

*When I was a kid growing up in Medicine Hat, there weren't any puppeteers around that I could pester for how-to information. I found the address of a famous puppeteer in a magazine article. I wrote a fan letter. I was nine years old. He did not reply. I was annoyed with him for years. I persevered. I found a directory listing puppeteers. When I received this at age twelve, I knew I had found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It even had the proper postal codes. Not everyone who received one of my letters wrote back. As I developed, both as a puppeteer and as a person, several of these contacts became my extended family, my champions, and my mentors. It would not be until my late teens that I actually started meeting them, and when I did, there was already enough history shared between us that it felt like I was coming home at last. At twelve I enrolled in a correspondence course in puppetry with a biggie in the American puppet movement. At some point I stopped asking how-to questions and I realised my mentor was allowing me to be his peer. I began visiting him in my early twenties and eventually moved to his studio. He fell ill and died, but I realised how deeply I had been mentored. For although he would no longer be readily available to praise my work, or challenge it, or critique it, he had shared what he knew with me. While I have developed my own techniques, followed my own style, and am in perpetual experimentation, the basis of my entire career was learned from this one man. He is with me every day.*



*R.B.*

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