

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

January 23, 2020 | Archived Famulus



January Meeting

President Mike Matson called the January meeting to order. We had a number of visitors, Colin Gunn, Daniel Hernandez, Roger Lovins, Jeremy Mickelson, Andre and Matthew Raphael and good to see Tom Craven again.

Bev did a teach-in with the well-known prop, Die-cypher. Bev was always able to tell which side of the die was up in a closed case. He explained a bit of verbal equivoque he learned from Duke Stern to make the effect very strong.

The Ring announced that Phil Schwartz, our club magic historian and Thayer expert, has concluded his over 10-year long series of Magic History Moments, that he faithfully presented at our meetings. His series contained 100 informative mini lectures along with many props, posters and ephemera. We were fortunate to have Phil take the time and effort to make us aware, and entertain us with the history of our art. We gave him a certificate with our deep appreciation. L to R President Mike Matson and Phil Schwartz | Photo by Craig Fennessy



President Matson, who is a full-time professional, presented another addition of “Theory and Thaumaturgy”. The edition was on card breaks and working with angle issues. He demonstrated how misdirection uses a “active and passive state” on body position, muscle tension and stance to obscure the timing of the break or the set-up for a double lift. It was excellent advice.

Secretary Thom Parkin opened the monthly show with his original effect in which a chosen card is revealed on a movie DVD, by the name “Premonition” in a case and the final cards in the spectator’s card pile match those in the case. Greg Solomon had an unusual effect with arrow on the table that seemed to point in different directions depending on which side of the table you saw it from. He had a card reveal and finished with a delightful game of “Clue” where he predicted the outcome of the game.

Brian Sullivan has a card trick based on Quantum Physics where two cards seemed to be in two places at once. Ryan Steiner had a printed clock face on a piece of paper and all the spectators chose an hour and counted around the face. After a bit of play his written prediction matched the number that every member landed on. Magic legend Tom Craven treated us to his magic. His first effect was a work in progress and intriguing. He called it “Card Repositioning”. His second effect was baffling. Dennis Phillips called up nine spectators to freely select random colored gloves from a shopping bag. The remaining paid mysterious completed a circle when the matching colors were touching as the group held hands. Dennis used this as an example of how communities form and how we are all linked to each other.

Dan Stapleton did his own improved version of Jim Steinmeyer’s, “Name Matrix”. A spectator randomly chose number cards in a five by five card matrix and dan was able to predict the final tally. The backs of the cards were turned over and it was an ideal poker hand!

Jaffo wrapped up the show by predicting a selected card with dice rolls.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

February 2019

“If your sleight of hand causes you to break eye contact with your audience, it is too advanced for your skill level.”

-Jeff McBride-

I was glad to see Bev Bergeron talking about Bob McAllister in Linking Ring and the “Cup Vanish”. I tried several times to get Bob to change to “slip casting”, out of latex rubber, for the cup gimmick, but he insisted on the long process of hand painting them. Sadly his excuse was, “What else to I have to do?”

Bob did achieve some renewed fame on the nostalgia circuit after a long dry spell. He , like many of us suffered from the shifting broadcasting business.

Our Ring Member , Kevin Butler, wrote a tribute to Bob McAllister within a larger comprehensive look at Wonderama, the New York based Metromedia TV show that Bob hosted.

You can click here for Kevin’s grand look at this classic in Children’s TV <http://www.tvparty.com/lostwonder1.html>

Bob has been gone, now, for over two decades and I have mentioned many times before that he was my original mentor and I had the sad duty of writing his obituary for the Linking Ring.

Bob worked with his faithful sidekick, Chauncey, a ventriloquist's dummy (a Davenport figure) to whom he said that he owed his entire career.

Born in Philadelphia ,Bob grew up in Norfolk, Va. He became fascinated with magic and ventriloquism at 10. In high school he spent so much time practicing his hobbies (and so little time doing his homework) that his despairing parents promised to buy him a dummy if he ever turned in a report card with all A's and B's.

