

September Meeting and Tips on performing from Bev

Posted on [September 29, 2018](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

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

September 2018 Meeting

President Mike Matson was away. Vice President Craig Fennessy conducted the meeting. We welcomed guests Nathaniel Stevens and Jim Henson, of Little Rock and new member Paul Hallas. Ravelli gave us a description of his new magic shop at the Auburndale Mall where he also performs on weekends.

Bev Bergeron’s teach-in was tips on performing from one of the pamphlets he has written. One great tip was to always hold up cards when performing for an audience because they are not visible on a flat table. We continue to raise “Go-Fund-me” money for the medical care of our member Sebastian Midtvaage who is suffering from rare Pineoblastoma brain cancer.

Dan Stapleton showed a few Gerald Heaney posters and catalogs and told about visiting the Heaney home in the early 1970s in rural Wisconsin. Dan grew up in Milwaukee. Heaney was a magician and owned a mail order magic business and is known for buying part of the Thurston show and storing it in his barn. Dan hopes to tell the complete story in a planned Magic History Conference here in Orlando.

Dan Stapleton then emceed our meeting show. William Zaballero have a spectator three opportunities to pick a card and they mysteriously ended with a winning Black Jack hand. Dave Freeman did Bewildered in Tarot where a freely selected card matches a prediction. Michael Flannigan had a “pick-a-card” effect made intriguing by his addition of flip charts showing the mathematical odds of him being about to predict the selected cards. Paul Hallas did a card effect where he was able to feel the selected cards.

Dennis Phillips wrapped up the show with two prop effects created by Ian Adair, the British magic legend who worked with Edwin Hopper and Supreme magic. Adair is still inventing. Dennis showed the Twin Doves in Balloon and vanished the dove using Dovevan. Both effects were made by Abbotts Magic in the 1960s with permission from Supreme.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

October 2018

“You can take the whole seat...but you’re only going to need the edge!”

-quote from an old Ghost Show ticket-



Houdini's Grave in Machpelah Cemetery

8230 Cypress Hills Street

Ridgewood, Queens County, New York, 11385 USA

It is the final resting place of magician Harry Houdini, his brother Theodore Hardeen, his mother, father, grandfather, four other brothers, and a sister.

I am going to engage into some historical and medical speculation. This is the month that Houdini died on October 31, 1926. The most common explanation of the cause of his death was from peritonitis, a massive infection in his gut area from a ruptured appendix, which was said to be caused by a punch to his stomach by a college student challenging Houdini who had offered to be punched in the gut to prove his muscular ability. My belief is that there could have been other contributing and pre-existing health factors. This is only my theory but supporting facts seem in place. Houdini was already in declining health and only age 52. Most biographers talk about him suffering from chronic fatigue, he had a broken ankle and an overall physical decline over the last half decade of his life. My assertion is that high exposure to x-rays starting a decade before and the resulting pathological effects may have led to his declining health and premature death.

Houdini bought his brother, Radiologist Dr. Leopold Weiss, one of the newly-invented x-ray machines, and he x-rayed Houdini dozens, if not hundreds of times. Houdini was intrigued by x-rays and how they could "see through" solid objects. Apparently Houdini had a small pistol round embedded in his hand from being shot earlier in his life and an x-ray showed the bullet. Recently the x-ray film was offered for sale as a collectable.



Speculation, among some old magicians, was that Houdini's massive exposure to radiation led to Houdini becoming sterile.

According to Jay Marshall, Bessie Houdini (his wife) told Anne Gwynne (Jack's wife) that Houdini and Leo played with the x-ray machine until they both unknowingly sterilized themselves. However, it may have also been that Bess had fertility issues herself. Bess and Harry had been married for 10 childless years by the time Harry started experimenting with Leopold's X-ray machine. Biographer, Kenneth Silverman revealed evidence of an extramarital affair Houdini had with Charmian London (widow of author, Jack London). Sterility is not the same thing as impotence, so two factors could be at work here. Possibly Bess was not fertile and Harry was sterile.

