

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

October 29, 2019 | Archived Famulus

October 2019 Meeting

President Mike Matson was away and Vice President David Freeman brought the meeting to order. We had many guests: Steve Nelson, Sammy Smith, Scott Humston, Anthony Medina, Eric Carabayo and Pat Pelazolo.

After the announcement of all the magic activities going on in the Orlando area, we heard a wrap-up of the recent local Genii Convention.

Bev Bergeron presented his monthly teach-in. He did the open-light spirit séance just like he did it as Rebo the Clown of “The Magic Land of Allakazam”. A cloth supported with a rod is held in front of a cow bell and it rings mysteriously.

Club Historian, Phil Schwartz, presented Magic History Moment 99.5. Yes, 100 is coming soon. The title was, “You Think You Know a Guy”. Phil began by saying that from 1908 to 1920, Howard Thurston was widely regarded as the best and most successful stage magician, but as history is remembered, the legend of Harry Houdini relegated Thurston to a person hardly known by the public today. Everyone knows the name Houdini. Biographies have been written, movies have been made and many people know he was an escape artist and psychic fraud exposé. We know he spent his boyhood in Appleton, Wisconsin and was a magician before he learned and perfected the escape act that made him famous. Houdini’s scrapbooks of letters, articles, programs and photographs have been sold and resold over the years. Houdini also left behind years of diaries, some of which are in the private library of the Bernard Ernst family. Recently, the family gave Conjuring Arts’ Bill Kalush access to review them. Fascinating new revelations include that Houdini may have had a half-sister, he explored escapes from a US Navy boiler and an old style diving suit, mentioned the names of assistants previously unknown and Houdini’s suspicion that Chung Ling Soo committed suicide via his Bullet Catch performance. Phil finished by showing a collection of stock lithographs from Friedlander and others.

The member show in the second half of the meeting began with Brian Sullivan multiplying Chinese coins and then pulling the cord and making the vanish. David Freeman made a small Buddha statue vanish and reappear under a cloth. Dan Stapleton borrowed an empty wallet and had several people crumple up their one dollar bill, and one person crumple a twenty dollar bill. He tossed them into the wallet being used as a pouch and had each spectator pull out a bill at random. Dan was able to know who had the twenty dollar bill. Eric Carabayo put four strings in his mouth with a charm on one and the spectator was given a choice and pull three strings with nothing, leaving Eric with the charm.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

November 2019

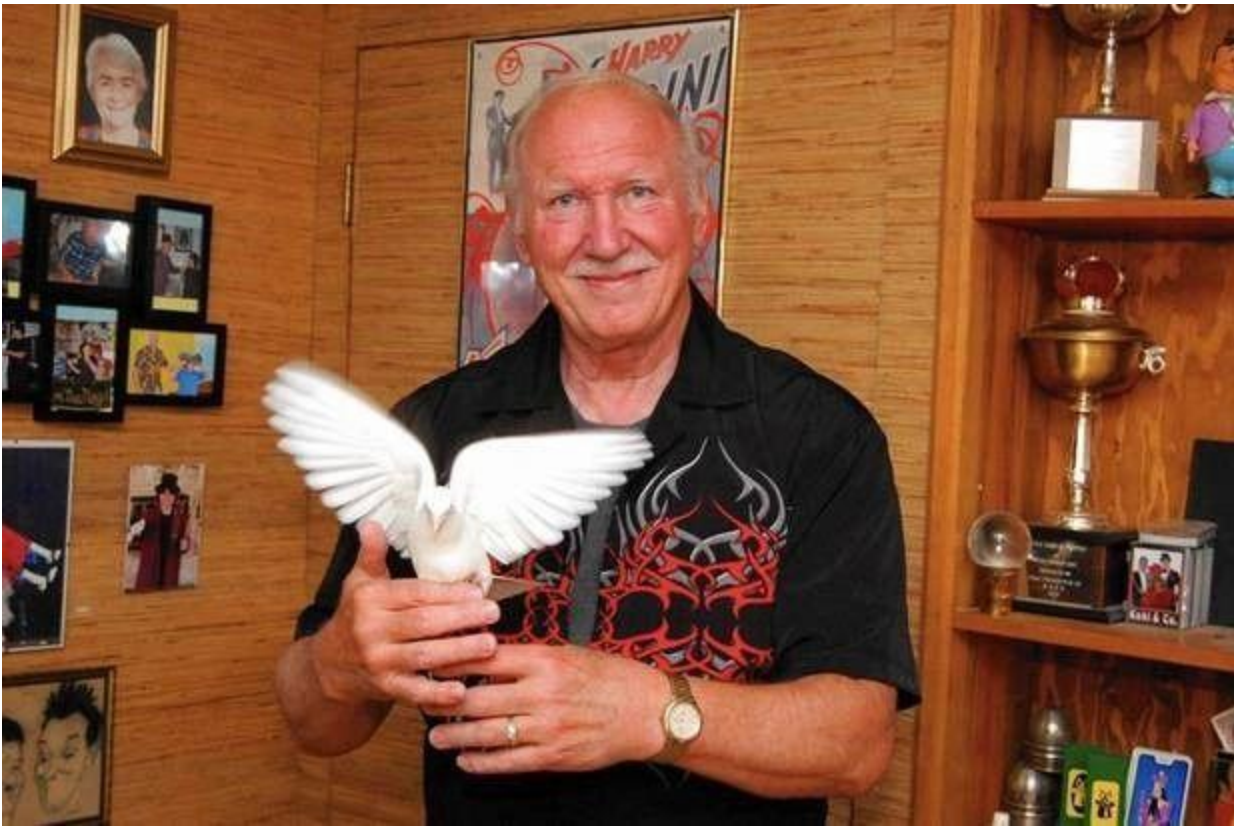
My dread is for my show to be a nostalgia act.

