

# Ring Report Ring #170 “The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring” SAM #99

June 22, 2023 | Archived Famulus



The June meeting date was shifted to earlier in the month so we could host a lecture by New Jersey's Bill Wisch. President Ryan Stiner introduced Bill and his son, Kevin.

Wisch is a 50-year full-time professional sleight-of-hand artist, performer, and innovator. He is the only student Slydini ever authorized to lecture his magic on his behalf. Bill is the inventor of over 30 original sleights, winner of multiple awards in magic and is proud of the fact that most of the magic he does is of his own creation or enhanced versions of classic magic.

His lecture included:

“Impromptu Any Card at Any Number,” a variation of the famous card effect. This was his great version of the ACAAN effect.

“Symbiotic Shoelace”. A Shoelace Knot with a very magical, surprise ending.

“A Beautiful Day”. The “Slydini Wild Card Turnover” and his new Flushtration Count.

"Truth & Dare Routine" . "Fast & Loose" variation of the spectator never being able to find the loop. Wisch uses a rope instead of a chain.

“Million to One Chance”. Brother Hamman’s wonderful effect that matches ten red cards with ten black cards under impossible circumstances.

“Slydini’s Helicopter Card”. A chosen card invisibly goes from a card fan to a pile on the table.

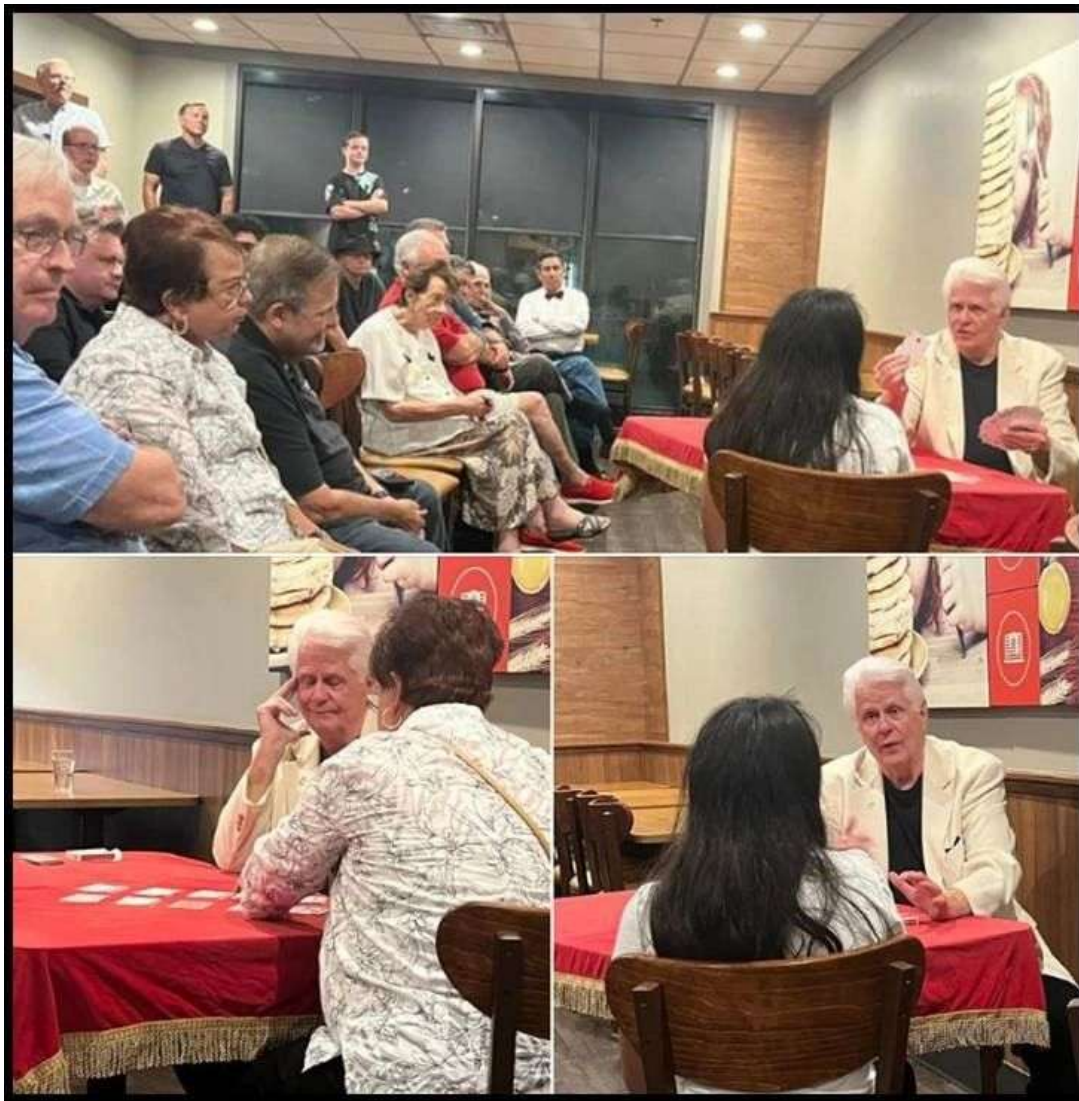
“The Slydini Knots”. The classic knots in two tied handkerchiefs that melt away.