Recall that not a lot was known about the dangers of ionizing radiation back then and the machines spewed out many times over the necessary needed x-rays to get an acceptable radiographic image on primitive thick emulsion film. Unaware of the dangers, in the 1930s, the Mayo Clinic experimentally used X-ray radiation to treat asthma. I recall X-Ray machines (Fluoroscopes) were used in shoe stores, X-raying my feet and many other kid's feet for shoe fittings until they were banned in 1953! X-Rays

were used to treat acne. The double-helix structure of DNA was not discovered until the early 1950s and that provided the mechanism for understanding cell destruction and radiation illnesses. Ionizing radiation has a very short electromagnetic wavelength and a lot of energy (Planck's Constant) so it can figuratively punch holes in your DNA and nucleic acid cell structures (RNA) since DNA is the pattern used for cell reproduction, and RNA for biochemical synthesis, massive errors of the code patterns (cancer) can result. High doses can act like burns and immediately destroy tissue.

Acute myelogenous leukemia (AML), chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML), and acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) can be caused by past radiation exposure. Myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS), a bone marrow cancer that can turn into acute leukemia, has also been linked to past radiation exposure. Part of the reason is that white blood cells are some of the fastest reproducing cells and shortest lasting cells in your body. You need a constant supply.

My hunch is that Houdini had a weakened immune system from radiation induced leukemia which contributed to his susceptibility to infection

Harry with brother Leopold <https://www.wildabouthoudini.com/search/label/Death>



Houdini's brother, Dr. Leopold Weiss, became a successful New York radiologist. For a time he even ran his practice out of Houdini's home in Harlem. Around 1916, Houdini and Leopold had a falling out when Leo married Sadie, the divorced wife of another Weiss brother, Nathan. Houdini turned against Leo, banishing him from the family cemetery plot and even cutting his head out of family portraits. The brothers never reconciled. In 1962, Leopold, elderly and blind, killed himself by leaping off the roof of his apartment.

Shim Lin won America's Got Talent! The second magic act to win the series.



It just goes to show the immense power of the BEST magic to blow away just about every other branch of the performing arts: singing, instrumental music, acrobatics, stand-up comedy, dance groups, animal acts, stunning 'black art' theatre with state-of-the-art electronic effects, and more. *Shin Lim* left ALL of these top-caliber acts in the dust, and solely with his riveting sleight of hand card magic!

Even the curmudgeonly Simon Cowell, who at one point expressed his utter disdain for “card tricks”, completely reversed his stance after watching Shin Lim, saying, “*Anyone who tries to tell you they **don’t** believe in magic – HELLO!!*”

As well, it should be noted that it’s one thing for a magician to compete among his peers at an international magic convention and WIN (as Shin did: I.B.M., FISM, etc.); that in itself is a fantastic accomplishment, there’s no taking away from it. But when the PUBLIC votes for some of the greatest (non-magic) variety talents in the world and ends up giving their highest accolades to a MAGICIAN – well, that has to have virtually every other magic fanatic in the world ‘bursting their buttons’ with pride.

And we in the magic community are all *immensely proud* of Shin Lim.

Shin Lim could be the biggest name in magic since David Blaine

His accomplishments include fooling Penn and Teller . . . twice.

