

Ring Report #170 "The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring" SAM #99

October 27, 2021 | Archived Famulus



We have resumed live meetings. Be kind and courteous. Masks are welcome but not required.

Our President Mike Matson called our in-person October meeting to order. We had 18 present and it is good to be cautiously back together. Pandemic conditions seem to be easing in Orlando, Florida and Mike reviewed what local tourist-attraction magic shows have resumed.

Dan Stapleton gave a report on the successful Magic History Convention at his hotel and Kent Gunn gave a preview of his upcoming "Gategate" close-up convention at the same location.

This month's meeting show began with a new and trim Kent Gunn doing his version of Dai Vernon's 4 Aces tossed-from-a-deck woven into a delightful tale. Bob Swaddling followed with a fabulous story and a Mental Photography Deck that did not work like the classic prop. He fooled us all. He then did a Mental Diary trick that defied explanation and his own improved rising-card deck.

Dennis Phillips, in keeping with a spooky Halloween theme showed Abbott's Hole in One where a chosen colored ball mysterious travels into a shot glass that is covered with an inverted larger glass. He then showed a stage size Card Spider where a chose card visibly appears in a spinning web and into the arms of large spider. Thom Parkin had 3 spectators divide a deck into 3 piles and repeatedly cut and eliminate cards until each had one. Thom was able to know which card each volunteer had. He revealed that miracles can be done with a memorized card stack.

Dan Stapleton dealt 5 poker hands to audience members, and they all played a little poker and Dan won. He concluded with a card effect where his two cards mirrored two audience selected cards.

Closing the show was Jeremy Mickelson. He had a prediction about which superhero card would be selected by an audience member. After elimination of 5 cards the predicted chose one was revealed. He followed with having 4 cards freely chosen and they turned into Aces.

Dennis Phillips



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

“The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring”

**“Don’t send me a drummer without a cowbell on his drum set”-
Bev Bergeron**

Bev was an expert at having his drummer use rim shots and cow bells in his act. None of us can forget his hilarious bit of being accidentally hit in the mouth and then spitting out a periodic and continuing mouthful of white beans (which looked like loose

teeth).

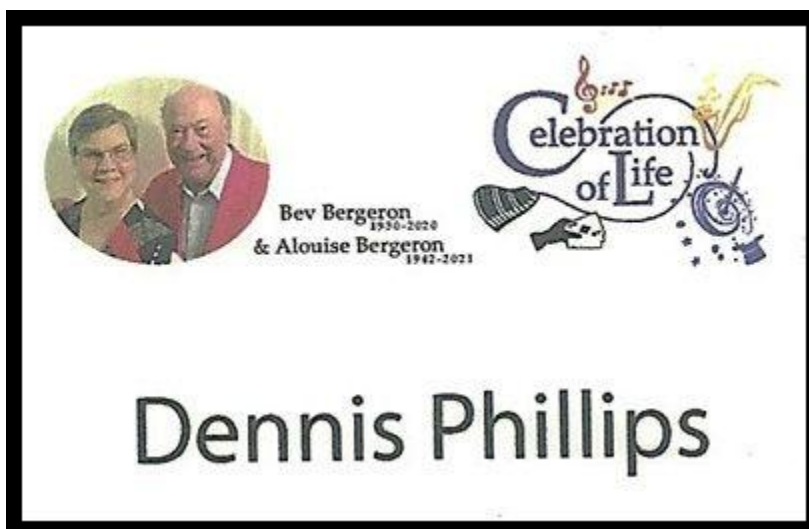
Accompanied by drum rim shots and cow bell taps, it became a running gag in his comedic sketch and was increasingly hilarious. It was pure vaudeville fun.

On October 2nd, we remembered the two people who were at the center of our local magic club activities and our hobby, here in Orlando, for 50 years.

Many thanks to Dan Stapleton and the Bergeron Family who arranged for the Bev and Alouise Bergeron memorial celebration at the recent Magic History Conference, here in town.

Dan did a touching and tearful “broken wand” ceremony and all present participated by tearing a playing card and the broken wand and torn cards were placed on their graves at Woodlawn Cemetery in Orlando.

This was symbolic of our acknowledgement that their physical magic is now broken from us but they will always be with us in our memories.



I had the honor of being asked to perform at the celebration and mentioned that Bev had connections to many magicians. When I was in college in Maryland in the late 1960s, a local school show performer, Dick Gray, told me stories about when he served

in the Air Force with Bev ,in the early 1950s, and some of the gags that Bev taught him. Later in 1975 when I did meet Bev personally ,for the first time here in Orlando, he became a mentor.

