

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

November 29, 2019 | Archived Famulus

## November 2019 Meeting

President Matson presided over a board meeting before the regular meeting. Treasurer Thom Parkin gave a positive financial report. A move was made to offer the same board of directors and officers for the upcoming election. Because we have a significant number of free lectures during the year and we also want to return to having an annual “Day of Magic” with a flea market, lectures and possible evening dinner, the motion was made and accepted to minimally raise the dues for the year 2020 to \$25.

Our regular meeting opened with introducing guests James and Joel from “Mind Masters” a new “Escape Room” Clermont attraction. Also guest Scott Rawlings-Steve Scott- from Canada. Our former President Carl Fowler was also with us for a visit .

Bev Bergeron gave a report on this month’s IAAPA Convention. It happens every year here in Orlando and is the worldwide trade show for the International Association of Amusement parks and Attractions. This year, Franz Harary had a display with a giant Steampunk style impaling device and Dan Stapleton gave a description.

The balance of the meeting was given over to a lecture by Jeremy Michaelson, a past award-winning contest magician. He is now developing a lecture and writing on what has been an upward career of innovation and excellence. He opened with a coin appearance and vanish in a puff of smoke. He showed us his hidden e-cigarette based device which is being used today by many pros. He had an effective “Card to cash” effect which used some of his innovations to make it more effective like blackening the edge of the cards and using magnets to hold the bundle together. He also effectively used sleeving and showed his techniques. He finished with a clever card manipulative technique where the buckled cards are multiplied individually by rolling them in the spread fingers like billiard balls! It made an aesthetic and impressive display and his encore was an appearing cane.





Photos by Craig Fennessey

Jeremy also offered advice on stage presence, how to stand and how to create a unique individual character image. He went through a list of about 10 magic and stars and explained what their character is and how they lived the character on stage.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Deliberations

### **Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170**

#### **“The Bev Bergeron Ring”**

**December 2019**

*When I was a kid, I had a paper route. After a few weeks, I managed to scrape together enough cash to take magic lessons by correspondence.*

*I sent for my first lesson book, and I waited patiently for several days, but it never came to our house. I waited another week, and still no lessons.*

*Feeling dejected, I finally came to the conclusion that I may have messed up the order, so I sent for the lesson book again. And... you guessed it... once more, it never came in the mail.*

*Then one day, I tuned into the local TV kid's show, and I sat down to watch it. And — I could not believe it ! There was my mailman, on that show, doing magic tricks!*

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If you want to market your magic act:

The birth of the internet ushered in a new gate, with a narrow-minded keeper, the algorithm. Now lines of code would replace people, editors, marketing managers as the filter for what Americans read, see and hear.

Is the flow of information the same for everyone? No, it has been personalized to our likes and dislikes. It has put each of us in our own information silo. The key is getting into that silo to sell your act. The media fog is too thick to get any attention to make a sale.

Selling a show used to involve an agent (or agents), if you were at all interested in keeping full time work. On a local level, you kept a “Yellow Pages Ad” and did postal mailings. You always kept a business card handy. You used a color brochure, cover letters and did mass mailings to potential clients. You also worked the phone, calling potential customers. For 25 years, the telephone boiler room was used in small towns to sell tickets to tent show circuses and touring shows. Typically, the sales pitch was as a charity sponsorship. The “Day room” sold blocks of tickets to send underprivileged kids to the show and the “Night room” was targeted calling to residential homes in middleclass affluent neighborhoods selling family ticket passes. I lived from this method for three decades. The collapse began with the rise of big box stores, like Walmart, would move into an area and kill all the local merchants. Phone answering machines and cellphones killed the residential boiler room customers. The last of the boiler rooms were killed in the dot com bubble collapse of 2000 and the final shovel of dirt was tamped down on the grave of that method in the 2008 Great Recession and laws against unsolicited phone calls.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the Internet changed everything! You now keep an E-Mail list. You do a periodic interesting client newsletter and keep up a blog and Twitter feed for your fans. You may buy Google Ad and Facebook Ad placements that are tightly targeted to your potential buyers. Facebook and Google know more about you than your mother, wife or medical doctor.

In very small towns “Word of Mouth” still counts somewhat. In larger places, potential clients do not want to be badgered. They want to hear from you only when they need something and then there are 2000 other people in competition with you.

The other change the Internet has brought is in the delivery of entertainment. Now, a scroll and click on your Smart TV and you can see anything in your TV room at home. That is what killed many shows.

In 1995, Robert D. Putnam wrote an essay entitled “Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital”. The essay chronicled the decline in all forms of in-person social interchange. What Putnam saw in his research was that the very foundation Americans had used to establish, educate and enrich the fabric of their social lives was eroding. People were now less likely to participate in their community, social organizations, churches, the IBM and SAM and even their democracy. You can see it in this decline of the enrollment in the SAM and IBM and all social fraternal organizations.

