

SPECIAL PANDEMIC EDITION # 22

June 22, 2021 | Archived Famulus



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

-Orlando and nation on pandemic alert-

Ring/ Assembly meetings set to resume in July at the IHOP, Kirkman Road

Virtual on-line sessions still happening on the regular monthly meeting night, the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:30PM

Our June meeting was called to order by President Mike Matson and may be our final “Zoom only” meeting. Hopefully, we will be back to live meetings in July. We still plan to offer a Zoom feed of future live meetings.

This month was a Zoom lecture from the island of Cyprus. There was a 7-hour time difference so he lectured to us, in Florida, during the middle of his night.

Nikolas Mavresis is a mentalist, and he creates great magic pieces that will thrill anyone interested in mentalism. It was a great night filled with some clever ideas! Not only does he take old methods and revamp them, but he introduced new methods and ideas and it is a breath of fresh air. He had a great command of English even though his native language is Greek.

He began with a drawing duplication of a selected picture card. He had an effect using “the Stroop Test”, a classic psychological ploy where the physical color of a printed word is different from what the word spells, such as the word “Red” spelled using “Blue” letters.

He did some clever work with a memorized deck and proved that it was a powerful tool for mentalism.

He had a music box prediction where a card with songs is selected and matches to a music box song.

Perhaps the most intriguing method and stunning effects was his “Stoogeless”. On the Zoom feed he was able to play prerecorded parts of the presentation during which he was able to insert cards in envelopes and boxes, unseen which the video was playing, and make it appear that he had been able to predict totally random outcomes.

Mavresis is a creative thinker in the world of Mental Magic. His lecture is highly recommended.

Dennis Phillips

<https://mavresis.com/shop/>

These are on-going developing stories and it looks like it will be a shaky start to a return to the cruise business, but it will be back.

Cruise Ship Sets Sail From North America For The First Time Since 2020

By Bill Galluccio
June 7, 2021



For the first time in over a year, **a cruise ship with 500 passengers set sail** from a port in North America. Celebrity Millennium departed from Philipsburg, St. Maarten, on Saturday (June 5) and will make stops at Barbados, Aruba, and Curacao, during its seven-day voyage.

"Today, we sail, again! This is such a significant moment for our company, our industry, and the Caribbean. That this day has finally arrived for our guests and our crew is truly special -- beyond words, really," **Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, President and CEO of Celebrity Cruises, said in a statement.** "What an honor to now be the first to enthusiastically say, once again -- 'Welcome Aboard!'"

NOTE: (still concerns and cautions)

Two passengers who shared a stateroom on the first cruise ship to set sail in North America since the start of the coronavirus pandemic tested positive for COVID-19. Royal Caribbean said that the two passengers are both asymptomatic and are currently in isolation. They are being monitored by the ship's medical team, and the cruise line said they are "conducting contact tracing, expediting testing for all close contacts and closely monitoring the situation."

Royal Caribbean postpones inaugural sailing after 8 crew members test positive for Covid-19

By Aya Elamroussi, CNN · 2 hrs ago



Like | 23

Royal Caribbean postponed the inaugural sailing of its cruise ship Odyssey of the Seas after eight vaccinated crew members tested positive for Covid-19, the company's CEO said.



© Shutterstock

The positive tests come as major cruises lines are finally starting to set sail for the first time since the pandemic halted their movements.



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170, Assembly #99

“The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring”

Quod vitae sectabimar iter.

What path shall we take in life?

- Rene Descartes-

Perhaps, the most challenging part of doing magic trying to determine just what effects to do and what “path” to take in performing.

Will you focus on close up, cards, coins, rubber hands or parlor magic with small props or illusions and stage work?

There are many paths to walk in magic, including mentalism and character thematic performance.

There are so many possibilities and much of what is bought it impulse buying which is why we all have drawers of props (in my case a warehouse bay) where we tried different directions.

The skilled performer knows the audience and what to do and the part to take. Sometimes, it takes a while to discover your path.

The pandemic has led some performers to reassess their careers in full time show business. We need to always have a plan and alternatives.

