

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for March 2017! It has been an interesting year so far with the weather being up and down and up again. Just a week before this article was written, in February 2017, we set to new high temperature records. It is just crazy the amount of varying temperatures and in such a normally cold month too! This crazy variety reminds me a lot of the book we are going to focus on for this month, ***The Secrets of Brother John Hamman*** by **Richard Kaufman**. It is a 252-page hardcover book in published in 1989 by **Kaufman and Greenburg**.

Brother John Hamman was a Marianist (a profession within the Roman Catholic Church) and a teacher of over 20 years, and he is very famous for many different card moves which have become standard moves over the years. Two his most famous moves include the *Hamman Count* and the *Gemini Count*, and he was responsible for the popularization of the *Flushtation Count*. Some of his more famous effects include *Fan-To-See*, *Haldeucination* and *Micro-Macro*.

This book concentrates on card magic, but there is really a great deal of variety in the contents as far as the plots are concerned. One example: most magicians are familiar with the Ace Assembly plot where four Aces are laid face down on the all magically assemble together on one "leader Ace". There is a most excellent variation on that in this book called ***Final Ace Routine***; it does use gimmicked cards but it is oh, so clean! This version has inspired other similar versions.

One of my all-time favorite card effects is called ***The Devilish Miracle*** and was created by **Ed Marlo**. The effect is a unique spin on the ***The Biddle Trick*** where one selection is found quickly; it appears and vanishes multiple times in a small packet, then transposes with the second selection inside the deck at the end. Brother John has a handling of that effect in this book called ***The Devilish Miracle Retold***, which uses a very clever count of his called *The Countback*. This is a very deceptive count that allows you to clearly display five very different cards and yet, one is switched out or vanishes completely. It is used to its fullest glory in another effect called ***The Invisible Card***, where one card is chosen and lost in the pack; five random cards are taken out by the performer in hopes to luckily pick the selected card. These five are displayed and then spread out on the table in a row, only one is missing. The missing card is "invisible" and the performer is able to name the card. At the end, the "invisible card" is turned over and it immediately becomes visible!

The Signed Card is a fantastic and very deceptive handling of the now-classic Mystery Card plot. To me ***The Faked Deck*** one of the most brilliant concepts set forth here; this is an ingenious way to store and carry around your gaffed/non-gaffed packet tricks without having to use the cheap plastic wallets, or any wallets at all if you so choose.

Well, that is all for this month folks! Remember to get out there and share the fun, read a good magic book and above all, keep the magic alive! - **JMA**