This trend has only been accelerated by social media and the internet. The unintended consequences of the internet are, that it has isolated each of us to a web of one. Algorithms have taken what Putnam saw happening in the last century and put it on steroids in this century. All in the name of driving more market efficiency.

The “efficiency bubble” means that efficiency is valued over effectiveness in today’s world. It’s a term coined by Will Lion of BBH advertising. Efficiency is the cost of getting the sale. How do I spend my marketing money so that I get the most “Bang for the buck”? No one wants to waste money on advertising.

There is an old story about a client asking his Ad Agency Account Director how much money they were wasting on ineffective advertising. The Account Director said, “About 50%”. The client said, “That is good to know, now cut the budget 50%!” The Account Director replied, “Which 50%?”.

Rory Sutherland, Vice Chairman of Ogilvy in the UK, recently shared this personal experience that demonstrated the efficiency bubble.

“The absurdity of the efficiency bubble was brought home to me in a recent meeting with an online travel company. The conversation repeatedly included the mantra ‘the need to maximize online conversion.’ Everyone nodded along. Clearly, it is much more efficient for people to book travel through the website than over the telephone, since it reduces transaction costs. But then someone – not me, I’m ashamed to say – said something revelatory: ‘Ah, but here’s the thing. Online visitors to the site convert at about 0.3%. People who telephone convert at 33%. Maybe the website should have a phone number on every page.’”

“Perhaps the most efficient way to sell travel is not the most effective way to sell travel. What, in short, is the opportunity cost of being efficient?”

“Nobody ever asks this question. Opportunity costs are invisible; short-term savings earn you a bonus. That’s the efficiency bubble at work again.”

The bottom line is that Google placement ads may be efficient in reaching potential clients, but do they close the sale?

I can also relate to broadcast radio, my alternate career in show business.



It's my belief that efficient radio chases away listeners, effective radio creates them. Efficient radio crams the hour with far too many commercials. For a while it reaches listeners until they get tired of the ad bombardment and with turn away from your station or turn on Pandora or Spotify.

Tech Guru Pete Thiel blames the efficiency chase on competition. "More than anything else, competition is an ideology – the ideology – that pervades our society and distorts our thinking," says Thiel.

When all radio companies chase the same efficiency metrics, they all end up sounding the same, their websites end up looking the same, and, they've turned the creative medium of radio into a commodity.

I am sure you know many "cookie-cutter magicians" who look like every other box turner or coin flipper or deck shuffler.

Never be "the best" always be "The only".

Roy H. Williams, the Wizard of Ads, says we buy things emotionally first and then justify those buying decisions rationally. The pursuit of efficiency is a rational answer to an emotional problem.

The magic business was never built on Excel spreadsheets and doing what was most efficient, it was built by creative people who touched others emotionally. Be it imaging, personalities, unique styles, props and routines but always going for people's hearts.

The successful magician today still fosters those emotions in their audience and clients.

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I like what this performer has done with the late Jerry Andrus' "Zone Zero"

Now the effect has a plot, a storyline and does more than just make a ball vanish and appear!

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More exposure. This is actually a good tutorial on how the Losander Floating Table works.

Pity that some may get cheap Styrofoam and try this.

This is an Algerian magician and he has hundreds of other exposures on line. Click on the others on YouTube.

By looking at his hit count and this one alone has three-quarters of a million hits, he is making some serious money from Facebook.



My rough guess is the equivalent of \$10,000 a month and all coming in by fractions of a penny a hit.

Facebook pays you when you get significant hits on a website.

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Magic Theft? Here is an Interesting article:

# The Tricky Business of Innovation: Can You Patent a Magic Trick?



[Can You Patent a Magic Trick?](#)

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On the inside of the front cover of the November 2019 issue of Genii Magazine is a splashy full-page ad for a card effect using a gimmicked deck. It's called "ALL ALONE"; but to my feeble mind it looks a heck of a lot like a variation of "Brainwave", or its illegitimate cousin, "The Invisible Deck".

Beef number one— They don't put a price on it in the Genii ad (I hate that!) and

Beef two — you can't find an address in the ad in Genii where you can order it (I hate that!!).

Then they frustrate further by stating at the bottom of the ad:

Watch the performance and get it at

[www.pheonixdeck.com/ad/AA](http://www.pheonixdeck.com/ad/AA)

I say "frustrate", because when I went to that web address, there were other card trick videos there, but I couldn't find "ALL ALONE".

