

SPECIAL PANDEMIC EDITION # 7

May 9, 2020 | Archived Famulus



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

-Orlando and nation on lockdown-

No meetings until future notice

All Ring meeting activities have been suspended until the state wide pandemic lockdown is lifted. Our Orlando tourist attractions, conventions and cruise ship activities have been suspended though the end of May. When a resumption of these activities begins, it is expected to be in phases with social distancing restrictions and screening. This means continued hardship for working entertainers for the foreseeable future. The issue with audiences may be fear as much as the actual health risk. We just do not know until we are circulating again. There is also a concern about business liability. Reopening for business will be filled with legal complexities and patron safety management

In the meantime, some of our members have been busy, in other ways, using the internet and creating and marketing new material. Jason Jafo Fields, usually the resident professional at The Great Magic Hall, Kissimmee, has produced some fabulous on-line routines. Jafo was seen on Penn and Teller’s “Fool Us” as was local professional , Nathan Coe Marsh. Nathan has been doing on-line Facebook talks. Michael Matson, our local president is offering on-line magic coaching. There have also been attempts by others to offer on-line shows through platforms like Zoom.

The challenge with any new idea and technology is how to monetize it. It usually takes experimentation and time. Recall that historically, broadcast radio and television took at least a decade ,each, to make it a vehicle for profitable delivery.

Many of us are rearranging our library and finding props in storage, on shelves and in drawers that we have not seen for years. When the pandemic subsides we should all have fresh routines, clean props and be ready to go.

Dennis Phillips

Air conditioning spread the coronavirus to 9 people sitting near an infected person in a restaurant,

researchers say. It has huge implications for the service industry.

<https://news.yahoo.com/air-conditioning-spread-coronavirus-10-154900420.html>



Very sad news in the World of Magic and Las Vegas with the passing of Roy Horn of Siegfried & Roy due to Coronavirus.

They ruled Vegas for many years from the Mirage Theater.



Our Ring and assembly members have been busy using social media and on line activities to keep the magic going!

Jason Jafo Fields continues to create and publish his routines

<https://www.getjafo.com/>



Nathan Coe Marsh has been doing Facetime presentations.

Ring President Michael Matson is offering his services as a Magic Coach for magicians who want to improve their acts and careers.

Randy Whelmarc says:

“Right now we wait, we rest, we float in suspended animation. Soon we will soar again!”



What was one factor that may have pushed a demand for Harry Houdini's public fight with Spiritualism? Was it the Spanish Flu Epidemic?

When the [influenza](#) pandemic hit the U.S. between 1918 and 1920, Americans wanted answers. Their questions weren't limited to what caused the pandemic or might prevent the next one. They struggled with more eternal concerns, such as what happens to us after we die and whether it's possible to communicate with dead loved ones.

The flu pandemic wasn't alone in spurring this search for meaning. World War I, which ended in November 1918, had racked up a worldwide death toll of 20 million soldiers and

civilians, according to one estimate. And if that wasn't sufficiently staggering, the influenza had taken at least 50 million lives. In both cases, most victims were young—between 20 and 40, in the case of the flu—and left behind parents, spouses, sweethearts and children.

The two most prominent proponents of spiritualism were British: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge. Doyle was, of course, the creator of [Sherlock Holmes](#). Lodge was a respected physicist known for his work with radio waves.

Both men had a longtime interest in the supernatural, and both had lost sons in the war. Lodge's son Raymond had been struck down by a shell fragment while fighting in Belgium in 1915. Doyle's son Kingsley had been wounded in France in 1916 and died of pneumonia in 1918, likely brought on by the influenza pandemic. Doyle also lost his younger brother to the flu in 1919, while his wife's brother had been killed in Belgium in 1914.

After the war, both men lectured widely in the U.S. and also wrote books describing their psychic experiences.

Lodge's 1916 book, *Raymond, or Life and Death*, describes numerous purported contacts with his late son. Lodge and his wife met with a variety of mediums, who practiced such techniques as automatic writing and table tilting to communicate with the dead.

In automatic writing, the spirit supposedly guided the medium's hand to write out messages. In table tilting, participants typically sat around a séance table while the medium recited the alphabet. When the medium arrived at the letter the spirit had in mind, the table would tilt, turn, levitate or make some other inexplicable move. Still other mediums went into trances and allowed the dead to speak directly through them.