Update on Max Maven



Max Maven

4 h · 🌐



PROGRESS REPORT:

It is now a week since the brain surgery. They were able to remove the entire tumor. Much work still to be done — radiation, chemo, &c. — but so far it is going very well. The outpouring from friends, relatives, and widespread associations has been vast and appreciated.

I have returned to solo living (although constantly looked after). Two nights ago, a lovely Cantonese meal; last night, delicious Korean Barbecue; tonight, fine dining at the Magic Castle.

High as a kite on painkillers, but functioning reasonably well.

And life continues. Thank you for keeping me as part of yours.

M

A look at the Classic Nest of Boxes

The Next of Boxes effect is old and a popular historic effect.

The plot involves borrowing a personal item for a volunteer and that item is either destroyed or vanishes and it reappears at an impossible location within a box in another box inside another box. Sometimes up to ten boxes are nested or as few are three.

Performers like MacDonald Birch, Richiardi Jr, and John Calvert had stand out performances. Rick Thomas has a humorous approach and combines a breakaway tray, the spectator holds, as a comedy bit simulating the destruction of the wrist watch.

In the early days, a wristwatch was borrowed and apparently destroyed. Sometimes coins or dollar bills are used. When cell phones became common, they were borrowed as was rings and wallets. The theme was also used, by Steve Hart, for a borrowed shoe and I have seen the reappearance connected to a Next of Boxes.

In 1968, Charles Windley commissioned me to make a Next of Boxes for him as he had seen Bill Neff use. Windley vanished a volunteer's watch inside a Devil's hank. One pocket had coins and nuts and bolts to simulate a broken watch. The routine was that Windley would borrow a watch to "tune up" for the spectator and after putting it in a Devil's Hank he would use a hammer to "get it running again" and of course apparently break it. He would shake the Devil's Hank so the rattling could be heard and then open the hank and the watch was gone. The assistant would take the hank off stage and load it into the final box. Windley would direct the attention to a large red box that has been sitting at the foot of the stage, in full view, all the time. A table was ordered from backstage, and the box was placed on it. The spectator would open the lock and inside was another box and another table was ordered. Again, another box inside and another table. Finally, the blue box was pulled by the spectator and never touched by the magician and when it was opened, a cloth bag with the spectator's watch was inside.

When watches became less common, cell phones could be borrowed, and Graham Crackers, in the Devil's Hank, are wonderful for simulating breaking the phone in a Devil's Hank.

In the current litigious social conditions, the only things that I will borrow today are shoes, a coin or paper bill.

The photos should be self-explanatory. The yellow box does not have a bottom and is placed over the well that has the loaded blue box. When it is pushed up. Two brass strip clips hold it up so the spectator can remove it. The effect can be performed almost

surrounded but does need an assistant off stage to load. There are ways, using a table well to eliminate an off-stage assistant. Tony Marks also used a tray for this solo method and the whole routine is well documented in Bev Bergeron's book on Tony Marks. I believe that John Calvert simply dropped the watch into the open final box in the well and opened the previous box backwards and pulled the box out of the well in a wonderful fake move.

This effect is timeless and a classic.



Make your own “rough and smooth” decks. Testor's clear dull coat spray, as well as Krylon Matte Spray also works.

The principle behind the rough and smooth is that pairs of cards will stay together when finger pressure is applied but can be separated without the pressure.

Cards effects like the “Brain Wave Deck” and “Invisible Deck” and “Pop-eye Deck” use this method as well as the McCombical and Split Deck.



You may find this interesting. Wes interviewed me for this podcast episode.

I was the opening act. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Jam I still can not determine if I hold the world's record for the magician with the largest live audience in history. Possibly Franz Harary may have had a bigger live audience, but I am in the top two , for sure.