So the key to it is how do we keep it fresh?

- Joan Baez, Singer-

Remember the Hilarious “[Kohl and Company](#)”?





Inspired by the magic tricks performed by his uncle Clarence Baum when he was a child in West Baltimore, Kohlhafer became a magician, too. He learned the basics at Phil Thomas' Yogi Magic Mart in downtown Baltimore and honed his craft after being drafted into the Army in 1961.

After his Army years, he had a long career as a project administrator with Northrop Grumman before retiring in 1999.

Throughout his long "real" career, magic was always a sideline, done after work, on weekends, holidays or vacations.

The "Big Act" is Kohl & Company, performed onstage with his younger brother Al "Farky" Kohlhafer and daughter Karen Kohlhafer. It is a real Hollywood-style performance, with props, signs, special effects and unexpected surprises.

Type in "Kohl & Company" on the [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) site to view two hysterical clips. One is a show they performed several years ago in Paris, which aired on a French national TV network.

His brother Al retired as the Northeast High business teacher and wrestling coach in 2012. As Farky, Al adroitly plays the role of a dorky, semi-crazed assistant with poor sartorial taste.

Karen works full time as a manicurist for Hairtique at Arnold Station. Karen's role as "Farkemina" was originally played by Dick Kohlhafer's late wife Kathy. Farkemina wears an overblown frizzy blonde wig, oversized eyeglasses, a dowdy outfit and saddle shoes — but acts like a sultry siren.

A smaller, 45-minute performance, "Musical Magical Moments" is a blend of magic and music staged before small audiences at senior activity centers, churches or clubs with his friend Nancy Carole Notargacomo. Kohlhafer does several short acts, interspersed with Notargiacomo's solo performance on the piano.



The Kohl & Company trio has appeared on stages around the world and on the big screen. They made four appearances on the Jerry Lewis fundraising telethons for Muscular Dystrophy and were also spotlighted on the Smothers Brothers Show.

Calling the act "a true adventure," Kohlhafer said the thing that made the act unique from the 1970s onward was that it was well-received by the magic world – their peers, other professional magicians.

In 2008, Kohl & Company was voted one of "The Top Ten Funniest Acts in Magic Today" by the trade magazine *Magic Magazine* and fellow magicians. The trio was selected out of 100 acts on the ballot, coming in at 10th Place. Penn and Teller also made it into the Top Ten at 7th Place.

In 1987, they received the "Siegfried & Roy Golden Lion" Award, considered the "Oscar" of awards in the magic world, at a presentation in Las Vegas. They beat out 18 other acts for the honors and were the only ones to receive a standing ovation from the audience.