So I did a quick 'work-around' by simply typing into YouTube, "David Regal All Alone" [without the quotes] and got it!!

BUT! — the problem with magic demos like that (Beef three!) is they completely miss the opportunity to show the effect under honest audience conditions! In this instance, David Regal drafts his teenage kid, can you believe it?, and with no audience in the room, Regal is thereby reduced to assuring the video



watcher that the two of them hadn't conspired to pick a certain card beforehand. Before I'd part with my hard-earned cash, I'd want to see a normal reaction out of real people!!

Here's the link, check it out and see if you agree that it looks suspiciously like a slightly-modified "Brainwave" knock-off.

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I get messages...

Dennis, tell me: "I've been buying lately, I wonder if it's passion for magic or just an addiction to collecting secrets and the associated clever props?"

My answer: Is a hypochondriac sick or do they just think they are sick? What is the difference? I just can't definitively answer because I am not a psychologist. I have only had grad level training in biochemistry but not in a clinical mental health setting.

I would think that there is a definitive difference between passionate, compulsive and addictive behavior. Mental health can depend on you personally identifying what your motivations are and being able to cope with them.

Typically, you begin to identify those motivations, as you mature in your middle to late teens. Some people never mentally get out of that phase of their mental development. There are a lot of emotionally immature magicians.







Here is a clever twist on a classic card effect. You will recognize the method! (Paul Curry's "Out of this World")

The first part with the green and yellow was Equivoque. On the back of the \$50 bill was written, "I knew that you would pick the Green Card".

I think they did a close up when he joined and split the pack and separated the two stacks It may have been luck or intentional on the director's part.

That one card in the middle was the marker card.

The reason he did the upside down thing was so that Seth would not remember which pile he put the faces!

Watch the clip a few times and see what you think. This is very clever thinking and I like the surprise ending.

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My longtime friend, Vince Carmen died on November 16th

He had been ill with dementia for 8 years. He was only age 77.

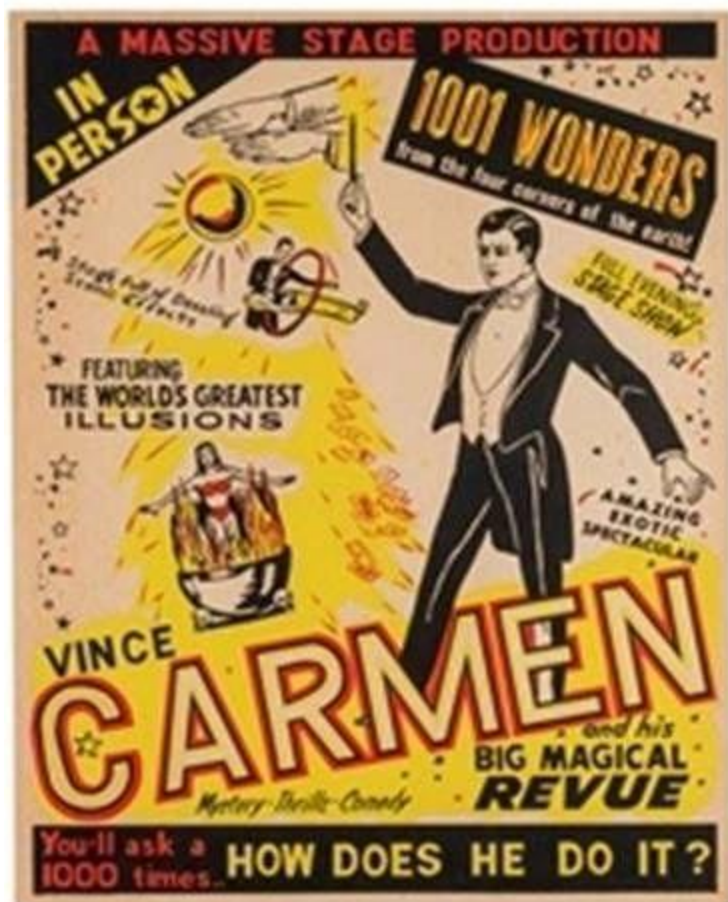
It is the end of an era for me, Vince was my friend since 1959 when I met him at the old Earl Edwards Magic Shop in Norfolk. He had just graduated high school and was playing with his rock band in night clubs and Norfolk was a music magnet for rock bands due to the sailors and the Navy bases.

He said that he was playing at a bar, not far from my house, and ( as a 12 year old kid) he helped me sneak in the back door of the bar in the early afternoon. Vince was short and I was tall so from a distance I did not look that young but when the manager showed up, I hid in Vince's sub trunk for 15 minutes until the coast was clear.