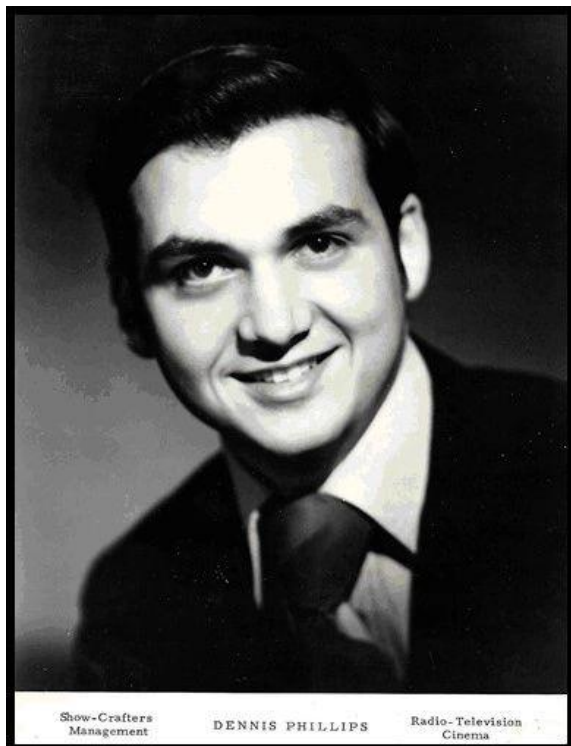
August Jam, the largest concert in North Carolina history, took place at the Charlotte Motor Speedway on August 10, 1974. It is said that this concert was the end of an era for its kind, preceded by the California Jam in April 1974 and the Ozark Music Festival at Sedalia, Missouri in July 1974. Headlining acts included the Allman Brothers Band, Foghat, the Marshall Tucker Band, and Black Oak Arkansas. WAYS radio station and other local sponsors, expected 70,000 concertgoers but widespread gatecrashing raised audience

totals to over 200,000 (some reporting as high as 300,000), accidentally making it the largest concert in state history and at the time, the largest concert (not festival) in U.S. history.

My part was to come out on the stage and welcome the crowd with a poem and produce 4 doves (“We come from the four winds: The North, the South, the East and the West. We come in peace...”) I also did some introductions and announcements for a couple of hours on the PA system. The site was jammed with a third of a million people and I was shuttled out on a Bell Ranger Helicopter to the pad on the infield of the racetrack. Because of the traffic, that was the only way the music acts could get there from the roof of the parking garage at the Charlotte Downtowner Hotel. My doves did not like the elevation change during the chopper ride and one of the “Grinder Switch” band members offered to give my doves “a little weed” to calm them down.

Coming back, I rode left seat in front, alone with the pilot and he was flying for an aviation service of Atlanta , Peachtree Rotors. Remember that this was 1974 near the end of the Viet Nam War and the pilot was a slightly crazy former Viet Nam military pilot. When I told him that I was a fixed wing pilot and had a couple of training hours in choppers, he gave me a “thrill ride” on the way back.

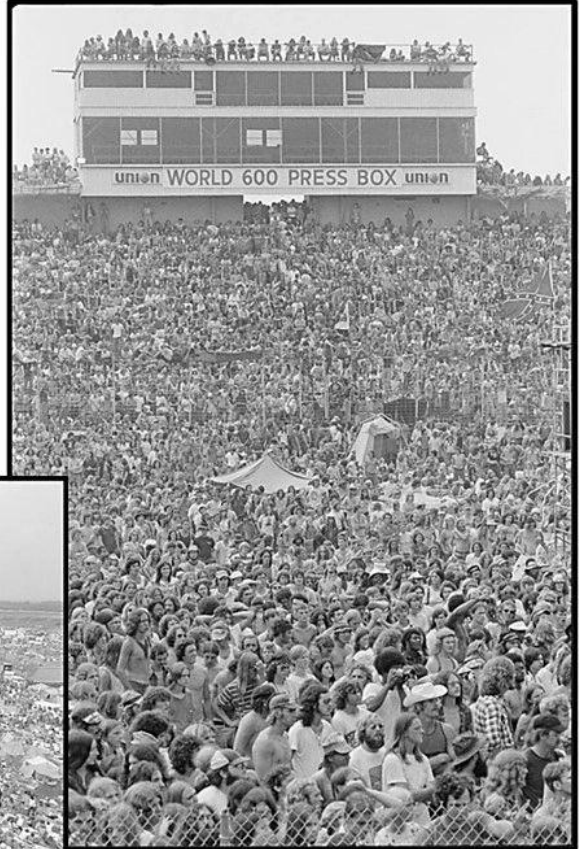
At the time, I was a local TV and radio personality at WBTV in Charlotte.