Compared to their cohorts in magic, Kohl & Company were unusual because "we were working people raising families. We literally traveled the world performing on TV and stage shows with so many amazing high-level entertainers and magic performers and then raced home to get back to our regular jobs," Kohlhafer said. "Most shows in Japan, Germany, Italy and other places were done on the fly. Taking long weekends, we would fly in, do rehearsals, do the show and then fly right back home for work."

It wasn't glamorous, he said, but they have incredible memories.

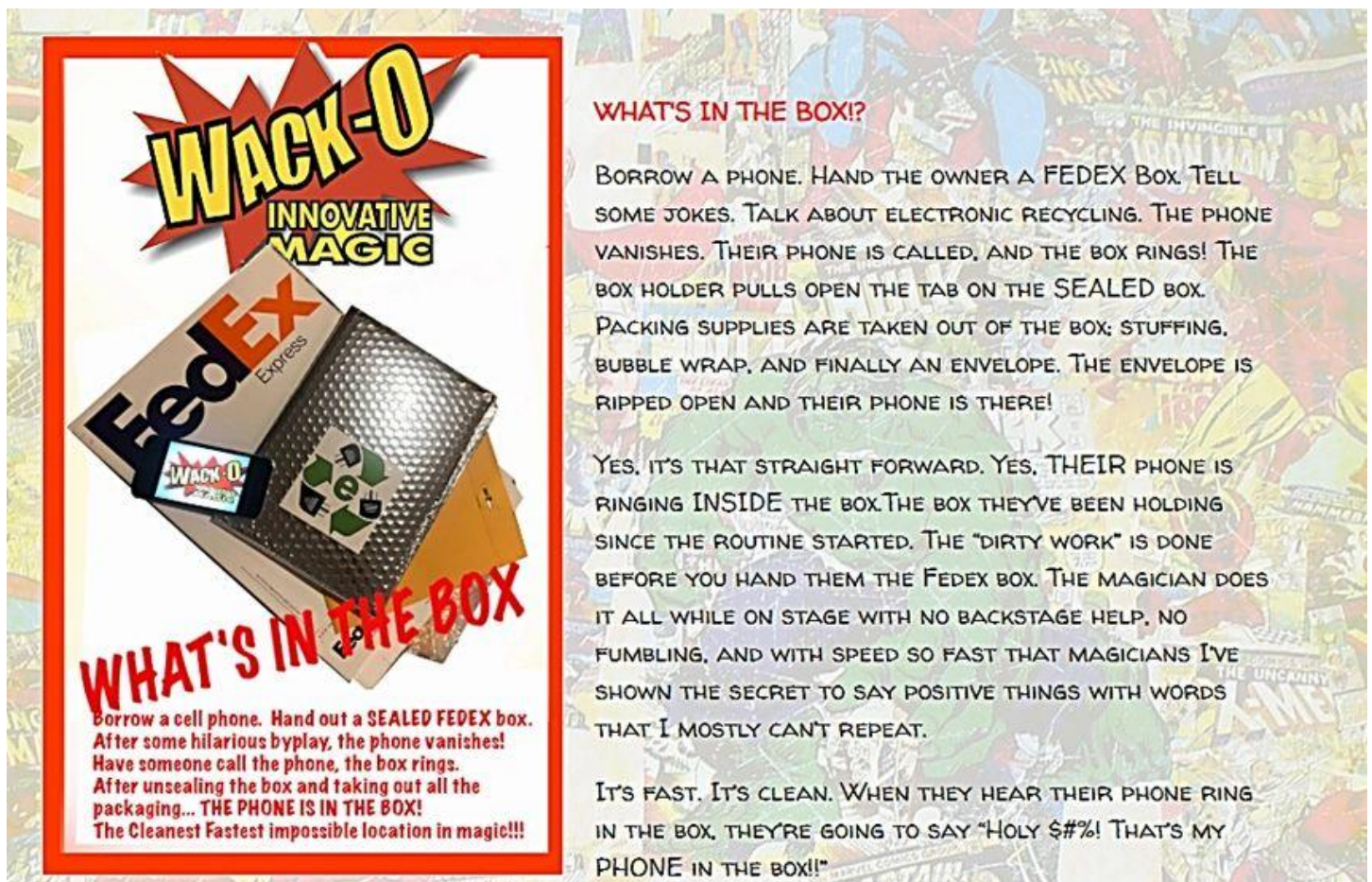
Ken Scott's premise on using a spectator's cell phone is good... [see for yourself](#).