The next month he had made at least a B in all his classes, so they paid \$45 for his reward, the dummy he named Chauncey.

A few years later, during a 1953 family trip to New York in honor of his high school graduation, as his parents slept, he slipped out of his hotel room with Chauncey and stationed himself outside the windows of NBC's "Today" show. The host, Dave Garroway, was so charmed that he summoned Mr. McAllister into the studio and later helped him get on Ted Mack's "Amateur Hour," which he won.

Bob attended a technical school in Richmond, just long enough to learn TV production and directing and returned to Norfolk and became host of a children's program at a struggling UHF station, for a few months. The larger VHF station, WTAR quickly hired him and for a few

years he became a fixture on Tidewater TV and around Earl Edwards, Norfolk magic shop. That is where I met Bob. He later moved to a much larger TV station in Baltimore (WJZ-TV) before within a few years to New York to take the "Wonderama" job.

Although the show, which was produced by Metromedia, was seen only in New York and half a dozen other cities, they were all major television markets, and for most of his run Bob owned the Sunday morning airways, attracting half the Sunday morning audience, according to Nielsen ratings.

Under the influence of cable TV's increasing share of total viewers, "Wonderama" was withdrawn from production at the end of 1977, Metromedia attributed the cancellation to a ratings decline that had left the show with a 36 percent of the audience. Today, just ratings would be a blockbuster!


Within a year of the cancellation, Mr. McAllister had developed a new show, "Kids Are People, Too," (named for his "Wonderama" theme song) for ABC, but although the show won an Emmy, Mr. McAllister, in his 40's, was replaced as host after a few months by a younger man. Bob did not take being replaced very well.

His old love of magic pulled him through. In addition to touring the country, performing at amusement parks and elsewhere and lecturing on the magician's art, he developed and manufactured magician's tricks, among them one known as Molly McBubble (whose durable bubbles Mr. McAllister would catch, put in his pocket and retrieve intact).

I last saw Bob at the 1988 Florida Magic Convention in Maitland. He spent 3 days rehashing our magic and TV careers. He made his rounds of Manhattan magic supply shops and buying supplies for the effects he manufactured in his apartment on roller skates.

Bob was a smoker, as many of his age were. He had been losing weight and feeling tired for a few months and just though he had a lingering chest cold. He died of lung cancer. I wrote his obituary for The Linking Ring.

He had three daughters, Susan, Robin and Molly Jo and three grandchildren. He also left behind dozens of magicians he had mentored as well as a collection of magic he had invented.

	<h2>Robert C "Bob" McAllister</h2> <table><tr><td>BIRTH</td><td>2 Jun 1935 Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, USA</td></tr><tr><td>DEATH</td><td>21 Jul 1998 (aged 63) New York, New York County (Manhattan), New York, USA</td></tr></table>	BIRTH	2 Jun 1935 Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, USA	DEATH	21 Jul 1998 (aged 63) New York, New York County (Manhattan), New York, USA
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Eastern Shore Chapel Cemetery

Something a bit different...an excellent tutorial on Slydini type scarf knots. Every magician needs these techniques in his act! Packs small, plays big

Okay, I know that most of you by now know that I seem to have it in for Penn and Teller. I am not alone. Here is a review of a West End London production there are a part of. Apparently, other Las Vegas names are a part of it also, including Copperfield.

Maybe magic is fatigued as an art. Maybe, the few names that are left who can draw at the box office are milking it for all they can get. At any rate, theater critics seem to have caught on to the diminishing quality of stage magic.