Often you get something that you don't expect in a magic lecture, and this was case with Wisch. Slydini was a mentor to Wisch. He advertised his visit as a lecture on Slydini magic, but Wisch focused more on how he enhanced and improved on a few of his mentor's, effects. There were some new and clever moves like the "Wisch Wedge" and a Flip-flop deal that fooled Dai Vernon at the Magic Castle.

Since many of the "moves" were unique and unusual, Wisch had available DVDs with full explanations. They were costly but quality instruction from a master is priceless.

Dennis

Photos courtesy of President Ryan Stiner:



\*\*\*\*\*

**Meeting policy:**

**Face masks, if you wear one, will not be ridiculed. We are respectful that some people may be immunocompromised.**

**Stay prepared, healthy, and informed about current Public Health issues and contagious outbreaks.**

\*\*\*\*\*



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

**“The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring”**



The fact that a trick fooled you is  
not enough reason to perform it.

— *Darwin Ortiz* —

\*\*\*\*\*

## What is art?

“What is that thing!?” asks the flabbergasted tourist.

“That’s a picture of my wife,” says Pablo Picasso.

“You’re crazy!” says the tourist, “The distortions are terrible! *I’ll* show you a picture of a *real* woman!”

At that, the guy retrieves his wallet, opens it, and shows Picasso a black-and-white photograph of *his* wife.

Picasso looks at it for a moment and says, “So... your wife is colorless, two-dimensional and only three inches tall?”



\*\*\*\*\*



Dan Stapleton lecturing in the exclusive 100 seat “Magic Circle Theater” in London. The pinnacle of magic success.



\*\*\*\*\*

My friend, Dan Witkowski has passed.

He thanked me for my ideas when he wrote his 1994 book, “How to Haunt a House”.  
(Random House)



Dan Witkowski passed away this past Saturday, May 20, 2023, at the age of 67. He had a short battle with cancer of the liver.

Dan was a magician, collector, and the founder of MagicCom Inc. in Minneapolis. His fascination with magic began at the age of five years after finding a cardboard magic trick on the back of a cereal box. This encounter with magic used as a promotional gimmick would later lead to his success at MagicCom, Inc.

Dan performed as a magician on the convention and banquet circuit throughout the Midwest during his high school years. In 1973, while still in high school, he was hired by a

Minnesota division of Caterpillar Tractor Company to magically produce a full-size tractor on stage to introduce the company's new line of products to dealers.

From 1974 to 1976, Witkowski worked at WCCO-TV in Minneapolis as a promotional assistant. While there, he produced a magical special "Abracadabra!" and a documentary on the life of Houdini.

In 1977, he founded MagicCom, Inc., a company specializing in stage and screen presentations. He also produced shows for entertainment centers such as Disneyland, Walt Disney World, and Six Flags.

In the late 80's, the NFL was looking to find new producers and ideas for its Super Bowl halftime shows in the years 1988, 1989 and 1990. NFL officials met with several individuals, among them was Dan and MagicCom, Inc. Dan did not give them specifics for a show at the meeting, but rather asked for the opportunity to give a formal presentation to them, which was granted. To pique the interest of the league officials, Dan put a padlock on the leather-bound pitch books he sent to the members of the league's halftime show selection committee ahead of his presentation instructing them to not view the contents until the formal in-person presentation. After his presentation, Dan and his company were given the opportunity to co-produce the 1988 Super Bowl pre-game show (as a dry-run of sorts) in addition to the 1989 Super Bowl XXIII halftime show. The halftime show created was titled "BeBop Bamboozled"... and was broadcast on television in 3-D.

Dan was a creative and marketing genius in every sense of the word. His "sales pitches" to potential clients were incredible productions in themselves. Those of us who were lucky enough to have had the opportunity to visit his MagicCom offices in Minneapolis were impressed by the creativity and production value.