Of course, we are 'in the know' on the method which is familiar to almost all of us, and obvious on the video, and I like the idea using a spectator's cell phone. Cell phones are contemporary. I am just a little reticent of using the personal destructible property of others.

A borrowed shoe is almost immune from accusations of destruction. A signed dollar bill or coin is not likely to be a disaster, but a watch, ring (especially with a stone), cell phone or wallet seems prone to accusations that you broke or stole something. "Hello lawsuit".

Never the less, this concept with a cell phone, used this way, seems less susceptible to liability issues.

And to think, I remember the days when I used to seem to smash spectators wrist watches and never had an issue. Times change.



WACK-O
INNOVATIVE
MAGIC

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

BORROW A PHONE. HAND THE OWNER A FEDEX BOX. TELL SOME JOKES. TALK ABOUT ELECTRONIC RECYCLING. THE PHONE VANISHES. THEIR PHONE IS CALLED, AND THE BOX RINGS! THE BOX HOLDER PULLS OPEN THE TAB ON THE SEALED BOX. PACKING SUPPLIES ARE TAKEN OUT OF THE BOX: STUFFING, BUBBLE WRAP, AND FINALLY AN ENVELOPE. THE ENVELOPE IS RIPPED OPEN AND THEIR PHONE IS THERE!

YES, IT'S THAT STRAIGHT FORWARD. YES, THEIR PHONE IS RINGING INSIDE THE BOX. THE BOX THEY'VE BEEN HOLDING SINCE THE ROUTINE STARTED. THE "DIRTY WORK" IS DONE BEFORE YOU HAND THEM THE FEDEX BOX. THE MAGICIAN DOES IT ALL WHILE ON STAGE WITH NO BACKSTAGE HELP. NO FUMBLING, AND WITH SPEED SO FAST THAT MAGICIANS I'VE SHOWN THE SECRET TO SAY POSITIVE THINGS WITH WORDS THAT I MOSTLY CAN'T REPEAT.

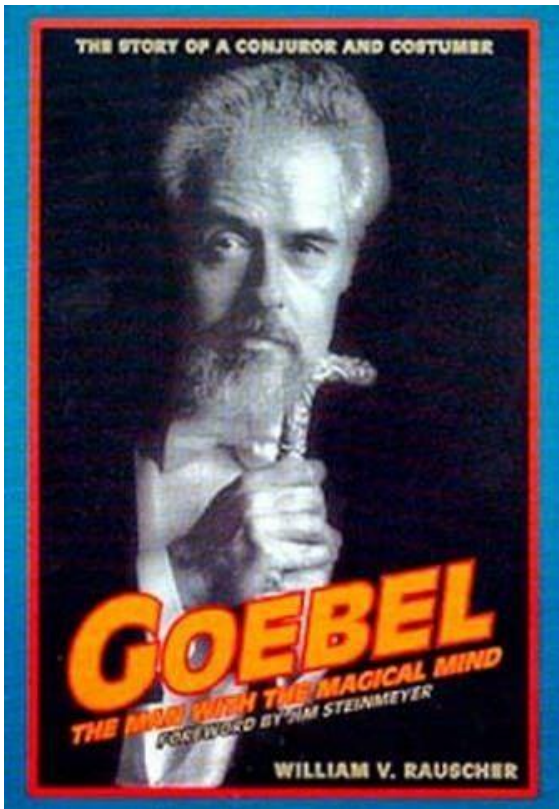
IT'S FAST. IT'S CLEAN. WHEN THEY HEAR THEIR PHONE RING IN THE BOX, THEY'RE GOING TO SAY "HOLY \$#!%! THAT'S MY PHONE IN THE BOX!!"

Borrow a cell phone. Hand out a SEALED FEDEX box. After some hilarious byplay, the phone vanishes! Have someone call the phone, the box rings. After unsealing the box and taking out all the packaging... THE PHONE IS IN THE BOX! The Cleanest Fastest impossible location in magic!!!

George Goebel, Phil Morris and me... We all owned costume businesses...all toured illusion shows.

You may enjoy watching Goebel's entire 1982 show! (After the intro by Bill Rauscher)

(Goebel's wife worked with a dance school - so I guess you know where he got all the showgirls and show women!)