August JAM

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND & EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER

BLACK OAK ARKANSAS, EAGLES, FOGHAT
THE MARSHALL TUCKER BAND,
OZARK MTN. DARE DEVILS
GRINDER SWITCH & MORE
GUEST M.C. - WOLFMAN JACK
A GIANT FIREWORKS DISPLAY
SATURDAY, AUG. 10 - CHARLOTTE MOTOR SPEEDWAY



The lovely Valérie, Artistic Magicienne (Valerie Swadling)

Here is a trip down memory lane where our own Valerie does a classy act. Watch and enjoy.



My "gut feeling" (pardon the pun) is that no stage effect should make you feel unpleasant or suggest anything unsanitary (even if it is fake). There are too many other things a magician can do to make you feel entertained.

I am more repulsed that entertained by their antics and that goes for many other postmodern geek show performance artists I, when they do things like this. My fingers pointed at Penn and Teller, David Blaine, Criss Angel and others.

This is a sort of twisted version of Steinmeyer's Hospitality and the old Hoffman "Think a Drink".

Those were good premise: Name a beverage and pour it from a single container.

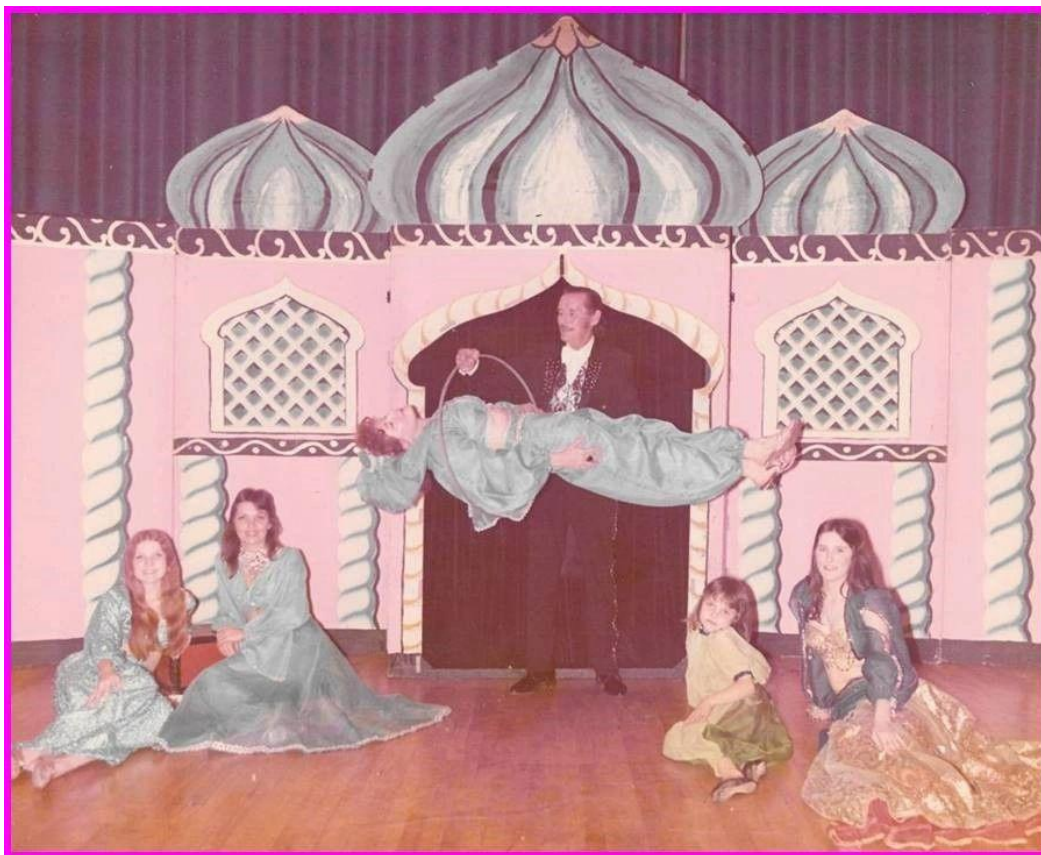
But, regurgitating a drink for someone, who you don't know, to drink? That seems kinky and immature.