\*\*\*\*\*

This is sad news from the magic world. Milt Larson Co-Founder of the Magic Castle, Private club in Hollywood for magicians and their guests, has passed away at age 92. RIP Uncle" Milt

Milt Larsen literally built the Magic Castle in Hollywood. Milt was a carpenter and magician who transformed a rundown mansion in the Hollywood hills into the Mecca for magicians who would travel from around the world to hang out and, hopefully, perform there. The Larsen family are magic royalty and today he will join his brother Bill and sister-in-law Irene, in death. They were the three who brought the Magic Castle to life in 1963.

He and his brother ,the late Bill Larsen, were the sons of William Larsen Sr., who gave up a practice as a criminal attorney in Pasadena, California to be an entertainer at resort hotels. The Senior Larsen

Also founded Genii Magazine along with his wife, Gerrie.

Both brother Bill, Jr died at 65 and his father died young. Bill Sr. died in 1953 at age 48.

His son, Milt had a long life at 92.





# VARIETY

Milt Larsen the magician and TV writer who co-founded Hollywood's famed Magic Castle night spot, died May 28 in Los Angeles. He was 92.

Larsen had deep roots in the world of magic and in Los Angeles. His father, William Larsen Sr., was a prominent local defense attorney and a performing magician. His mother, Geraldine, made early appearances on TV as "The Magic Lady." Milt Larsen worked as a writer for TV game shows including "Truth or Consequences" during 18 years of Bob Barker's tenure as host in the 1950s, '60s and early '70s.

Larsen teamed with his older brother, William Larsen Jr., and William's wife, Irene, in the early 1960s to transform a Gothic renaissance mansion on Franklin Avenue in the heart of

Hollywood into a clubhouse designed to cater to working magicians. The trio created the Academy of Magical Arts, but the venue became known as the Magic Castle. The club opened its doors in 1963 and has become a world-renowned destination, despite its ups and downs over the past 60 years. The Larsen family leased the property from owned Thomas Glover until last year, when the site was acquired by videogame magnate Randy Pitchford, founder of Gearbox Entertainment.



Milt Larsen, co-founder of Hollywood's famed Magic Castle club

"The Magic Castle is like bedrock — the center point of magic," Pitchford said in a statement at the time. The people who think of the Castle as their home and the place itself seem to have magical properties that have created and inspired some of the world's greatest entertainers. I'm proud to be trusted to both, give back to the place that made me to become the custodian of the Magic Castle, and to work with its members and the Larsen family to ensure our most incredible club house grows and thrives for decades to come."

Magic Castle co-founder William Larsen Jr. died in 1993 at age 64. [Irene Larsen died in 2016](#) at age 79.

Milt Larsen and his brother were saluted with the star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2006.

Larsen got his start as a writer in radio, working on audience participation shows for ABC Radio. In addition to "Truth or Consequences," Larsen worked with Ralph Edwards Prods. on its signature unscripted series "This Is Your Life." That gave Larsen exposure to legendary performers such as Buster Keaton, Stan Laurel, Ed Wynn, Mack Sennett, George Burns and Jack Benny. Those relationships spurred his passion as a showbiz historian and collector of memorabilia from the days of vaudeville as well as 78 RPM records produced in the 1920s through the early 1950s.

Larsen stayed active as a performer himself, producing the stage show "It's Magic" for more than 50 years in the Los Angeles area. Larsen owned and operated the Mayfair Music Hall in Santa Monica, where he produced stage shows for 10 years. He also once owned downtown L.A.'s Variety Arts Theater.

Milt Larsen's survivors include his wife, Arlene Larsen, nephew Dante Larsen, niece Erika Larsen, and great-nieces Jessica Hopkins and Liberty Larsen.

"When an old man dies a library burns to the ground."

\*\*\*\*\*

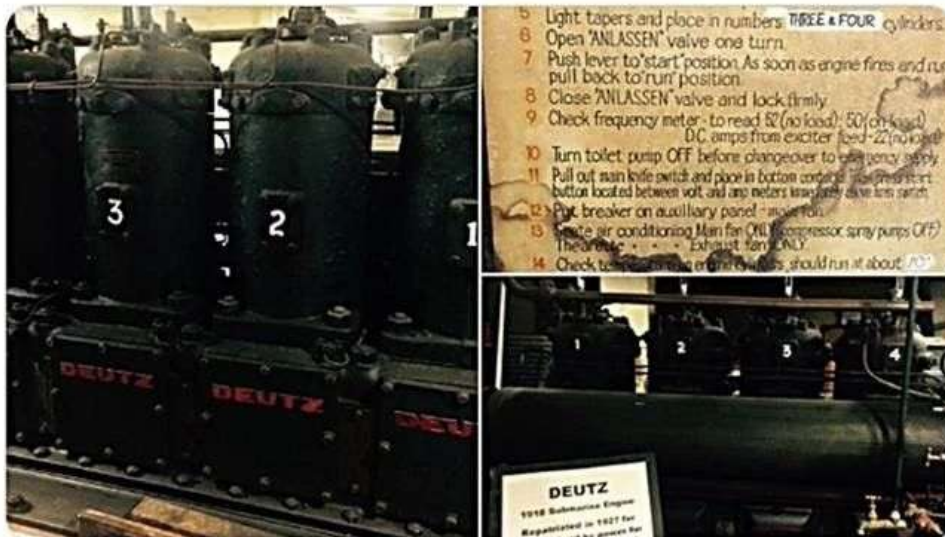
The late Alan Shaxon - Magician - Five Magic Minutes - 1980