In his messages, Raymond offered a comforting version of the great beyond, complete with flowers, trees, dogs, cats and birds. He repeatedly assured his parents that he was happy. He told them he'd reconnected with his late grandfather plus a brother and sister who died in infancy, and made many new friends. He reported that soldiers who'd lost an arm in battle found it magically restored, although those who were "blown to pieces" took a bit longer to become whole.

In a 1920 visit to New York, Lodge told a reporter that he was still in touch with Raymond, as well as other fallen soldiers. "I have talked to a good many lads killed in the war," he said. "They have not gone out of existence. They tell me it is pretty much over there as it is on this side."

Not surprisingly, spiritualism, which promised a window into the afterlife, saw a sudden resurgence in the United States, Great Britain, France and elsewhere. A February 1920

headline in the New York *Sun* said it all: “Riddle of the Life Hereafter Draws World’s Attention.”

Arthur Conan Doyle had a similarly soothing message. He claimed to have heard from his son during a 1919 séance, calling it “the supreme moment of my spiritual experience.”

As Doyle remembered, “A large, strong hand then rested upon my head, it was gently bent forward, and I felt and heard a kiss just above my brow. ‘Tell me, dear, are you happy?’ I cried. There was silence, and I feared he was gone. Then on a sighing note came the words, ‘Yes, I am so happy.’”

On a 1922 lecture tour Doyle told a reporter that, “I have many times spoken with my son,” and that he remained happy. “You see, a so-called dead man goes to a happier plane,” Doyle explained. “There is no crime, no sordidness, and it is many, many times happier.”

Now, Doyle claimed, was he unique in communicating with his son. In 1918 he said he knew of 13 mothers who were in touch with their dead sons. By the following year, the number had reportedly risen to 24.

Houdini took the stage to expose phony mediums



Harry Houdini and Senator Capper, of the Senate District Committee, on February 26, 1926 during hearings on the fortune telling bill.

While Lodge and Doyle appear to have been sincere in their beliefs, they inadvertently gave a boost to scam artists who saw money to be made from grieving families and the simply curious.

“Since the war,” the *New York Sun* wrote in 1920, “pretended mediums, long since exposed, have revived their ugly trade and are again in this and every large city fattening on the offerings of the distressed in heart.”

This proved too much for [Harry Houdini](#), the famous escape artist, who had successfully eluded the influenza pandemic. Though a friend of Doyle, Houdini, with his deep knowledge of magic tricks, was a natural skeptic of spiritualism, which he had studied for years.

While Doyle toured the world promoting spiritualism, Houdini spent his time exposing fraudulent mediums and reconstructing how their trickery worked. In 1919 alone he claimed to have attended more than 100 séances, not one of which had made a believer of him.

“After 25 years of ardent research and endeavor,” he wrote in his 1924 book, *A Magician Among the Spirits*, “I declare that nothing has been revealed to convince me that intercommunication has been established between the Spirits of the departed and those still in the flesh.”

In 1926, Houdini was called to testify before a Congressional committee that was considering a bill to outlaw mediums, clairvoyants and fortune tellers in Washington, D.C. Members of the latter groups packed the audience, and the hearing soon became a shouting match between them and Houdini—and had to be adjourned for a time.

“There are millions of dollars stolen by clairvoyants and mediums every year, and I can prove it,” Houdini told the committee when he was able to speak. “Conan Doyle is the biggest dupe outside of Sir Oliver Lodge.” Houdini also took the opportunity to debunk palmistry and

The heightened interest in spiritualism in the U.S. continued throughout the 1920s and well into the 1930s, but dropped off with the coming of World War II in 1941.

In 1919, a *New York Tribune* writer tried to summarize what spiritualists claimed the dead had to say about the next world. “They tell us that dying is not a painful process,” he began, adding that it sometimes takes the recently deceased a while to realize that they are no longer among the living.

“Finally,” he concluded, “they all say that in no circumstances would they come back.”



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

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

“Too be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

— **Howard Zinn**

From the, “Oh course! Why didn’t most of us thing about this?” file.

The hearing impaired who rely on lip reading need to see your lips! Think about this is future close up work requires a mask.

Then I got to thinking. A mask can make ventriloquism a whole lot easier!

