

Jimmy Vee founded the Ventriloquism Institute, the Voice of Ventriloquism, an Orlando 501(c)(3) building ventriloquism.org, the world-wide hub of ventriloquism and its community online, and its free public archive of the art as American entertainment history. He's been interested in ventriloquism since 1984 and working as a ventriloquist for more than thirty years. He's a magician, the author of ten children's books, the co-founder of a marketing agency started in 2004 with two hundred dollars, the former executive director of the Vent Haven International Ventriloquist ConVENTion, and the founder of the Florida Ventriloquist Association. He owns more than a hundred figures and brings them to interviews.

1. A visual act was the biggest thing on the radio

Bergen headlined vaudeville with a dummy, did one radio guest spot in December 1936, had his own show five months later, and by February 1938 held the highest rating ever recorded for a weekly series. Nobody could see Charlie McCarthy. Why it worked anyway, and what that says about voice, character, and an audience that wants to believe.

2. The dummy that sold America chocolate

Farfel sang "N-E-S-T-L-E-S" for ten years, 1955 to 1965. Danny O'Day pitched Texaco next to Milton Berle on the show that sold America its television sets. Jimmy is a marketer by trade. This is his field twice over, and he can talk about what those campaigns knew that most brands still don't.

3. The censorship fight that started on a dummy's show

December 1937. Mae West made a pass at Charlie McCarthy on the air. Listeners complained, the FCC called it indecent, and NBC banned her for more than a decade. The most famous censorship fight in radio history started because a starlet flirted with a dummy.

4. The missing half of the record: the makers

Frank Marshall of Chicago carved Jerry Mahoney, now in the Smithsonian next to Charlie McCarthy and Knucklehead Smiff, and Farfel, the Nestlé dog. The deepest record of Marshall anywhere is in this archive. Nobody kept the makers' history, and without it no figure in any collection can be identified or dated. That's the problem the Institute was built to fix.

5. What gets thrown away when a house is cleared

Why the Institute preserves without taking ownership. What a name on the back of a photograph is worth. And the album from a television host's estate that showed up in the archive's first month with the only known photographs of a 1953 convention.

6. One month to learn it, ten years to find the book

Jimmy saw a ventriloquist at a school assembly at eight and couldn't find a way in until he was eighteen. Then he learned in a month. That gap is why the literacy and youth programs exist, and what a kid does with a sock puppet and a first show.



He does not come alone.

Freddy Fiddlesticks, the Institute's spokes-dummy (carved by Alan Semok), handles public statements and most complaints. **Dusty Backlog**, the historian, is a Mack figure with half a million facts to look after. Either one can join a segment.

Practical

Orlando. Studio, Zoom, or your location. Comfortable on live television; hundreds of school assemblies in front of four hundred kids at a time.