I began my performance by doing the “White shirt sleeve gag” where you announce that you are not going to use your sleeves to do any of the tricks, so you pull off two white loose sleeves from inside your coat sleeves. I then showed two of Bev’s well-known creations: The Nesting Wands and the Hot Book.

I concluded by doing a humorous “3 Cards Across”, in Bev’s style, routine using two of the Bergeron Grandchildren, as helpers on each side of the stage.



Bev at the Diamond Horseshoe Show at Walt Disney World.

You can see his cheek puffed out with white beans as his character is ready to do the "Loose Teeth" spitting bit.

It was hilarious classic vaudeville comedy.



Bev and Alouise



When I look to my left from my computer desk in my office, this is part of a wall of bookshelves that I see. Many DVDs of almost every TV magic program since 1979 are in the room.

If you are into stacked decks, bookmark this file.

<http://simonaronson.com/Memories%20Are%20Made%20of%20This.pdf>



A stacked deck is an invaluable card worker's tool. Probably the most famous in the Si Stebbins stack. Si Stebbins (real name William Coffrin) published the sequence in 1898. The deck stack is considered cyclic as any card in the deck can be used to determine the value and position of the card before it or after it. A deck in Si Stebbins order can be cut any number of times without disturbing the order. The drawback is that you do not know where every card is. That requires a memorized deck like the Aronson Deck, named after the late Chicago lawyer Simon Aronson (d 2019).

[Thom Parkin's idea for a training deck](#) for memorizing the Aronson or Mnemonica Stack is great and I applaud him for the work and idea

Typically, decks are stacked for different sort of tricks and effects and have various features. I only got into stacks because of MATH. They are a type of "modulo math" (like a cyclical clock face) used for crypto codes etc.

If you enjoy gambling effects, Aronson has a lot of famous ones built in, if you enjoy more straight magic effects, mnemonica has a lot of effects built in.

From both stacks you can deal any poker hand with just overhand shuffles for example.

Some stacks, like Woody Aragon's are designed so they can be shuffled, while some like Osterlind's is based on a mathematical formula, meaning it is easy to figure out where everything is without any memorization.

Lots more people will have published effects based on the better-known stacks, so there's a lot more material for you to learn. If you were to grab Joyal stack or the Redford stack, you might not be able to do as many effects as with the Aronson or Mnemonica stacks.

Sometimes you might just have your own stack because you're only concerned with certain effects. I know 2 full deck stacks, and I use them only for 1 trick each. One is Aronson the other just a stack that lets me do the 1 effect I want.

Harapan Ong has tons of tricks with his stack, but he produced his own so it could better be able to do what he wanted .

If you are into fooling magicians, you can use your own or an unpublished stack. David Berglas and Tamariz did this.

I am certain that you can do almost anything with any stack, just the methods and execution are different.

Some stacks you can get into from new deck order, like mnemonica.

My Lady to Lion (1990)

I have often heard it said, "Book a show first", then get the act together. The problem is: what if you booked a show that is in two weeks? You are going to have to perform what is rehearsed and ready. With the coming of the 1990s, the yearly routed "boiler room" shows died. All shows became "pickups" or individually booked shows.

You can't book something that you don't have. You must think to *only do what you can do*. So, I needed spectacular rehearsed routines and props ready for the increasing "fill in" and "pick up" work that I was doing.

Too many times magician friends have advertised and booked an illusion show with illusions they did not have.

In the late 80s (when the phone-room operations were dying as Walmart and the emerging big box stores killed small town business), I put a lot of time into researching the illusion market in the Southeast US. (Cruises, circuses, fund-raisers, fairs, etc.) Everything that I heard was, "If you don't have a Big Cat or major Vegas illusions, forget it". They continued,

“Your price will triple if you have the big stuff!” Agents that booked me said, “All clients want is the big stuff. Get it or there is no more work!”

Thus, I built what I thought that I needed: A Big Cat illusion! It was a Lady to Lion, but I wanted to avoid the expenses, insurance and problems of transporting a live large animal.

I booked it once! It was great but there was no regular market for it. The problem was that I was 10 years too late with it. Big Illusion American touring shows were dying by 90s. It was the emerging age of David Blaine and post-modern magic.

Owning a prop house and costume shop and being familiar with Disney’s techniques, I liked the idea of an audio-animated Lion!