Coronavirus: Deaf community facing challenges during pandemic



Face masks have made it nearly impossible for those in the deaf community to communicate. Masks with clear cut outs have helped. (KIRO7.com/KIRO7.com)

Speaking of Ventriloquism : Enjoy some ventriloquism and laughs with the late great Glenn Haywood

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4LuG2ll_yU&fbclid=IwAR1lunbasnucPedBhZXrfhDNS-LNAmk-xmHXbLvEju2kRw3wYo0VSNhmX3k



Niels Sayers says to share his episode in the Famous TV Show Pawn Star on the History Channel New season (17) which has reach over 1.3 million views in YouTube in 5 months. Here you can see him with Murray Sawchuk.

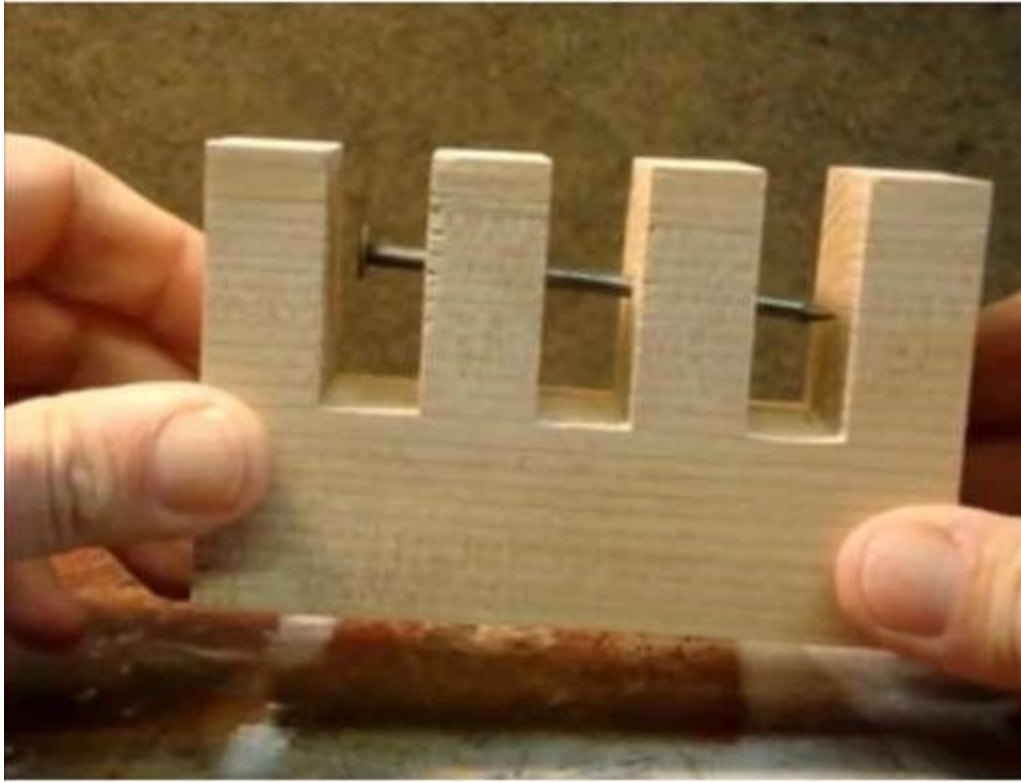
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXY2mhCDYZg&t=103s&fbclid=IwAR1jIIONTslqbFXqXqnbBG4FmaF_jBOaHOJCU5DAzlo5jExwyKqV1Tf9s5Y



If you get bored and want to work in your shop, here is a puzzle you can make.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=103&v=fEATei2wewY&feature=emb_logo