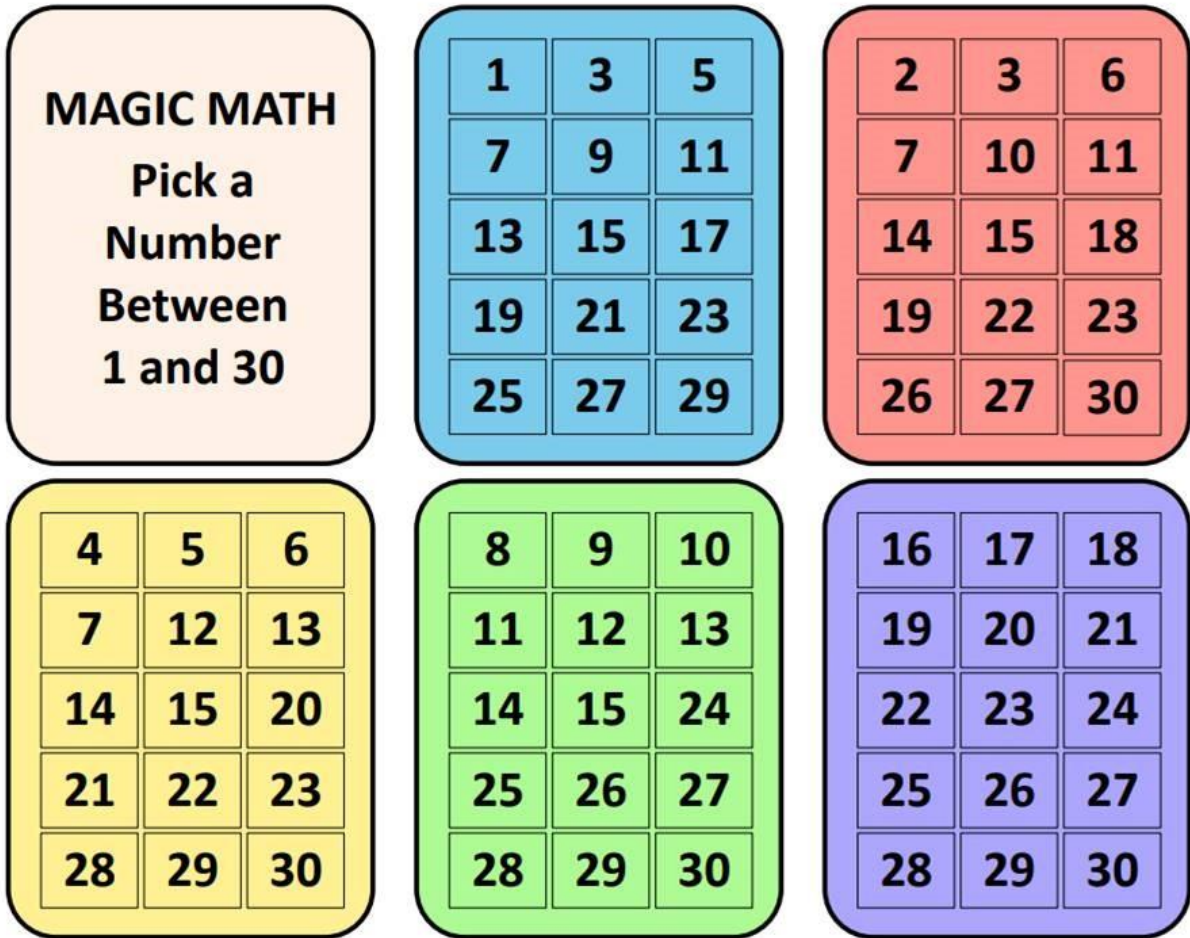
Toward the end of magician Shin Lim’s “Dream Act” routine, his hands slowly rise to his head, palms up. Just as the accompanying dramatic orchestral music swells, he opens his mouth, expelling a cloud of smoke and revealing a folded playing card that had been inexplicably moving between both of his hands and his vest pocket.

Lim’s precise movements, his intensity, the crescendos of the music. It is cinematic.

The question is: In today’s world of entertainment, how far will a deck of cards and smoke machine take you?

Most of you know that personally, card magic , and his style , is not at the top of my list of “likes”, but I give credit where credit is due. A full discussion of this and the grief other magicians have given me can be found in an e-mail exchange at the bottom of this Deliberation.

Some months ago I did this effect , in a disguised format, at a meeting. It is a fooler. Print it out and carry it around.