\*\*\*\*\*

From the “Dennis, where did you find this obscure bit of information?, Department.”



This 1918 German Submarine diesel engine and generator was the back up power for Sydney's State Theatre until 1975



In the basement of the Heritage State Theatre in the city of Sydney Australia, there's an old German World War One submarine engine.

It was taken as WW1 war reparations and provided backup theatre power. Apparently, it took a lengthy amount of time to start. Over 15 minutes to crank up while patrons sat in the dark and was as very noisy when running.

I wonder if Dante or Virgil played on the stage above this engine when they were on tour in Australia?

\*\*\*\*\*

I am intensely fascinated by why people laugh and why and what sort of humor works. (So was Aristotle and that is why he wrote *Poetics* !!! Sadly, we only have a few bits of that ancient work. We do have *Poetics* 1, his explanation drama)

What becomes politically incorrect humor? No magician in their right mind today would do the Bra trick on a female. On a male it will either get a big laugh or you will get slugged! Even that is now unacceptable.

Here is a clip of Spike Jones on early TV! All this is funny stuff!

Notice how that dressing in drag in comedy sketches carried no stigma back then! (Milton Berle, Red Skelton, Bob Hope etc.)

Spike Jones' humor is right out of vaudeville, which was the only format that early TV had. Something shifted in the social psycho-sexual mindset in the 60s and 70s so that it no longer was funny.

Our humor also shifted. The late Bob Orben's lines mostly don't work today. People have no appreciation of linguistic cleverness, which was a gift of Jewish Borscht Belt comedians. Today's humor is all "put down humor" with lots of profanity and anger.

In contract here is some old-style humor: (Borrowed from Harry Allen) "Before I was a magician, I worked in a factory making alphabet soup. They fired me, I was making only 100 Gs a year...Then I worked as a taste tester in a prune factory. It was great job but a lousy schedule. One day on and two days off."

These lines only work with a crowd over 55! I have tried them a few times in a high school class and the kids just don't grasp the language...More examples:

"You think this is a tough school? You should have been at the school I substituted at last week! The yearbook had two pictures of each senior, front and side!"

No response..."Really, Mr. Phillips? What school was it?" The routine continues:

"I took one of the students down to the Guidance Counselor and asked the councilor how long it was until the student graduated. The councilor said, "I donno know, maybe ten to



twenty with good behavior"! It was a tough school. The Principal told me that I would have all honor students. He was right. All they knew was, "Yes, your Honor. Sorry, your Honor"! It was a tough school.

When the students were in elementary school, they played Hopscotch with real 100 proof Scotch! I asked one of the students what he was taking in school. He said, "Anything that ain't nailed down"!

I asked, "How do you like school?" He said, "CLOSED!" That school was so tough the Student Newspaper had an Obituary column! The student news on the School TV channel used the slogan, "If you have the time, we have the crime!"

No response... "Wow that was really a bad place, Mr. Phillips. What school was it?"

I repeated the same routine in the Faculty Lounge at lunch and the older teachers were rolling in the floor with laughter...They wanted to book me to do the routine at the Faculty Luncheon.

I also have tested the theory outside of school. I was in Lowes checking out and the cashier was a young woman working with an older woman showing her the cash register. As I walked up they were talking about how the young woman met her husband. "I met Bill at a party". The older woman said, "I have known Jack since high school". I walked up with my plywood and said, "I will tell you how I met my wife. She was working at a Vacation Travel Agency. I walked in looking for a good time and she was my last resort." The older woman laughed; the younger woman looked puzzled.

I guess I am old school in everything. Loved Blackstone, detest Criss Angel. My tastes reflect the old generational thinking before the changes.

\*\*\*\*\*

I recall seeing the late Frank Brents, on The Captain Kangaroo Show, when I was a young teenager in the early 1960s. I was always a fan of his style.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dennis