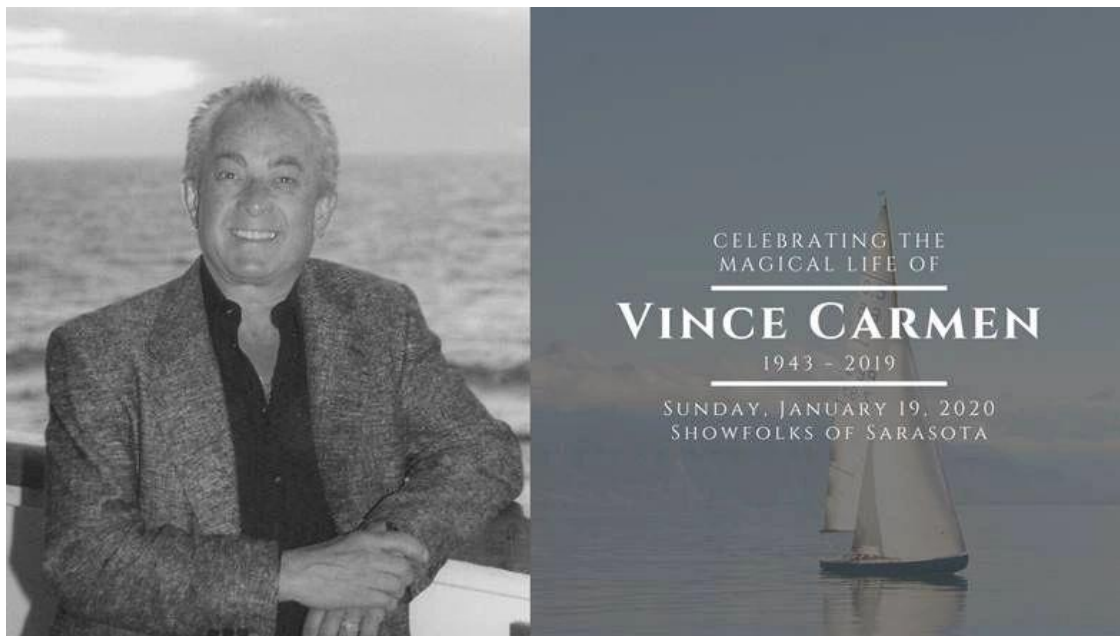
Here is a scathing and complete review

The critic believes this show is at best, barely adequate for a fringe festival.



Dan Stapleton and I went to Sarasota to pay our respects to the late Vince Carmen on Sunday January 19th. (See photo)

There were touching tributes and a gathering of Vince's family and about 200 friends to say good-bye to the great showman. Vince and his family were personal friends of mine.







The late Paul Daniels had a way of taking a prop that was , at best a puzzle, and slowly talking his way through it to make it a miracle.

I hope you did out your seldom used, “Gozinta Box” (Royal Magic) and put it back to work in your close up shows.

A floating cow illusion? Now I can say that I have just about seen everything! Wow, isn't this “milking” the audience for applause?

Yep! Elsie is suspended in mid-air and they pass a hope over her. The biggest mystery, in my mind, is not “how” but “why”. If it was a dairy convention, I could see it. Otherwise, I just don't know.



Yep! Elsie is suspended in mid-air and they pass a hope over her. The biggest mystery, in my mind, is not “how” but “why”. If it was a dairy convention, I could see it. Otherwise, I just don't know.

All of us had our own touring illusion shows back in the days when you could roll a stage show using a "boiler room" and telephone sales (small town charity fund raising).

We had three standard vaudeville gags for an auditorium of at least 300 people.

1)The first was right after the opening production scene, loud talking and "where's my seat" could be heard in the back. The magician would stop and look at the back and say to the audience, "Excuse me?" he would then lean over the footlights and look at the back and say, in an aggravated, sarcastic voice "Welcome to the show folks. Can we help you find something? Like a watch?" That would always get a laugh. Then he say in an annoyed voice, "Let me fill you in on what has happened so far. We just floated a lady and, well, you missed it! Just get a seat" More laughs.

2)Another other gag (and this only worked in the smallest of rural towns) was to introduce the magician friend or two who were supposed to be famous. For example, "I am pleased tonight to see that some of my famous friends are with us here. I would like to introduce the man who is the voice of Mickey Mouse. Will you stand up and take a bow, Mr. Dennis Phillips and also the...(Do the man who plays Bozo or Big Bird etc.) Kids in small towns would mob the quest for an autograph and sometimes demand they do the voices!

