

Dennis Deliberations

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

October 2026

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It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our dear friend, Thom Parkin.



He was a member of the IBM Ring 170/SAM Assembly 99 FAME magic ring in Orlando and served as a Ring officer. Thom was an enthusiastic magic fan and magic creator. He was also a dedicated friend and family member, and an all-around gentle soul with great wit. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. May his friends and family find comfort in the many good memories of Thom. His full obituary can be found here:

https://neptunesociety.com/obituaries/altamonte-springs-fl/thomas-parkin-jr-13062670

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Honoring the memory of Harry Houdini who we lost 100 years ago this Halloween,





Harry Houdini's physical presence wasn't very imposing, but his charming attitude was something completely different!

It was this contrast that allowed him to capture attention everywhere he went.

Up on stage, he would have the audience holding their breath within minutes. Everyone fell completely under his spell.

His incredible talent allowed audiences to hope and believe that maybe magic was real, at least for the duration of his show!

Offstage, he was famously devoted to his mother and his wife Bess, showing a more sentimental side which only made him more likeable in the eyes of the public.

He loved a good challenge, especially proving skeptics wrong. Though he was confident and playful, Houdini was never arrogant.

He was so well-liked because whenever he was around, people could be part of something extraordinary!

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"It is Done with Mirrors."

In 1862, inventor and magician Henry Dircks developed an optical illusion that allowed a seemingly solid “ghost” to appear onstage. The concept was refined and popularized by scientist John Henry Pepper, and the effect became known as Pepper’s Ghost.

Using carefully positioned glass, lighting, and reflection, performers could make ghostly figures appear, disappear, and even interact with actors.

More than 160 years later, variations of the same principle are still used in theaters, theme parks, museums, and special effects.

Sometimes the old explanation really is true: It IS done with mirrors.

(The drawing does not show this but there is a wide hole in the floor. This is the method used in the ballroom scene in Disney’s Haunted Mansion dark ride)



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My friend in Houston , Curt Miller says : I was hired to entertain by AIG Insurance to entertain 1000 of their employees. A week before the event they called and said, “We’ve been promoting all over the company that you’re going to make someone’s boss disappear, and every floor is voting on which boss it will be!” I said, “One small problem: I don’t do that trick.” They were panicked. “What?!! It says on your website you can make an executive appear.” Me: “Yes, APPEAR, not disappear.” Them: “Can’t you just do the trick backwards?” Me: “It doesn’t work that way…”

I didn’t have any time to buy or build an illusion that would do this, so I consulted my library of magic books and found a hundred-year-old illusion where a person changes into another person. This might work! I had a seamstress sew a 6’x6’ glittery curtain, and I emailed a script to the boss at AIG.

At the beginning of my show the boss came out and announced that he had been voted as the one to disappear. He waved goodbye and 2 women from AIG wrapped him up in the glittery cloth. He was struggling and looked like a mummy trying to come alive. The employees were laughing. There was a drumroll, and when the cloth dropped it was ME. He had disappeared! The crowd went crazy. I still do this routine 23 years later!

More crazy stories: https://curtmiller.com/roadtales/



BOOMERANG TRICK *Escalator version.*

It's a **larger** illusion.

Needs a van.

CAN BE EXAMINED.



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10 THINGS THAT SHOULD NEVER BE SAID TO A PERFORMER

BUT ARE STILL SAID DAILY..

1. CAN YOU PERFORM FOR MY EVENT FOR FREE? IT WILL BE PROMOTION FOR YOU. YOU WILL GET LOTS OF EXPOSURE.

2. YOU JUST COPIED (WHOEVER) FROM YOUTUBE.

3. WOW! YOU CHARGE HOW MUCH? YOU MAKE IT LOOK SO EASY I AM SURE ANYONE CAN DO THAT.

4. WE DON'T REALLY CARE WHAT YOU DO. WE JUST NEED SOMEONE TO KEEP THE KIDS QUIET FOR AN HOUR.

5. IF YOU DO THE SAME SHOW AS LAST YEAR, CAN I HAVE IT CHEAPER? YOU HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT ALREADY.

6. I COULD JUST DOWNLOAD SOME YOUTUBE VIDEOS AND SHOW THEM.

7. YOU ARE LUCKY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK. YOU JUST GET TO PLAY WITH PUPPETS (OR DO MAGIC TRICKS) ALL DAY.

8. CAN YOU PERFORM FOR MY EVENT FOR FREE? WE CAN GIVE YOU A NICE MEAL.

9. I COULD GET MY UNCLE ERNIE TO DO THIS FOR 20 BUCKS.

10. MY KID IS ALMOST 10 YEARS OLD AND HE IS A REALLY GOOD (VENTRILOQUIST, MAGICIAN, ??) JUST LIKE YOU.

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Criss Angel

Magicians often disliked Criss Angel because his television style and public persona broke long-standing traditions and ethics in the magic community. I follow the 11th Commandment of show business: “ Thou shalt not speak ill of any other performer”. Keep this rule when dealing with anyone other than a close longtime friend in magic.

Key reasons Criss is disliked by some magicians include:

- **Camera Tricks and Editing:** On his hit show *Mindfreak*, Angel relied heavily on post-production editing, camera cuts, and visual effects to create impossible moments that could never be performed live. Traditional magicians feel this misrepresents the craft and tricks the audience through film manipulation rather than skill.
- **Use of Stooges (Plants):** Critics pointed out that he frequently used paid actors or secret assistants ("stooges") in the crowd to pull off stunts, violating a core unwritten rule of magic transparency.
- **Pretending It Is Real:** Magicians accused him of implying he has supernatural or real powers rather than presenting magic as a skill or illusion.

- **Rockstar Persona and Ego:** His dark, gothic, "rockstar" image—complete with leather, chains, and heavy metal soundtrack [now woefully obsolete] alienated old-school magicians who preferred a more traditional, presentation.
- **Public Confrontations:** He clashed openly with other figures in the industry, such as his dramatic live television confrontation on the show *Phenomenon* where he tried to expose and challenge a mentalist contestant.

While most colleagues, me included, respect his commercial success and showmanship in marketing magic to a mainstream MTV-generation audience, many other magicians viewed his methods as cheapening the art form.

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