If Central Casting were looking for an archetypical prestidigitator, it could do no better than George Goebel, the veteran Baltimore magician and Houdini expert who also owns A.T. Jones & Sons, the Howard Street costume shop.

"In our day, magicians looked like magicians. Today, they wear jeans and other outfits," Goebel said in an interview.

"A magician should wear a full dress suit, pique vest, turban and have a beard. I remember one time a little boy looked at me and said, 'You have the magic suit on,'" Goebel said with a laugh.

With a head of thick, wavy hair, once dark but now silver, a mustache and goatee, also silver, and dark penetrating eyes, Goebel is still the embodiment of the magician of legend.

Goebel's lifelong love affair with the conjuring arts began when he was a 10-year-old growing up in the city's Evergreen neighborhood.

In 1942, a cousin gave him a Christmas gift that changed his life: a Mysto magic set made by the A.C. Gilbert Co. of New Haven, Conn., better known perhaps for its American Flyer electric trains.

Suddenly, the elementary school student who became known as "Goebel the Magician" discovered he liked performing tricks for his classmates.

"Magicians are like children, and I never outgrew my fantasy," Goebel told the Rev. V. Rauscher, whose biography of the Baltimore magician, "Goebel: The Man With the Magical Mind,"

By the mid-1940s, Goebel was president of the Pyramid Magic Club, and while a student at Polytechnic Institute, performed his magic in the annual "Poly Follies" talent shows.

After graduating from Poly in 1950, Goebel went to work for A.T. Jones, the venerable costumer that was established in 1868 and has been in the 700 block of N. Howard St. for years.

After serving in the Army, he returned to the costume company in 1955, where he managed the company and went on the road performing magic.

By the mid-1950s, Goebel was developing a reputation and a devoted following.

Rauscher writes that in 1956, Goebel was "presenting escape effects in schools, churches, public exhibitions, and was also doing Houdini's needle-swallowing trick, but using razor blades instead of needles.

"He realized, as others had, that Houdini was a name everyone would recognize, and when his publicity was linked with the escape artist, it drew a crowd," wrote the author.

Goebel earned elaborate news coverage in 1958, when he escaped from a straitjacket while suspended upside down from a crane at the Kent Island Fair.

In May 1963, a crowd gathered outside the newly opened Convention Center to watch Goebel successfully re-create a classic Houdini escape that had last been performed in Baltimore in 1916. Goebel, whose arms were tightly bound in a straitjacket and whose legs were bound in rope, was suspended 50 feet upside down from a McDade Rigging Corp. crane.

He married Carole Busby, a social worker, in 1957, who worked onstage as his assistant.

Goebel assembled the George Goebel Magic Show in 1968, which had a cast of 30. His inventory of 15 doves, nine rabbits, five ducks, two chickens, a goat and 60 crates of illusions traveled aboard a 22-foot truck.

Goebel eventually came to national attention when his friend Milbourne Christopher invited him and his wife to appear with him on Jackie Gleason's 1962 Christmas special, which was televised nationally on CBS.



(Goebel on the left assisting

Christopher on the CBS-TV network)

The couple later appeared again with Christopher on a subsequent Gleason show as well as on "The Garry Moore Show" and in a Houdini documentary.

Despite elaborate illusions, Goebel said, a traditional magic show must have three elements: "They are pulling a rabbit from a hat, floating a lady and sawing someone in half,"

He does all three in a unique and grand style as you can see on the You Tube show video. Click and enjoy on the link above.

Last month we had two very good spelling-card stories. "Sam the Bellhop" is the classic example.

Here a Roman Catholic Priest put a religious twist on the effect.

Its Halloween, so how about an old Carnie Side Show Stunt? The Electric Lady? I will tell you where to get the most important component. You may want to save this information for your files if you are a prop builder.



This is one of the simplest of the acts, and yet, well done it can be elegant.