Thanks for this tip from Ring Member Henry Rydzinski



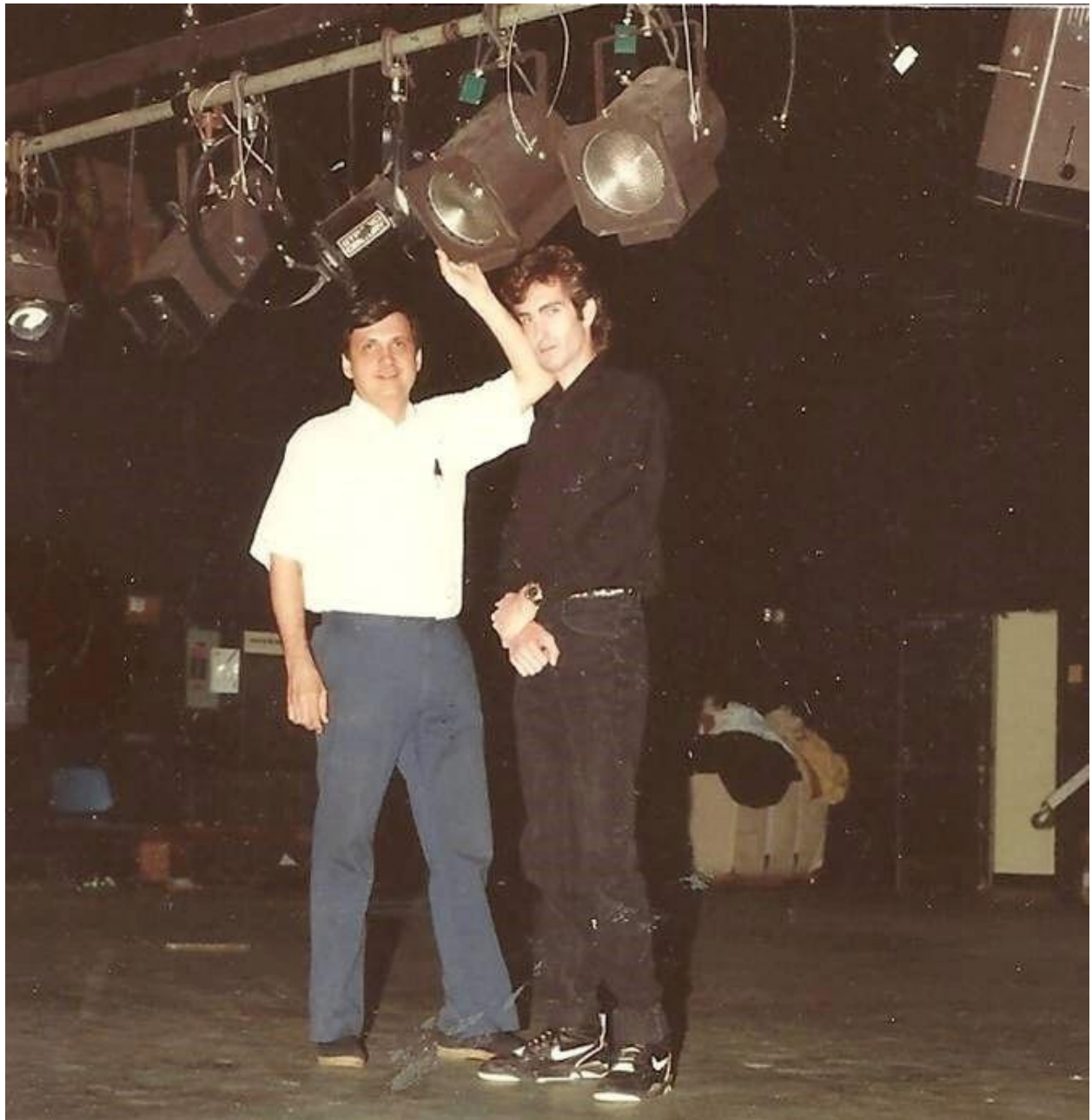
From 1987 until 2009, I was an Adjunct Professor in the Theater Technology department at Valencia College. I taught Theater History, Theatrical makeup and Costumes and advised on most productions during that time.

One of my students was Brad Gorton who went on, after graduating, to do some acting at local Universal/Nickelodeon Studios and then in New York.

Brad and I put together a spoof on David Copperfield. This was in 1988, during the years that David did a special every year.

With makeup and some acting, Brad did a great job of impersonating Copperfield's moves and voice at the Department Event we were doing.

This photo was made on stage at the Performing Arts Center on the East Valencia campus.



Throughout most of the 1980s and into the early 90s, I toured several editions of my family fantasy illusion show. It was not unlike what Stan Kramien did. The “front end” was telephone boiler room sponsorships working local businesses as a “charity beg”. We also did an ad book and concessions. With a combination of papering the house (free tickets), and sponsorship tickets and about 25% pure box office ,we were playing to mostly standing

room only houses in small towns in the Southeast. Understand that we played the tall grass and small towns back in the pre-Walmart and pre-500 channel cable TV days.