In that it is always a closing illusion, I designed the cage to somewhat obscure the animal so that for a quick 90 seconds it would look real!

The mouth snarled, it swatted, the tail moved, it lunged at the audience. Moreover, built into the base were twin ten-inch speakers that put out a massive 200-watt growl!

The genius was that I needed no special insurance and no permits, and I did not have to feed a beast. There was no smell.

I booked it on a show in Atlanta. The show barely paid my cost to pay my assistants and the rent in a Budget truck. We spent 3 weeks rehearsing and video recording to see how real it was. It was! The audience and client believed that it was real. It got a standing ovation.

The client wanted to bring his kids back to see the lion in the cage. I begged off for “insurance” reasons.

In fact, an animal rights group picketed my show! They were none the wiser until I was so badgered that I invited just the director backstage and showed her the “lion”. I made her sign a confidentiality agreement and release me for any liability if the lion harmed her. Okay, I have a sense of humor.

I showed her the “lion” and explained that no animal parts were used. The body hair was all artificial pile fabric from “National Hair Tech”, a Massachusetts company who made many hair and wig products for Hollywood. That only infuriated the woman more! She said, “You are using a fake animal to teach people to abuse real animals!”

I said, “Sorry, but you are crazy, get real! What the heck do you want? Not even use the prop. Do you think that Yogi Bear, the cartoon is teaching animal abuse? You think that eating margarine hurts cows? Now, go out there and tell the press and your cult that you got fooled and you are an fanatic!”

She left furious and all she said to those gathered outside, including the news crew reporter from a local Atlanta TV station, that, “It is an evil illusion teaching people that animal abuse is tolerated!”

You always hear from the so-called magic experts. “Do something different!” “Be unique!” “Have what the other guy doesn’t!”

That is true and I always did, but booking decisions are never logically made, as I found out. It was sort of the right illusion at the wrong time. I was a day late in the big illusion cycle.

The Lion and Cage was sold in 2003 to a magician in New York State. I know that it was offered for sale again in 2018.