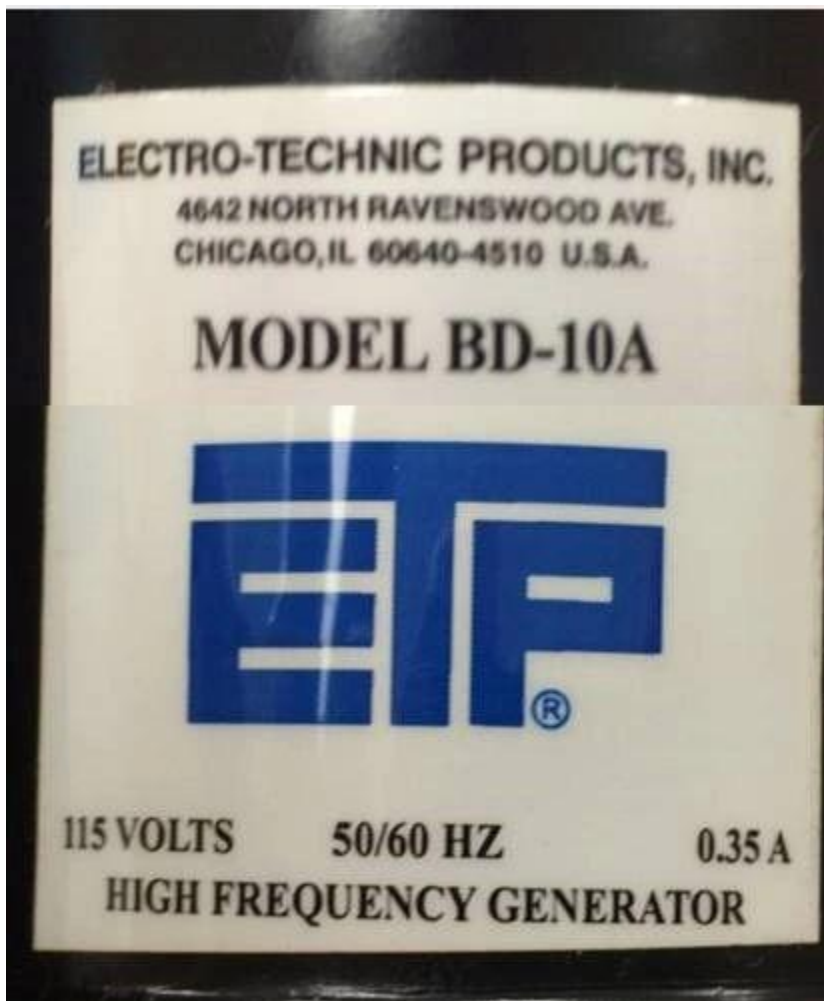
A young lady sits in an Electric Chair and demonstrates that she is invulnerable to the thousands of volts. Actually, it's a high frequency generator. Years ago they made these from T Model Ford Ignition coils. Today we should use a "Neon sign Tester". It is a small Tesla coil.

It works on a very low amperage but very high frequency voltage. The frequency is stepped up very high, giving an apparent current in the thousands of volts (usually 20,000 or even more). The high frequency causes what is called a "skin effect" (like why high tension power lines deliver power efficiently) which simply means that the current literally travels on the surface of one's skin, rather than giving a typical shock, like you might get by sticking your finger in a lamp socket!

How to do the hook-up. This is pretty easy. Simply by attaching the electrode to a copper plate in the seat of the wooden chair, the bare skin of the girl's legs (she wears a bathing suit) make good contact. I just cut the soft copper and bent it around to hold the coil case (seen below) and attached the device using metal strapping. It is under the seat. The copper plate can also be mounted on top of a wooden "Coke-a-Cola" type crate, so the girl just stands on it in her bare feet. I have made both types.

The better the contact the more it gives you a better spark to be lighting torches, lighting up fluorescent light bulbs, making sparks fly off your fingers or shocking spectators as they reach for the coins in a metal pan she is holding.

Here is all you need in terms of electronics...



[Electro-Technic 583518](#)



With the recent trend in specialty card decks...I found one.

The best marked deck of Bicycle playing cards, ever! There is none better and the clocking of the card takes a nanosecond; even for people with poor eyesight.

Available soon.

Here's the secret: Count the birds and add the amount of nipples on the mermaids. Take away the amount of grass blades and the total - on this card - is Four. As for the suit: divide the amount of hills by bicycle spokes and the result will be 1, 2, 3 or 4.

In CHaSeD order, our example here is 4. THE FOUR OF CLUBS.

See how easy? Total magic!