The show was structured around childhood fairy-tale scenes with wardrobe, music and dance and apron magic with audience participation. We mostly played High School and small-town auditoriums and traveled self-contained.

I created a show finale that was designed to be a standing ovation and leave small town audiences filled with a good feeling. My first track was "God Bless America" by Robert Goulet (actually a Canadian!) and then I switched in May of 1984 to Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA". I used a Bryce's Screen to produce the Statue of Liberty and it was operated by two Colonial Soldiers. In the sequence after Lady Liberty was produced, my comic side kick (Rob Labby) came out just as Greenwood sang "...and I'll stand up..." and I pulled the trigger ropes to the Abbotts Finale Pagodas and they burst open. Then I walked out in a full sequin Uncle Sam tail coat and produced the giant American flag. It never failed to leave the audience with a great feeling and the sponsors wanting to sign up again for the next year. This clip was made on December 15, 1990 in Gainesville High School. We were on a Florida tour through the North Florida small towns. Magician Jim Green and Alston Cockerel (Mars the Magician) drove over to see this show. You can see the Pagodas in action during the final set and the audience on their feet! (Pardon the low rez on screen captures)



I got bored during the lockdown and made this.... Dean Dill's Box. Dill uses no storyline. I was impressed by Jafo's excellent presentation with it at the Old Town Great Magic Hall which did have a compelling reason for why the box did weird things.

Enjoy creator Dean Dill's fun creation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMRe4TxEjo0>



You may enjoy making and doing this amazing card effect

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4NaS6BIAxk&list=PLYbrsuXgRMhxez7LrOkWYAlfyyig4hlz3&index=2&t=0s>



This routine used standard forces for a mentalism effect.

<https://1funny.com/amazing-heartwarming-magic/>

I liked the multi forces and the emotional tug grabs the audience. I am not sure I like mixing magic and tear jerkers, but it seemed to be play well. I recall that a few years back Kevin Spencer ended his Show with the Milk Can escape and did a heartstrings tug about nearly being killed in a truck wreck and

months of struggle at rehabilitation. The audience liked it. And then there is Copperfield's Grandpa story... It is difficult to do an emotional story like this and not get too **shmaltzy**.



Jeff McBride has a style that never quit clicked with me. I respect his skill and accomplishments and I like his thinking on many things. I was disappointed in one of his Daytona Magic Conventions. It was the last half of the main show and had very little production values added. Jeff did fine with his classic signature material but there was a lot of filler time in the show.

I reject his mystical Burning Man style stuff of being in tune with the cosmic. In some ways, his style is for me, too artsy. I am talking about things like the double LED floating canes and De Lights. In others, his acting and mugging comes close to smothering the effect (silent miser's dream and the water bowls). Magic should be fun and not an attempted religious experience. McBride and others push making magic a mystical experience. Henning failed at it in his later career. It is like Hedda Hopper, the great Hollywood movie critic once said after she criticized a movie and the producer came back and said, "Its a message movie!" She said, "If you want to send a message use Western Union!"

I think the Jeff McBride/ Eugene Berger linkage was because to the Burning man mysticism. I believe that Berger taught religion in Chicago. Berger always acted like he knew he was a legend. He was good. The deep bass voice-of-god helped.

Now, I understand the concept that myth, according to Joseph Campbell's explanation. Myth is tied to performance art and we all use things like: Birth-Death-Rebirth and the Heroic Struggle in any Freytag Pyramid Plotline. But I don't think there is a formula for creativity and a substitute for personal connection.

It also helps that have a stage persona that is not complex but makes one point at a time. That may be one of the reasons Henning faltered. He shifted from his rainbows and bell bottoms to being a promoter of mystical religion. Too complicated. Same with Andre Krole, talented creator that he was, he was always aloof on stage. Bill Neff was the same way. Not the kind of guy you would want to have a beer with. That may be a little too true in Neff's case.

I learned a long time ago when creating broadcast advertising that you never send more than one message at a time. Entertainment needs to be kept simple with a single emotional impact.

Stay safe

Stay Well

Dennis