wes Iseli (from Charlottesville, Virginia and a full-time professional) says on his Social Media pages:

“Did you know that I often perform a 100 ft rope escape in my show where an audience member ties me up? No tricks, just pure Houdini style escaping!”

I have seen Wes do this bit at least five times and it is always a hit with his audiences. It is amazing how much entertainment you can get from a \$20 length of 100 foot rope from Home Depot!

Wes presents this as an audience challenge which asks, “Can I get out in less time than it takes for you two guys to tie me up?” The general tie-up time is less than 3 minutes and he always beats it.

He has someone time him and call off the time.

Lee Jacobs has written produced two excellent booklets on how to do this effect. The complete title of the first booklet is “The Real Methods & Secrets of the Challenge Escape From 75 Feet of Rope”. What a title!

The Novak book (also published by Lee Jacobs) is “What Jacobs Didn’t Tell You About The Rope Escape.” Both are out of print but often sold for a couple of dollars each at Magic Flea Market Tables. Few magicians appreciate the value. Both are full of real world tips. There is no “secret”. They just tie you up. Wes’ only instructions are “please do not wrap the rope around my neck”. Then he does hurry them along, and the spectator calling off the time , in 15 second intervals, encourages them to speed up because the faster they tie you up the more they tend to just wrap the heavy rope around you and with a few wiggles it merely falls off. Wes adds to the struggle by kicking off his shoes. I sometimes will rock the chair until it tips over! It does little to alter the process and time but gets a gigantic audience response.

Most audience members believe that the thicker and longer the rope the more secure you can be tied and the more difficult the escape. Just the opposite is true! Use 3/4” nylon rope. White looks less tricky but the bright yellow color and size on stage is very visible. Nylon is more comfortable than the hairy hemp brown ropes also. Use a rope that looks massive in weight and when the volunteer holds on to 100’ of it ,with its mass, it gives the impression of being very secure. When asked, the majority of the audience is skeptical that you will escape faster than it took the volunteers to tie you up.

Perhaps this wonderful bit of entertainment was bypassed by magicians who saw their audiences as more interested in quick flashy stage props, thumping music soundtracks, glitzy girls and arrogant posing. Magic also moved away from the outdoor stage in fairs and events in most urban areas in the 1980s and into television “assists” with the effect. So the Strait Jacket and classically captivating routines, which take time and showmanship, faded into the background. One note. This routine is psychologically masculine in perception (as Houdini was) whereas , magic generally seems to have a more feminine approach. I believe that both gender themes are valid and the individual performer has to decide which approach to follow. In doing dove magic, I have avoided a long routines with dove steals from silks and favor Dove Catching and vanishing in a fall apart box. My stage look does not favor the mascara of a feminine thin looking Lance Burton or Joseph Gabriel. John Schrock and Rick Thomas have made Doves from Silks work for them, with their stockier body build, when combined with some props.

So not everyone can get away with the Rope Tie, but if you can, it is an entertaining interlude in a show.

Dennis