The cage and lion set up in my warehouse 1994

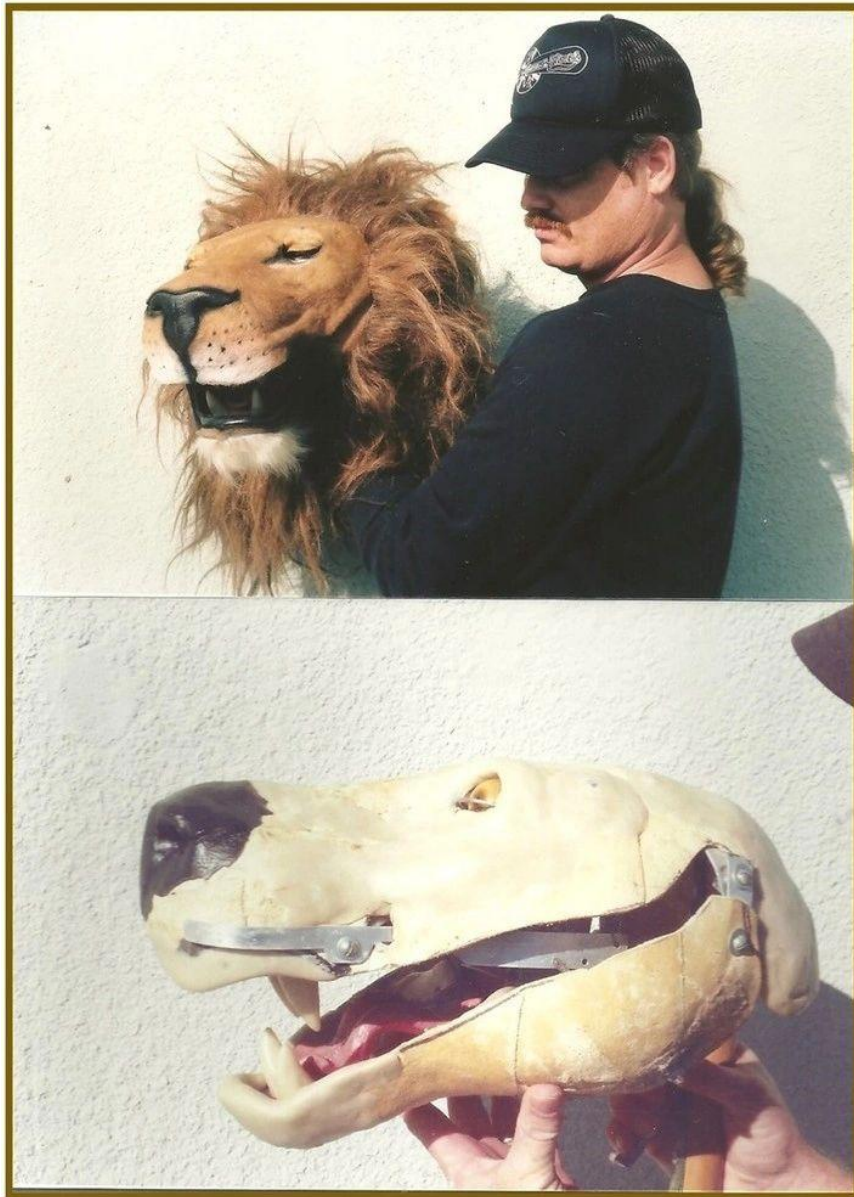


The top photo is the Celastic[®] form that was molded over a Styrofoam

Taxidermy form from Van Dykes taxidermy supply. We modified the shape a bit.

You can see the hose as the base for the tail which had a wire “plumber’s snake spring inside it. The girl in the base could move it with a lever.

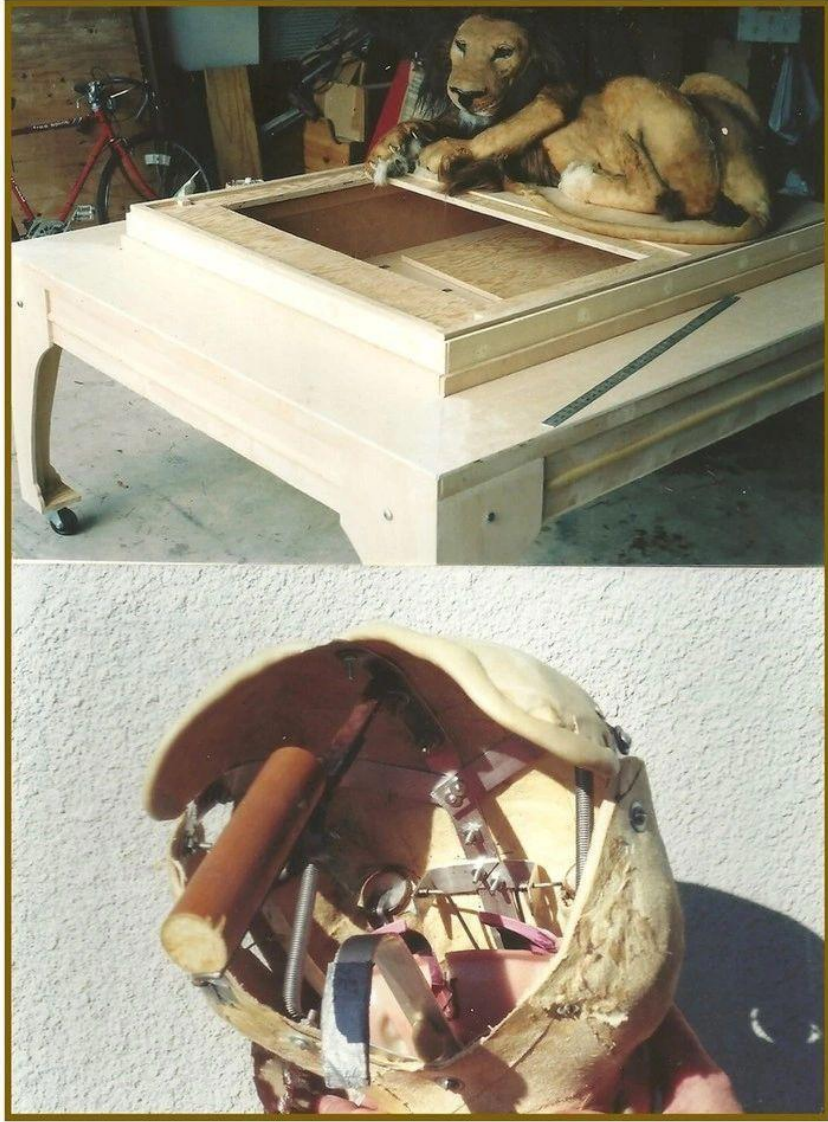
The bottom photo is Allan added the “fake fur” fabric to the a hind leg.