1. Print out the Magic Math cards page and cut out each of the cards individually.
2. Place all 6 cards face-up in a pile and put the “Pick a Number Between 1 and 30” card on top. The order of the other 5 number cards does not matter.
3. Show your student the “Pick a Number Between 1 and 30” card and ask him/her to pick a number between 1 and 30. Be sure that the student does not tell you what it is.
4. Show the student the first number card in the pile and ask, “Is your number on this card?” Be sure that the student looks carefully before responding.
 - If the student says “yes,” make a mental note of the number in the top left hand corner of that card (it’s either 1, 2, 4, 8, or 16).
 - If the student says “no,” just continue.
5. Show the student the next number card in the pile and do the same as you did before.

6. Repeat until you have asked the student for all 5 number cards.
7. You should have kept a mental note of the top left hand corner numbers for all of the cards to which the student responded “yes.” Add those numbers together.
 - TIP: Keep a running total in your head as you move through the cards instead of waiting until the end to add them. It’s much easier to remember a running total than to remember a bunch of different numbers.
8. The sum that you just calculated is the student’s secret number! Now’s the fun part – blow the student away by sharing what his/her secret number is!

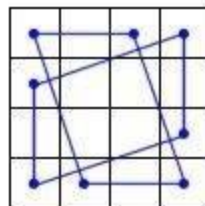
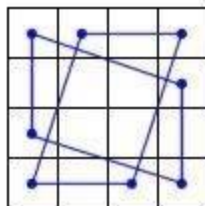
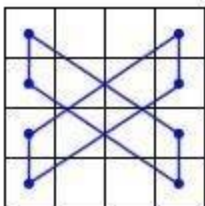
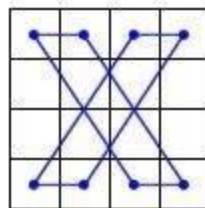
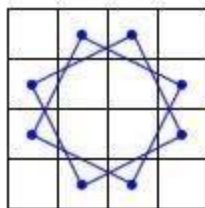
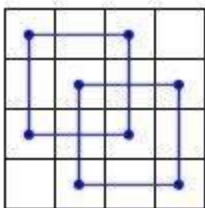
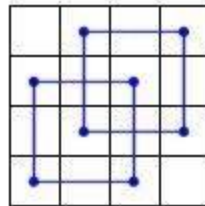
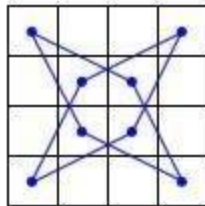
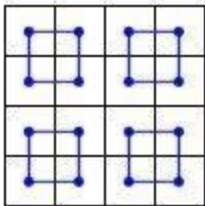
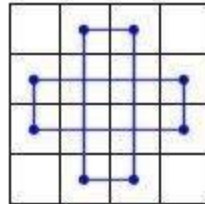
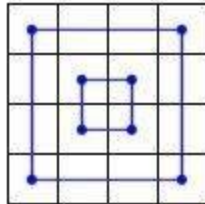
How cool and simple is that trick? You can repeat it .

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0955/2452/files/Magic_Math_Cards.pdf?10250573149741188969

Bonus! Here is an even more complex Magic Square, if you enjoy doing this effect.