Vince would do magic between his band's sets. It was quite popular and the crowd loved it. When I moved to Charlotte in the early 70s we reconnected because he was from the Ashville area and was doing many evening shows around the Carolinas. That led to me making props for him and being a creative help for him.

In the early 2000s, he moved to Sarasota and I lived in Orlando so we worked together again. I wrote the cover story about him for Magic Magazine. At the last Magicpalooza Magic History Conference Dan Stapleton asked me to present a lecture and power point on Vince and his family.

Vince meant the world to me and was a link to an age of magic that we may never see again.







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**gm**

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As we approach the Christmas Holiday, one of my activities is presenting a short drama about the development of the Christian traditions in Church (Photo below)

Christmas was not historically the most important church holiday. That was historically The Feast of the Resurrection (Easter).

“Advent” took on a greater importance as “Franciscan” Western Christianity and later the Reformation focused on the humanity of Jesus rather than Platonic-based ideas of Divinity. St. Francis of Assisi is historically accepted as inventing the crèche (manger scene) by mingling together events out of biblical sequence.

The Magi came much later than the birth night and wooden stables and feeding bins were not used in the Levant but more common in St. Francis time. (1181-1226 AD) Reformer Martin Luther did not write, “Away in the Manger” but Luther did write for his young children—a carol commonly known by its opening words: “From Heaven High.” It emphasized the poverty surrounding the birth narrative and baby Jesus.

The Puritan-Calvinists forbid celebrating Christmas in early New England because they said it was a “Romishness and Riot” holiday. In truth, in their time, Christmas was rowdy and a time to party it up and play jokes on each other. Ever been kissed under the Mistletoe? “Sexual Harassment”?

The Calvinists also did not like the word “Christmas” because it alluded to the Roman Catholic Mass (Christ-Mass) and they objected to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which said the bread and wine are mysteriously changed-in-substance to physical flesh and blood.

Modern Christmas, as a family holiday, is a creation of the 19th century bourgeoisie where children became the center of the wealthy family. The poor kids still worked in textile factories at age 6 to 8 and were lucky to get a bowl of oatmeal a day. For details, read any Charles Dicken’s novel!

“The Night Before Christmas” is largely responsible for most of our modern conceptions of Santa Clause from the mid-nineteenth century to today. It has had a massive impact on the history of gift-giving. Before the poem gained wide popularity, American ideas varied considerably.

There is some debate over the authorship but the name most associated with it is Clement Clarke Moore, a writer and American Professor of Oriental and Greek Literature, as well as Divinity and Biblical Learning, at the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in New York City.

The final transformation of Christmas into a commercial Capitalist Holiday was the rise of the consumer economy in the early 1900s. With a new Federal Reserve to pump money into the economy and the rise of credit and Henry Ford’s increase in working-class wages ( this was despised by his fellow industrialists) we were transformed into a consuming economy and Christmas has never been the same. As I type this I am watching the Macy’s Day Parade on NBC. It is one gigantic paid-for promotion.

One final note on the image of Santa Clause that we use today: At the beginning of the 1930s, as the burgeoning Coca-Cola company was looking for ways to increase sales of their product during winter (then a slow time of year for the cold soft drink market), they turned to a talented commercial illustrator named Haddon Sundblom, who created a series of memorable drawings (inspired in large part by Clement Clark Moore’s 1822 poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas”) that associated the figure of a larger than life, red-and-white garbed Santa Claus with Coca-Cola. Illustrations of lavishly bearded Santas (and his predecessors), showing figures clothed in red suits and red hats with white fur trimming, held together with broad black belts, were common long before Coca-Cola’s first Sundblom-drawn Santa Claus. What Coca-Cola popularized was an image they borrowed and standardized.

So regardless of what your religious convictions are or are not, culture and religion do work together. In the United States we have the freedom to express our convictions openly but not force them on others by using laws (I believe there are no more of the “Blue Laws”)





I find there is no “War on Christmas”. Christians openly celebrate and evangelize and express themselves publicly. One consistent misconception is that the term “XMAS” means that “Atheists are trying to take Christ out of Christmas”. That is false. The “X” is not the same as the English letter for our “X”! It is the Greek letter “Chi” which is an ancient shorthand for “Christ”, as in the “Chi-Rho”. Cruise ship magicians know that the “X” on the funnel of a “Chandris” cruise liner is the Greek “Chi” and not the English “X”.



Here I am playing Bishop St. Nicholas with my monk assistant at St. Matthews, Orlando. I am retelling the legend that says that, at Constantinople in 381 AD, Nicolas punched Arias for speaking heresy regarding the nature of the Jesus. Religious fights have been going on a long time!

Blessings to you always and Peace and Good Will to all !

Dennis Phillips