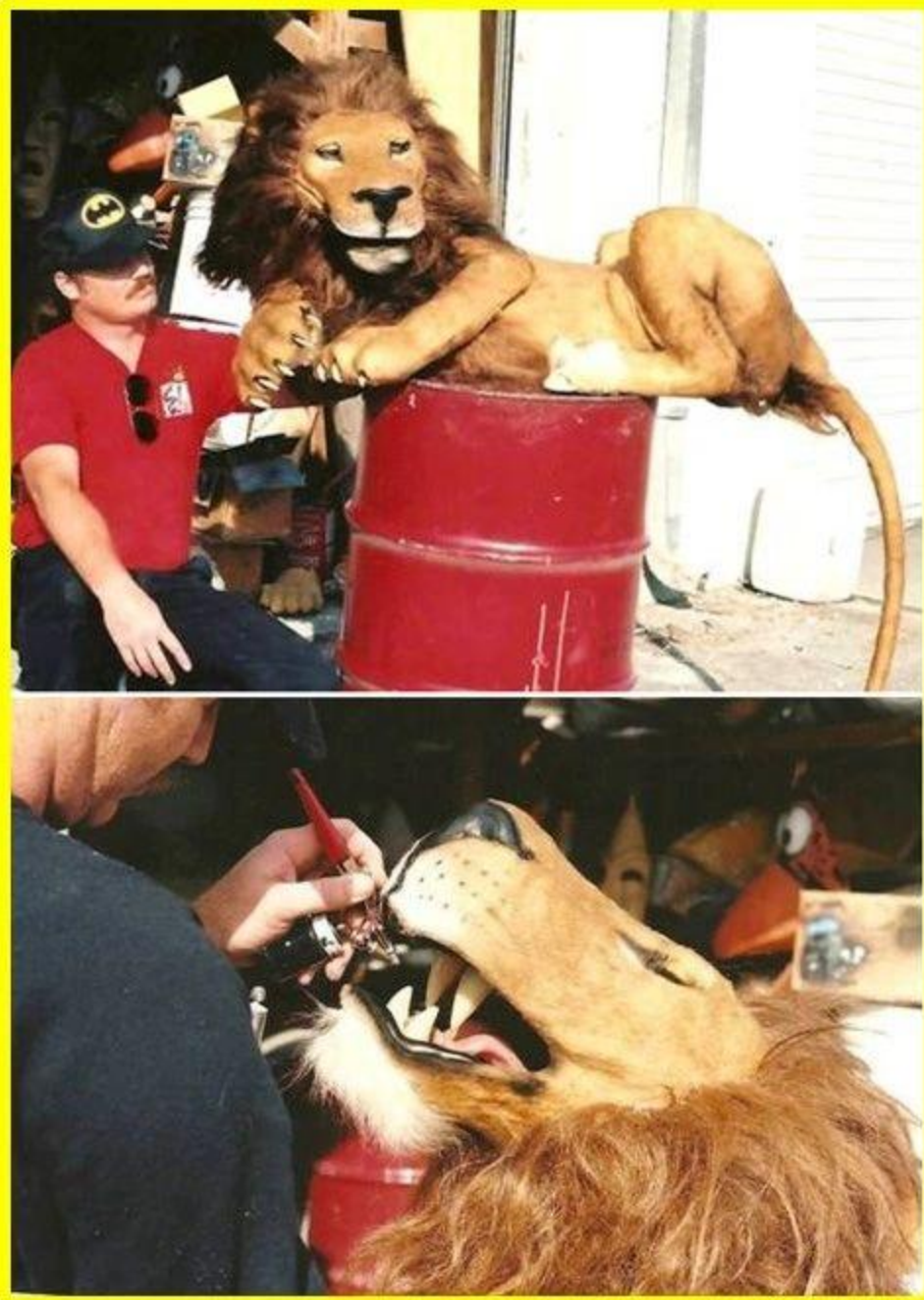
The Lion's head was basically a puppet operated by the girl below. There was a room in the base for another person to do this but we could get by with one person. You can see the mechanism, for the eyes blinking, the lip snarling and the mouth opening.



The lion's head was made similar to a ventriloquist's dummy. In the top photo, the head is moved by the wooden dowel rod and the bent aluminum is for leverage for the fingers. The action of opening the mouth was tied to the eyelids and the lip snarl. So when the girl entered the cage, she moved back the trap lid and got into the base and pulled the tray that held the Lion form over her. It has the area under the body cut out so she could reach up and manipulate the Lion head and work the levers for the paw swatting and tail moving.