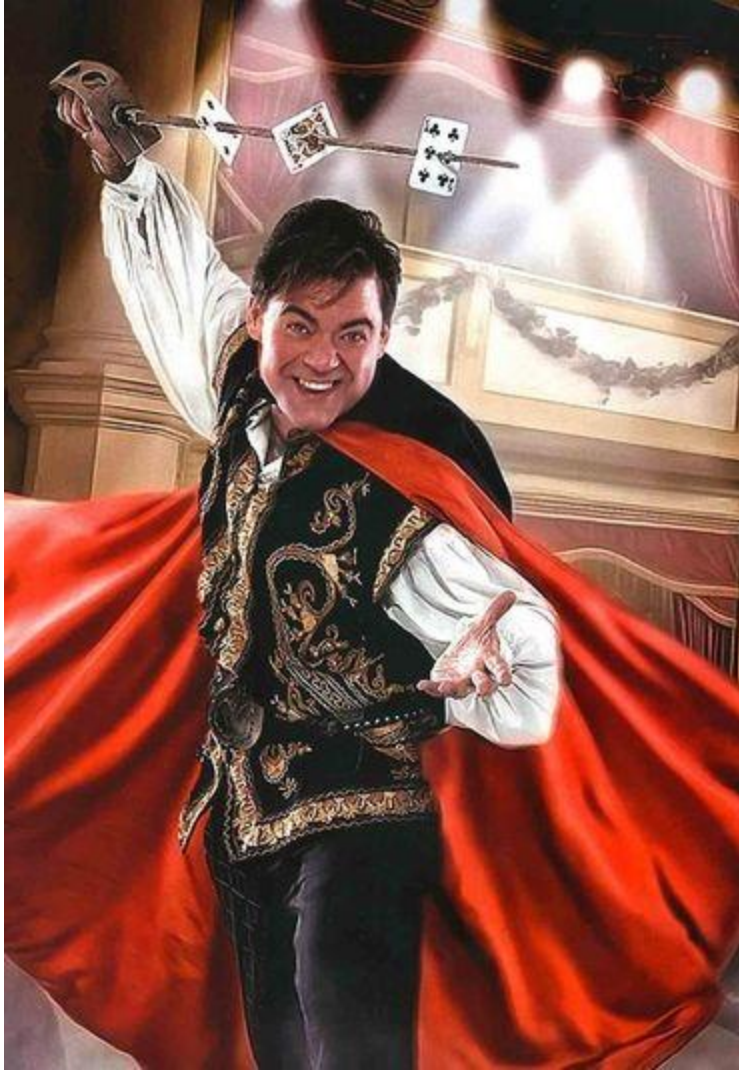
In this "supermagic square", not only do the rows, columns and diagonals add up to 34, but so do all the combinations of 4 numbers marked by linked dots in the squares below:

16	3	2	13
5	10	11	8
9	6	7	12
4	15	14	1



This bit of advice on distinguishing your magic and personality from one of the real theatrical artists in magic from John Tudor. Read the whole blog entry here: <http://blog.mcbridemagic.com/magic-murder-in-the-media-age/>

John Tudor <https://tudormagic.com/>



“Have our magicians had any training or direction in the art of magic? Have they stage presence, or can they act? No, they have not. They just got hold of a bunch of tricks, and walked out on the stage. Magic, which is one of the arts, and one of the best entertainments for the great intelligent public, has suffered terribly. In fact, it has been murdered.”

Guy Jarrett wrote those words.....

“A theater manager once told me, “We (theaters and performing arts centers) are all doing these mind-reading and card trick shows, on projection screens. We do good

business with these too, but they all seem the same.” The magicians seemed interchangeable to her, and she wondered whether they would grow an audience. My opinion may seem obvious, but I truly believe it. The better trained you are (aside from with the use of media) the less interchangeable you will always be (even projected on a big screen). I think the stage presence/acting aspect becomes even more crucial in a TV or media heavy production, than in a “normal” magic show.

The buyer also asked me why there weren’t more artistic magic shows, like the artistic puppet and juggling shows she’d presented. I told her about Jeff McBride & the Mystery School scholars, and the one-man fringe festival shows, like Ricky Jay’s. She said, “I would love to offer a magic show that’s different, something more robust.”

Robust, she said. Robust... I confess I’ve spent a lot of time pondering what she meant by that choice of words! Perhaps it is different for everyone, I don’t know. I am sure, however, that you, the reader, would prefer to seem “robust” than to seem “interchangeable,” wouldn’t you? Then don’t just watch YouTube, or *Fool Us*. Think hard about Guy Jarrett’s words. Get some training, some direction, work on your stage presence, take an acting class...or a Master Class. You’ll find yourself much happier, to be a champion, rather than a murderer of the art.”

I was happy to meet John at Magic Palooza 2016 and have been impressed by his work and writing.



How many male magicians feel this way? Honesty is the best way, as well as having more than the talent self-claimed. The working class is not starved for entertainment as it was in the days of P.T. Barnum. Every magician needs to be unique. That part you can control.

The whims of culture and what is a fad is something that you can not control.