3)The last gag was for the magician guest to sit in the front or second row and loudly snore during a pause in a routine. Magician looks out and says, " You sir! Wake him up. Are we keeping you awake? Nice shoes you are wearing. How did you get the numbers off of them?" "I think your babysitter just called. She wants to know where you keep the fire extinguisher.

These were all old vaudeville gags from a less politically correct age. Somewhat similar gags have been revived for performances in Cirque du Soleil shows.

In a pickle, the 'Fantastic Fig' is disbarred. I am curious as to how many other disbarred lawyers became full time magicians? They could be bad at the law but good at magic. In the case of Charles Carter, early 20th Century global illusionist, he was both good at the Law and good at touring an illusion show. Once, in Japan, he was forced to sue a Japanese production company and he did and won!

A Los Angeles lawyer described on his website as "a California icon" and an "L.A. legend" was disbarred in the fourth discipline matter filed against him since 2005. Paul F. Fegen earlier left his law practice to pursue an emerging career as a professional magician known as The Fantastic Fig, who, he claims, is "guaranteed to amaze."

<https://www.ripoffreport.com/reports/paul-fegen-fig/west-hollywood-california-90069/paul-fegen-fig-paul-fig-fegen-was-disbarred-from-practicing-law-he-also-filed-bank-1093356>



Although practiced law for 44 years with an unblemished record, he found himself in trouble in 2005 when he drew a suspension for misconduct in a personal injury case. The last straw came when he was disbarred after admitting to four counts of misconduct in three matters.

Got to love the late Paul Daniels! Here is a clever version of Dante's "Through the Eye of A Needle" or Barricaded Barrels.

If you notice he does not use the typical tricked up rods! This is very clever! It tempt me to find my table saw and get to work again.

https://dyingcharlotte.com/2017/04/12/photo-multigraphs-the-mirror-and-the-camera/?fbclid=IwAR3Oa_RtOhgtI3WvB43vVsluD7JmoMkDpXv6UOKz8dhOqreqV0lrq2sMVIQ

I enjoyed Dan Stapleton's "Wakeling's Name Matrix" effect. It was simple to follow and baffling. (from: The Magic of Alan Wakeling" Page 213-drawing on Page 207) It had the dreamed-for double finally. Dan used a poker hand rather than spectator's name as the second finale.

There is a distinction between magic and mentalism – and although they achieve similar ends (awe and astonishment), while the magician appears to do the impossible – the mentalist does the very unlikely – the extremely unlikely. For this reason mentalism appears more real than traditional magic.

This is especially true if the mentalist does not focus on fancy props.

I think it was Dunninger who said, "Every time a mentalist brings out a prop, his price drops by half". Yes, I am also a sucker for props and love fancy Chinese painted frames with dragons on them that switch billets. But, if you think, most people marvel at how it mechanically does the switch. A shuttle pass works better!


So what does Party City charge to provide a magician at events? It is all on their website: <https://www.kazzam.com/performers/magicians>

I have no idea what their commissions are and what you net when you work for them.