The top photo shows the trap to the base where the girl lays to hide and operate the Lion. The bottom photo shows another view of the mechanism inside the head.



My artist, Allan Duckworth, with “Leo”



Working on the cage in my garage at my house in Oviedo in 1993. The top photo shows how the back bars hinged out the back to accommodate the width of the lion, which did not collapse. The back bars were covered by the cage cloth which came around both sides halfway. After the girl was put into the cage there were drawn all the way around to hide the inside. The fake bars inside the cage that hid the Lion, hinged upward, and were latched by the girl and then she brought the lion forward with her in the base. The polished aluminum bars for the cage were numerous enough to provide enough obscuring of the Lion so the details of his construction were not seen for the short time he was on stage. What movement there was inside the cage combined with the roar from the cassette tape and

battery powered Radio Shack amplifier and the excitement of the finale, made this illusion work well.

A crazy Brainstorm:

Say that I want to force the number “15”.

Why not lay out 9 blank square cards and explain that each one has a single digit number on the bottom side.

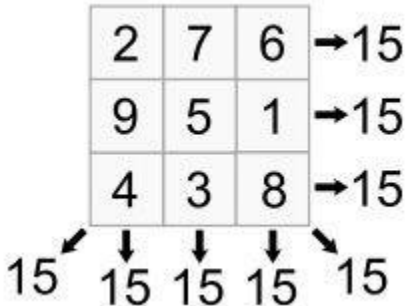
They can pick any three cards that are in a row, up or down

or either of the two diagonal possibilities. That is 8 combinations for 9 numbers!

So, you can see how you can force the number 15!

I have no idea how to effectively use this.

I was thinking about have it chalked on the back of the Mental Epic Board so the final force is not a card.



I just made a giant Card Spider, just in time for Halloween. I am in my backyard and Scott Humston took and made the video.

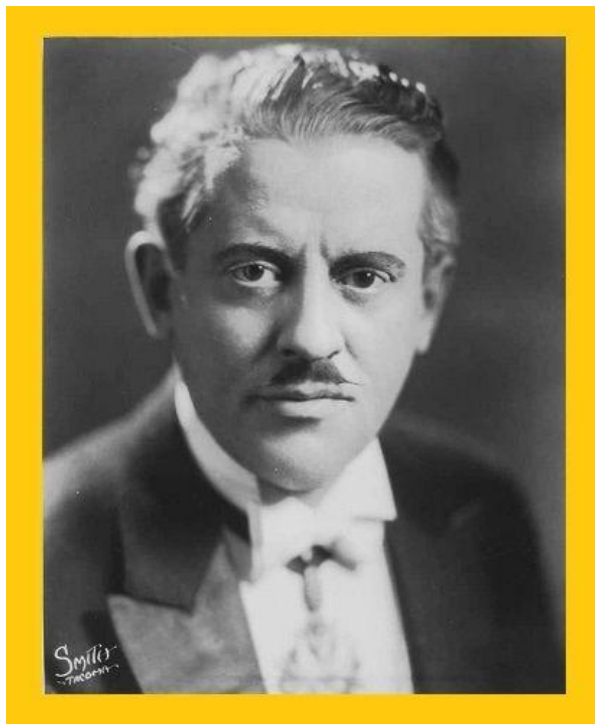
Volunteer picks a card, and the Spider spins her web. Few have ever seen this old effect. It is a classic.

(This is not a published video. It just shows you the look of the effect)

An interesting look at Pittsburgh's Ray Sugden, who toured as "Tampa" on a Howard Thurston produced illusion show unit.

Tampa the Illusionist (on Howard Thurston's second American unit. Dante was Thurston's International unit)

The name "Tampa" seems to have been used by Thurston because Thurston owned orange groves and land in the Tampa, Florida area and thought the name would be good luck for both the show and his property. Both show business and real estate are problematic businesses and neither of these ventures were successful for Thurston. The lingering effects of the 1929 Great Depression and rise of talking movies and radio broadcasting cast a shadow over Thurston's final performing years. Read the "Tampa" show story.



<https://www.spmc.org/blog/ray-sugden-and-mystery-tampas-mystery-buck>

The very talented and fellow Orlando magician , Neils Sayers.

The Great Indian Rope Trick

Cute new effect from Louie Foxx (a form of “Out to Lunch”)

With MS Publisher or your favorite graphics program, you can “screen capture” the card on the demo video and make a crude version to try.

If you like it , do what I did and buy it. Be ethical and support Louis. He has a lot of creative ideas.

Dennis