Here is an e-mail exchange with a Canadian Magician who took exception to me saying that I appreciated and applaud Shin Lim but what he does is not of great interest to me and I would not go out of my way to see him perform.

I said.... (My Assertions and Response is in the bold type. His are in the smaller type)

I respect and applaud his magic. I am happy for him and his fans and magicians everywhere who do this type of stuff.

It's just "stuff", is it? And because it "isn't your thing", meaning since you don't (or can't) do it yourself, or, to be fair, just don't care to, then that lessens your appreciation of it?

Not at all! I can appreciate that *liver smothered with onions* is enjoyed by some people. I just don't care for it. How am I supposed to feel guilty and self-loathing because I don't care for it?

What I can artistically do has nothing to do with my likes and dislikes! I cannot sing like Andrea Bocelli but I went to see him and I follow his art. I have my likes and dislikes in magic. To each his own.

"To each his own" is a rather dismissive phrase.

Not at all... I am giving you and other magicians the freedom for their likes and dislikes and opinions. Why can't you do that for me? I do not care about artsy close up close up stuff. It adds too many complexities for an analytical mind like me. i.e. smoke in a card trick? It is like taking a perfectly great sophisticated song such as "Misty" (Errol Gardner) and doing a Jazz version that add so much complexity that the melody and mood get lost in the chaos. It seems that in Post Post-Modern art forms, all sequence and logic goes out the window and it is chaos punctuated by snapshots of seeming discontinuity (that is the psychological "magic" moment). Modern magic was more like Bauhaus architecture ("Form follows function") and Scandinavian design. I prefer that.

I get lost in what is happening in most Post-Post Modern art expressions. David Blaine and Criss Angel both went too far into grunge. The performer was not separated in look or power from the audience. To me, the psychological effect is like a shark feeding frenzy . Out of the chaos arise the Darwinistic victor or the luckiest survivor. Sure, certain patterns of the “natural” can appear to be “supernatural” but , to me, the thrill of the “supernatural” is that it remains in its domain and interjects onto our natural and does not merely rise from the “natural”.

I have to confess that as interesting as Siegfried and Roy’s Mirage show was, the net effect that that the stage action and pace was so chaotic that the thrill of the magic was lost. Too many “miracles” reduce the effects to mundane, sort of like Superman showing off his powers.

It suggests to me that you didn’t see the many incredible performances Shin Lim did to “claw” his way to the top. With most of my lifetime involved in magic, I confess I saw him do things that totally defied all belief. Studying him in slow motion repeatedly still left me baffled.

I can appreciate all the obvious work that he did. I don’t care if he “clawed” his way. Lots of people claw their way and never get anywhere. But, as you know, I have no respect in the Calvinist work ethic which is some sort of self-justification for why a person is rich. But like my professional magician friend, Jeff Eaton, once said, “The magician has failed if, when he finishes, and you ask, ‘So what?’. Often in close-up, I ask, “So what”.

The reason *I* loved it had nothing whatever to do with the type of magic I actually do. Like you, I don’t do his kind of magic, and so in that sense it was “not my thing” either. But my admiration for his skills, his pacing, his showmanship (it’s not for nothing he took first place in close-up at FISM and the I.B.M.) and the fact that he stunned me and everyone else with conjuring feats that seemed utterly impossible, is why I couldn’t be like you: confessing, as you did, that if it is not something YOU can find a venue or make money with, then you don’t give care.

Professional show business is a business. Making money is the only way to stay in it,as a business, otherwise it is a hobby.

In the final analysis, if you are not hungry, thirsty, insecure, sexually in need or poor or have some internal drive to get rich, why should you care about any magic other than as a hobby? Maybe some small amount of curiosity may compel you. But “magic” is a shallow way to explore mystery, because you know it is illusion. It is only a mystery as to how they did it.

If you want real mystery the pick something that is not knowingly fake but mysterious, like <https://www.quantamagazine.org/mathematicians-chase-moonshine-string-theory-connections-20150312>

Someone could interpret that as a kind of jealousy. Or a man who is a magician himself, but in his twilight years has become somewhat bitter over his lost opportunities. But I'm no psychologist.