In CHaSeD order - this is THE FOUR OF

CLUBS



From the : "Sorry. I can't let it go department"

I told you so, many times! Penn Gillette gives a whole new meaning to a urinalysis:

It was at the Genii Convention, here in Orlando. Nathan Coe Marsh gave a description of the effect on his Facebook page: "Penn performed "spectator's urine to impossible location"

Penn and his sidekick, Piff the Magic Dragon, asked if anyone was willing to pee into a test tube on stage (after explaining the premise of the trick)...There were no hands from the mostly male crowd, and after some time a young woman bravely volunteered.

The tension was palpable in the room. It seemed as if the performers themselves had expected a male volunteer (if any at all) and, in the moment, were thinking about whether and how to move forward with a female spectator.

The volunteer came on stage. A sheet was held in front of her. She urinated into a test tube while on stage (the sheet provided privacy from where I was seated, but it was later confirmed that what appeared to happen had in fact happened).

She then signed the test tube, which vanished and appeared -- with its still-warm contents -- inside a nest of boxes."

Yuk!

Okay...Stop the magic world! I want to get off. I, for one, am sick of "theatrical cruelty and humiliation" grunge and grossness in magic. What is next? The Color-Changing Feces trick? Brown to Silver Poop.

What an effect! (Note that such visual fecal magic already happens in medicine. It is called Thomas' Sign and it is an indication of cancer involving the Ampulla of Vater, the organ area where bile and pancreatic fluids mix ,located just before the Sphincter of Oddi - but I digress)

I boycotted this convention and from all the texts and e-mails that I have received from friends, I am still satisfied with my decision.

I would consider going to a lecture on renal function. Urology is a fascinating medical specialty and urine can indicate much about bodily functions.

However, I do not see urine to be an humorous object to be used for theatrical magic manipulation.

Giving Penn and Teller a "Magic Award" , of any kind, is as absurd as giving Jeffrey Dahmer a cooking award. Magic is tangential to their absurdism and bombast. Why does our post-modern Zeitgeist desire a pattern of self-serving humiliation of others and bizarre exhibitionism? Is it the continuous social need for a geek show? I see this continuing absurdity in postmodern politics, religion, and even economics and academics. Sadly, the goofy "solution" is supposed to be political correctness. In theater, it should be restraint, humility and Freytag/Aristotle's Plot lines. Post- modern magicians have lost their mind along with the rest of human culture.

Maybe I need to think like a Post Modern. Let's give Bernie Madoff an award for "Excellence in Capitalism"? Gimme a break....

I was later told the award was a spoof on Criss Angel's award, with all the hyperbole on how great Angel is. He is another story but equally bizarre.

Would you like examples of theatrical cruelty that led me to boycott this convention so you will know that I am not judging by relying on hearsay?

I have seen (with own eyes) such effects as stabbing a knife through Teller's hand... Rats in a cage on his head...Running over Teller with a truck tire. Teller in a concrete mixer with bricks emerging with a card in his mouth. I have seen these (with my own eyes- just to assure you that I am not engaged in "hearsay")

All were never presented in the P.T. Selbit style of an indestructible feat and not as a cruel sadistic or masochist feat. Yes, I know, Selbit did use blood on his sawing a lady. That was then and now is now.

Penn, with his bombastic copycat revivalist preaching style (people he says that he detests) tries to set you up to be grossed out. Criss Angel is also noted from hanging by fishhooks stretching his skin. The net effect of these is cruelty and pain for shock value. This seems to me to be carnival and geek show stuff...not magic. Same for Blaine and his fake survival stunts. Blaine's stunts generally failed in the UK. They seem to be far more sophisticated, as opposed to lower socio-economic level Americans.

I boycott this convention for the same reason that I refuse to attend lots of other shows. I don't like the show. Plus, I don't need to validate my dislike by participating so I can say that I was there. I can say that sewers smell. I do not need to pry off every manhole cover to validate my presupposition. Prove to me that it would be worth my time and money to attend.

Let's see who is on the bill next year and if my \$500 admission fee is worth it.



“Dad, you need to come home!”

“Sorry , Son, but I can’t. I am in the hospital!”

“Mom is selling your magic for the price you told her you paid for it!”

Wine seems to be the new beverage of choice for the urbanites. I guess the labels need to stand out.

The magic and carnival theme seems big.