I got past that stage of life when my High School girlfriend and I would pass ice cubes from mouth to mouth while sharing a drink in a glass. Even that took a couple of shots of Jim Beam in the Pepsi. She told me the alcohol made it sanitary.

I believed her. Young hormones can make you believe anything.

The Holy Grail of stage magic is a simple, light weight, yet effective Floating Lady. I am going to discuss the Wernicke method of the effect, one of the most practical, but seldom seen designs.

I first saw the workings when I worked with my longtime friend, Vince Carmen. He owned two of them. Both has been made by Ken Griffin. An earlier one he sold and then he was able to buy another one through Eddie Wade (owner of Magic Methods) in Charlotte. The Levitation had been owned by the late C. Shaw Smith, who had Ken Griffin make him one.



Vince had been my friend since 1959 when I met him at the old Earl Edwards Magic Shop in Norfolk. He had just graduated from 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 Boiler Room fund-raising 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, from Las Vegas and I lived in Orlando, so we worked together again. I wrote the cover story about him for Magic Magazine. At a Magicpalooza Magic History Conference Dan Stapleton had me do a lecture and Power Point on Vince and his family.

The Abbotts Super X is just a "suspension" because the woman is does not move while on the board which also is seen and "floats". A great improvement of the Super X is the motorized Gamola method where you can see the woman move up and down. You still need to stand behind the woman to hide the upright.

If you can troop with a couple of flats, the best of the Aga style effects in the Wernicke Levitation. It was popularized by Ken and Robert Griffin and became their signature effect.

Because of the unique bow shape of the gooseneck support bar, the magician can seem to walk almost all around the back.

The couch is simply a frame with an upright back and legs and the bar comes out of the back and in on one end. The lady is always laying on the lift board!

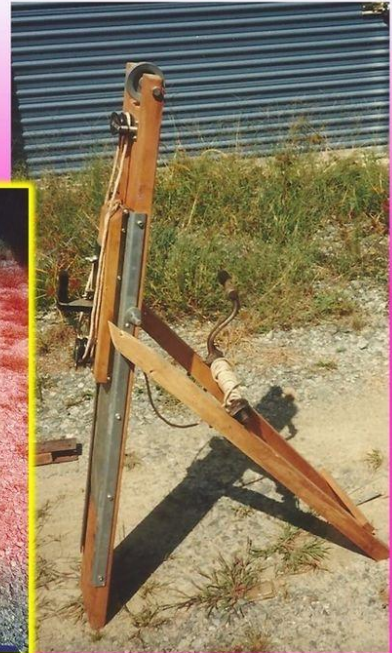


The lift mechanism could not be easier. It is a heavy wooden board and a sliding lifting board which is held by two angle irons. The boards are greased up to slide easy! The Griffin version used a windless winch as in the photo. It also sat backstage in an "A" shape like a ladder, so that meant that the girl moved slightly toward the curtain as she went up. This ingenious idea eliminates any counter leverage bars on the floor coming under the lady, as well as large counterweights in the back of the curtain.



Clever Lift Mechanism on the original Wernecke

He modified it



In Vince's version the lift is painted black and stands upright with a 3-foot hinged wooded floor piece extending back. It is held by two braces, one longer than the other, that are bolted to the upright and to the floor piece. He also used a boat trailer winch rather than the windless winch that Griffin used. The counterweight is accomplished by the winch operator standing on the floor piece. Vince also used a 5-gallon water bucket filled with water or stage weights or sandbags if the theater had them.

In building this, the only metal work is the bow shaped gooseneck bar, and it is 1 inch by two-inch steel. It has an attachment hole on one end that goes onto the nipple on the lift board. The bar appeared to be heat treated so the metal was slightly brittle and would not bend. It has been years since I studied engineering materials, so I could not give you specific Rockwell Scale hardness figures. The leverage moment is not that great, and the bar is a lot of steel so they may have just used a simple heat and cold quench technique.

The operation was smooth and the props lightweight.

The Wernicke is a piece of magic history.

The Wernicke can be seen near the end of this promotion clip for Vince.

Dennis