I am not bitter over my experiences. I am disappointed that the Modern paradigm (Weltanschauung) has evaporated into social chaos and the common elements of Mass Cultural Entertainment has degenerated into tribalism. Professional Sports may be the last vestige of Mass Entertainment. Probably David Copperfield was the last of the broad spectrum mass culture magicians. Interesting to note that his broad appeal declined in the 1990s just as the Internet was talking over. That era also spelled the doom of “The Big Three” TV Networks which had a sufficient share of audience to create an awareness of a singular personality. This goes for all of show business including radio broadcasting.

David and Dania, Matt Franco, the two previous AGT winners, have respectively faded into “ A half-time basketball court show” and “The Las Vegas backroom” Purgatory where they have been consigned for magic eternity. Neither arrived in the age of Mass Culture which is how Copperfield made his billion dollars of net worth.

A man who truly loves the art of deception loves it all, unconditionally. With the only criterion being DOES IT SATISFY THE PARAMETERS THAT ELEVATES TO AN ART? Not listed in any order of importance, the best of the genre should — entertain ... fool the audience ... and be emotionally gratifying. A kind of visual beauty is also important, as are secondary considerations such as: a challenge to the intellect ... a lesson in the

psychology of deception ... and the uplifting experience of seeing the laws of Nature seemingly violated.

I don't see any reason to "talk him down" at all. UNLESS! – he failed utterly to satisfy all or any of the criteria I listed above. In my mind, he did not. His material is on a par with the classical dove magic of Channing Pollock and Lance Burton. And many others I could name.

I did not talk him down, all I told you was that his magic style was "not my thing" and I was privately honest with you (as I would be with all magicians) and you act like I do not appreciate all the credits he should get and deserves! He is golden ,in my view, when I talk to the general public.

One reason he is so good, is that he put an incredible amount of work into his magic. When he was mastering classical piano, he was required to practice 15 and more hours per day, until he was smitten with carpal tunnel syndrome in both wrists. That kind of near-maniacal dedication was then turned over to his second passion, card magic, as he was forced to give up piano and concentrate on only one thing.

Hard Work never equals success or wealth... Pre-1865 Slaves and low-wage factory workers in 1910 prove that! "Success" depends on some linkage to society and in showbusiness, Mass Culture Media is the link- how much ever of it still exists. AGT is the best example but still, the format is not as constructive to individual stardom as having your own TV prime time network special. "Fool Us" and "Masters of Illusion" are another, but the lesser cable channel location makes them less effective. Of course, You Tube, is the eternal domain of all magic gods and wanna-be gods and their detractors. You Tube is "Magic Hell" and like Dante's Satan boasted, "I would rather rule in Hell than be subservient in Heaven", You Tube continues to attract reprobates.

The reason there are so many lousy magicians in this crazy world, is that there are so few willing to put in that kind of dedication.

But I have known personally many great magicians who died unknown. They were totally dedicated, creative and awe inspiring and, when

performing, hailed by audiences. But they got nowhere and died unknown and forgotten. I have a “clock act” that was passed on to me by Vince Carmen and he got it from an unknown magician (who I saw once when he was elderly). For its day (the 40s-50s) is was the most diabolical of methods and effects. I would say that Karl Germain was another and he would have been lost to time, if it was not for Stuart Cramer’s documentation. Another is Ho Yam (William Mayoh b.1886) who also was a photographer and luckily self-published his creations which found their way into Lou Tannen’s collection. All of these people are unknown outside of magic.

Like music, there are some remarkable outstanding talents and many low talents. Talent does not equal fame.

I remember years ago, someone saying that at any typical magic get-together, there can be illusionist after illusionist [yawn...] but the moment a brilliant sleight of hand artist comes onto the stage, his manipulations cause the magicians to sit bolt-upright and take keen notice. Because they all *know* the kind work it requires to pull off successfully. But I digress...

Yes...and that is probably why the Juggler is usually the one who brings down the house at a magic convention! Ever notice that?

Dennis