

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

Hello and welcome to the Ex Libris article for April, 2016! What a magical month this has been for many of us, especially since we had a wonderful turnout for our Michigan Magic Day earlier this month! The lectures and the acts for the evening show were all very good and it took a strong team to pull it off from the beginning. We did it!

This month I will be focusing on a book whose author had an interesting beginning himself. The book is *The Life and Times of Albert Goshman* by Patrick Page and of course, Albert Goshman himself.

Goshman was not always outspoken and was rather shy as a child, the oldest of five born in New York City. He was socially awkward and had only managed to perform his magic act once at a high school concert, which he would soon rather forget. After his high school years he started helping his father run their bakery, which he did until 1941. Attempting to join the military and being rejected for medical reasons, he worked in Buffalo, NY at the Curtis Wright Aeronautical Company for five nights a week. He figured if he could not be in the military, he would at least be able to help the cause in some way or another. Because the routine of getting up to work every day, eating, sleeping and repeating got old rather quickly, he became easily bored. Once he decided to explore the city of Buffalo further, he tripped across a used book store where he found his first magic book, a book on card effects by Howard Thurston.

Not long after that period of time and after discovering Holden's Magic Shop on West 42nd Street in NYC, he knew he was bitten by the magic bug. He quickly became a regular at Holden's shop and began to hear about another one a few blocks away, that one owned by Stuart Robson. One particular Saturday he left Holden's to go and visit Robson's, only to discover the same crowd of magicians hanging around Robson's shop! Shortly after this period, Louis Tannen opened his shop and Albert found himself very busy on Saturdays with three different shops to visit. There was no going back now. From Sundays to Fridays Albert would work with his father at his bakery and on Saturdays, he would join the usual crowd of amateur magicians and make the rounds from Holden's to Robson's to Tannen's, occasionally throwing in a visit to the famous shop on West 34th Street, owned by the legendary Al Flosso.

After being married in 1946 and having four children, the family bakery business started to falter and things got worse. After leaving the business Albert took many other jobs to support his family, none of them successful and they always took him back to one thing: *magic*. Goshman had given many successful lectures over the years and he was very well-respected for his sleight-of-hand skill. Owing to this, and fast-forward about twenty years and a few jobs later, he was hired by Milt Larsen to perform at the Magic Castle Close-Up gallery as a regular basis, after Larsen had seen him performing at a Hyatt House hotel (a company that he had been working for, based in California) in Seattle. The rest, as they say, was history.

Albert Goshman had almost single-handedly created a new 'genre' in the close-up arena. After leaving the Magic Castle and traveling to England to perform at the British I.B.M. Convention, he became a sensation because most close-up performers were just a bunch of guys doing a collection of 'tricks'. Goshman was doing a close-up 'act' – it was something they had never

seen before. Albert Goshman became famous for different things over the years, not the least of which is his sponge products. He started a company, Magic by Gosh, where he developed various foam rubber products which were light years ahead of the rough hand-cut sponge items of years past. The company still exists today and is run by Albert's youngest son, Steven Goshman.

If anyone ever saw Goshman perform, they always saw the same stuff over and over and over. This was because Dai Vernon once had a conversation with Goshman wherein he told him, instead of trying to master many effects, pick a few and perfect those. Goshman did just that and those 'few' effects (10 of them, to be precise) became the act for which he was most famous and the act that took him around the world for over 30 years. One effect in particular really stood out to magicians and that was the Salt & Pepper Shakers, where a coin continually vanished from the hands/under one of the shakers and reappeared under another shaker. Goshman had a few other items that he became quite well-known for, including his version of Chink-a-Chink using playing cards, which was aptly named 'Cards Thru Newspaper' and his A.G. Bowl Routine, where the final load was a bagel – a nod to his days as a baker. Something else that many people remember about him was his introduction: "Hi, my name is Albert and I'm going to *magish* for you!"

The entire Goshman act, as well as a few extra items and sundry sleights are described in the book, *The Life and Times of Albert Goshman*. Years later there was also a video tape that was put out (and subsequently a DVD) of the same material. One of the great things about the material is that although it is a complete act, it is entirely modular, meaning you do not have to perform all of the effects in one sitting but you can pick and choose which ones to use. The book was penned by a good friend of Goshman, the equally legendary Patrick Page. The book was published in 1985 and was edited by magician Kathy Diamond, along with the help of Mike Caveney, Tina Lenert and Richard Kaufman.

That is all for this month folks. Have a great month, get out there and share your magic with others and remember, as Goshman was told by Francis Carlyle and always said himself, "The MAGIC is YOU!"