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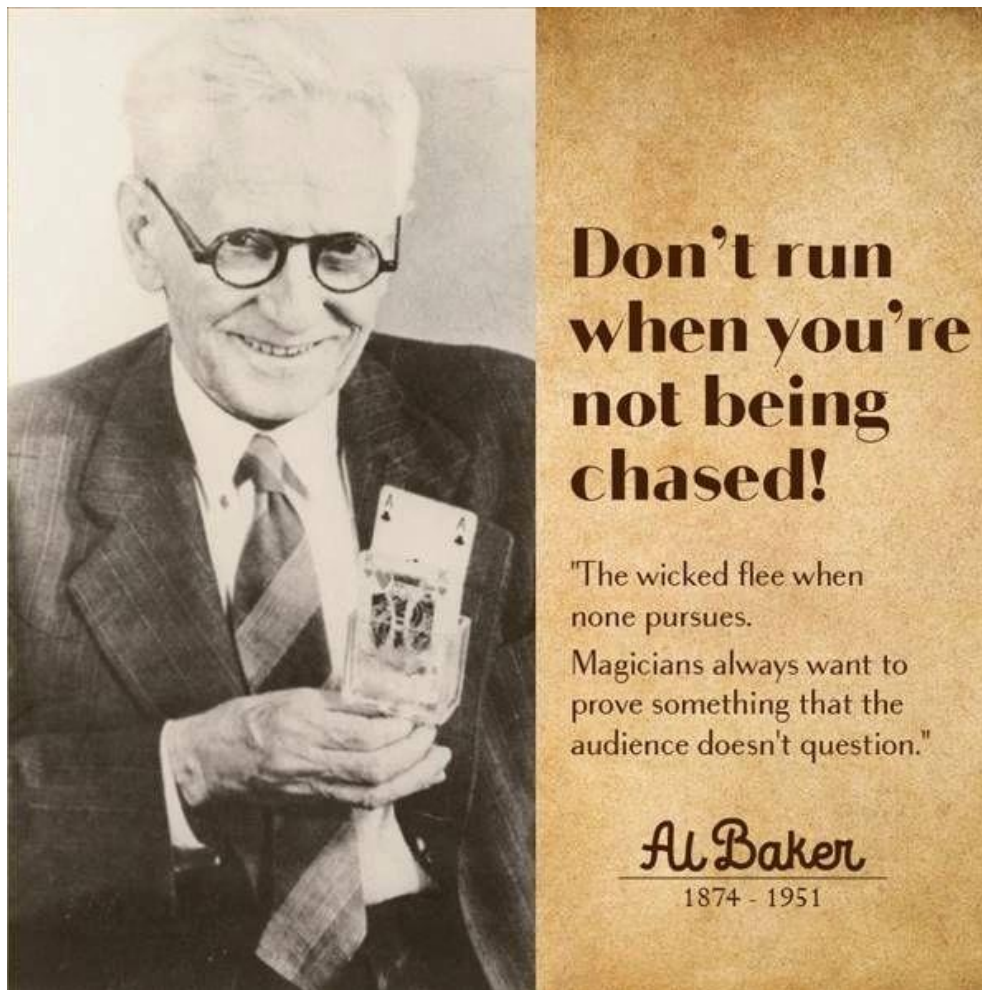
Lets keep the classic alive!

Here is an excellent update to the Classic “Egg Bag” trick, by Martin Lewis. I always thought that eggs and bags don’t really seem to go together but a golf ball is more natural!

For an adult audiences, I also like his line: “ This is a golf ball. Having a golf ball is a lot like having a tennis elbow.”

I love his finale. Ending an egg bag routine demands a shock finish just as Danny Tong producing a shot glass filled with whiskey was a great finish for Tong’s Malini Egg Bag Routine (also excellent)

Al Baker was the father of Jay Marshall’s first wife. Baker’s books are a wealth of advice and filled with a lot of clever ideas.



The idea is that many magicians work too hard to prove (or disprove) things when there is no suspicion from the audience.

I've found that close-up magicians are more likely to "run" while stage magicians tend to have learned they can get away with a lot!

For example, I'd often hear people debating the nuances of a force technique, then an old stage magician would pipe up and say "just use a one-way deck and be done with it!"

I notice as a stage performer, this attitude has seeped into my close-up work as well. I'm more willing to make bold moves, and less interested in subtle techniques. I guess I'm becoming that crotchety old "one way deck" guy now.

How much do you "run" with your magic?

I don't believe there's a right and wrong approach here. Some people love creating intricate mysteries. The art suits the taste of the artist.

Al Baker also said, "Many a good trick has been ruined by improvement."

this is a comedy sketch but sadly it is fairly close to the truth of public perception of magicians!

We have known every one of these acts that are being ridiculed, or at least acts with this type of image. It is sad that the general public has such a jaded view of us magicians.

Much of the reason is that we copy off each other. We copy successful looks. How many Copperfield wanna-bees did there used to be? The original was great but the copy Copperfields invited ridicule just as copy Elvis clones did.

Dennis Phillips