

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the *Ex Libris* article for November 2017! I certainly hope that everyone has been well and that your Halloween was spooktacular! Now that we are into November, the holiday season is upon us. This is a time for bringing family and friends together and for sharing our lives and interests with each other. This reminds me of a person who shared something very special with all of us magicians, namely **Andrew Galloway**. Andrew was the sole student of the legendary **John Ramsay** from Scotland, creator of many now-standard sleights, subtleties, principles and effects in magic.

Andrew hails from Ayr, Scotland and is the author of the *Ramsay Trilogy*, along with a handful of smaller booklets and is also the star of a two volume DVD set, *Magic of John Ramsay*. These items together detail the entirety of the Ramsay body of work and they are sole record of his work as taught to Andrew Galloway. This work in and of itself is a gift to the magical community because had Andrew not shared any of this with us, we would all have missed out on the brilliant thinking that John Ramsay was known for.

Jean Hugard was once describing the kind of magic that Ramsay performed to **Dai Vernon**. Vernon asked, "I have heard about this guy – what does he do that is so good?" Hugard told him, "He makes coins disappear." Vernon went digging, repeatedly asking what techniques he used and Hugard interrupted, "No, no...he simply takes a coin at the fingertips and it simply...disappears." That is a very strong testimonial, especially coming from someone as knowledgeable as Jean Hugard!

John Ramsay was a grocer who did not perform magic for a living but rather shared much of it with his customers. He did give the odd lecture performance, but today many magicians would argue that his effects were created, specifically, to fool magicians. They were indeed, and Ramsay especially delighted in creating effects specifically for this purpose however, that does not diminish their impact on lay audiences.

Ramsay was very good at using things that magicians used and were familiar with and using them to knock their socks off. One of the prime examples which has gained a lot of attention recently, thanks to the **Eric Mead** performance on the **Penn & Teller** show, is the ***Cylinder and Coins***. This the equivalent to the Cups & Balls for coin workers; some believe the effect to be a great piece of theater while others dismiss it as trivial and boring. Regardless, Ramsay took the old **Cap and Pence** effect and brought it up to date, giving it a more sensical twist, if you will.

John Ramsay was especially known for his attention to detail. Case in point: **Victor Farelli** wrote the original manuscript on the Cylinder & Coins effect in exacting detail as described by Ramsay, detailing of every move with precision. Upon submitting it to Ramsay for proofreading, Ramsay rejected it because Farelli left out things which he considered trivial and unimportant, but Ramsay said they **MUST** be included because they are even more important than the sleights and moves.

Something else that many readers will be familiar with is the *Ramsay Subtlety*, which is most often associated with coin work but can be applied to any small object of similar size. It enables you to show, subtly, an empty hand whilst holding out an object. The *Ramsay Vanish* is another technique, again usually associated with coin work but also applicable to other similarly shaped objects. The thing about John Ramsay that should really be appreciated, however, is not

the effects, the moves and the sleights but rather his ideas and work on “misdirection”. These are the things that make the moves invisible to even the most observing of audiences. They make your magic that much cleaner and stronger and further still, they help you build a rapport with your audience. So good was his thinking that it influenced the way many future masters of the art thought and developed their own theories and ideas, including Dai Vernon, **Tommy Wonder, John Carney, Slydini** and many others.

That is all for this month folks! Join me again next month as I wrap up this two-part article. Please enjoy a wonderful start to the holiday season and remember to share your magic with others! – **JMA**