

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for April 2017! Being that it is April, I thought we would go abroad (at least in our imaginations) and explore the land of Japan via the body of work of a Japanese magician! I thought of Japan because April in Kyoto, Tokyo and Osaka is typically Cherry Blossom time, and I have been re-reading a lot of Dai Vernon recently. This month we will focus on a book called ***The Amazing Miracles of Shigeo Takagi*** by **Richard Kaufman**. It is a 120-page hardcover book that was written and published in 1990, illustrated by the ever talented owner of the Magic Land magic shop in Japan, **Ton Onosaka**.

Shigeo Takagi is widely regarded as the **Dai Vernon** of Japan – he was born in 1930 and died in 1991 and his skills were as varied as that of the Professor. He was an author of many, many books and not just magic books; his expertise ran the gamut from gambling to games, psychology to hypnosis, from puzzles to memory to philosophy. He worked at the National Diet Library – kind of like the American Library of Congress, where he translated many books into the Japanese language.

This book is chock full of great, strong magic. Within its 120 pages you will find magic for coins, cards, ropes, rubber bands, silks, the Linking Rings and even a bit with scissors. Among the highlights of the card work are his ***Wild Blanks*** where you display five all-blank cards and after writing your name (or anything you want, really) on one of the cards, it magically transfers to the other cards. **Total Triumph** is a great combination of the **Larry Jennings** Convincing Control, the **Tenkai** Optical False Shuffle and the most famous Triumph Cutting Display by **Daryl**.

In ***Trans-Purse-Sition*** four coins are dumped out of a coin purse – three half dollars and a Chinese coin. The Chinese coin is placed back into the purse and it is snapped shut. The three half dollars then change into the Chinese coin and when the purse is opened, the three half dollars are dumped out! In ***The Oriental Coins***, which has no Western counterpart, uses two small bowls and four coins. The coins vanish and appear between the bowls one at a time and then two at a time and finally all four at once. ***The Ghostly Silk*** is a short, sweet penetration of two un-gimmicked silks; ***Do-As-I-Do Rope Routine*** is self-explanatory but is a very strong audience participation rope effect, worthy of being a feature piece. ***Owan To Tama*** is the Japanese answer to the Cups and Balls with some very pretty sequences and no Western counterpart, especially where the techniques are concerned.

Certainly the biggest highlight of the book, and indubitably the thing for which Takagi is most famous for creating in 1977 is ***The Solid Cup***, a Chop Cup routine where a small ball is vanished and reappears under a cup repeatedly and at the end, a large ball is produced. Ah! But the cup is shown to be absolutely solid! The large ball is apparently pushed back into the cup, but then the cup is unscrewed to show the ball *actually inside* of the solid cup!

Well, that is all for this month folks! Be sure to check out this truly Ah-mazing book and remember to keep the magic alive! We will 'see' you all next month! -JMA