

***Ex Libris* by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.**

Hello folks and welcome to the *Ex Libris* article for July 2015! I hope everyone is enjoying the summer weather and doing lots of shows.

Last month I mentioned that I would delve deeper into a more mysterious part of the book, *Greater Magic* by John Northern Hilliard. Here goes:

Going back in the time line just a bit: Carl W. Jones, the editor of the book in 1932 suggested the title *Greater Magic*. Hilliard thought it was brilliant and had it copyrighted then and there. He then spent three years working tirelessly on the book. When he began compiling the material from the contributors, he wrote everything down by hand in notebooks with a brown leather cover. These notebooks were his record of all of the material in the *Greater Magic* book.

On March 14th, 1935 in Indianapolis, Indiana John Northern Hilliard died of a heart attack in his hotel room at the age of 62. At this point, only a third of the *Greater Magic* book was finished and many of his friends helped Carl Jones to complete the tome, with Jean Hugard helping with the editing and of course, Dr. Harlan Tarbell doing the illustrations. This massive tome was truly a team effort.

There was a problem though: Hilliard had collected hundreds and hundreds of tricks – many more than what was included in the finished book, and they were nowhere to be found. When Hilliard died in the hotel, there were a lot of people coming and going in and out of the room, everything from hotel personnel to the police and other magicians. The fact that all the remaining material collected by Hilliard was missing caused a great stir with many different speculations and theories as to what happened to it, but there was no definitive answer.

Fast forward 57 long years later, somewhere in the central states of the U.S. in 1992, there was an auction of old magic catalogs being held. After the auction, the buyer was going through the box and there in the bottom of the box he found two old notebooks. They had worn brown leatherette bindings and had hundreds of typed pages – these were not listed in the contents of the auction. It was later discovered that these were indeed the missing notebooks – the lost notebooks of John Northern Hilliard!

The notebooks comprised of roughly a combined 300 pages. The material in both volumes is split up into sections according to the source; Volume 1 included the Stewart Judah Section, the Annemann Section and the Al Baker Section. Volume 2 included the Yettmah (the British magician Cyril Yettmah) Section, the Card System Section, Card Systems with the use of Prearranged Packs, Tricks with Prearranged Packs and a section on Poker Deals.

In 1994 when Richard Kaufman reprinted the *Greater Magic* book, he added 300 extra pages which included correspondence between various magicians in regards to *Greater Magic* itself, as well as the origins of the book, lots of additional tips, photos and miscellaneous material.

In 2001, Richard Kaufman released a facsimile edition of the Hilliard notebooks, appropriately titled *The Lost Notebooks of John Northern Hilliard* with an austere photo of Hilliard on the cover. There is a lot of wonderful material in this collection. If you decide to read this, you will have to take your time because as it is a facsimile, you will be required to read and interpret all of the handwriting and notations of Hilliard as it appeared in his personal notebooks. It may be hard for some people to read, but the material is still there and it is very, very good!

I hope this has been a fun trip back in history in regards to one of the greatest books ever written for magicians. It certainly is a massive book with lots of material to digest, but that means there is plenty of good stuff to pick and choose from. If you are interested in reading *Greater Magic*, we do have a copy of the Kaufman edition in the club library, which means you also have the extra 300 pages available to learn even more about the book, its author and its contributors than can be covered here.

Here then is a short but very effective contribution from the author of *Greater Magic* himself, John Northern Hilliard:

A “Think Stop” Trick by J. N. Hilliard

Effect: A person makes a mental selection of a card from a small packet, say, 20 cards. The magician is then able to identify the card without fishing. *See a note from Dr. J. regarding this effect at the end of the article.

Here is the entire effect as written *almost* verbatim from *Greater Magic*:

“This to my mind is the most brilliant of all the many tricks in this category. It is done without asking a question and is unfathomable.

Allow a spectator to shuffle the pack, a borrowed one, if such is available. Take it back and request him to think of a number between 10 and 15. The chances are all in favor of his thinking of thirteen (13), at least he will do so ninety-nine times out of one hundred. But if he mentally selects another number it will make no difference as I shall explain later.

Deal, say, twenty cards in a pile, face up on the table, and count each card aloud, asking the spectator to note the card that falls at the number he is thinking of. As you deal the cards, note and remember the first card dealt, it will be your key card.

Pick up the packet, cut the remaining cards of the deck without completing the cut, put the packet of twenty cards onto one of the halves, then place the remaining half on top of all, thus reassembling the pack with the twenty cards in the middle. Execute a false shuffle and have the cards cut several times by the spectator, complete cuts, of course.

Ask the spectator to scream “STOP” in their head, and ONLY in their head, when they see their card. Deal the cards from the top of the deck face up onto the table and watch for your key card. When it appears, begin counting and when the thirteenth card is reached boldly announce that it is his card. It will be in almost every instance.

If it is not, you berate the spectator for not thinking “Stop” strongly enough for you to be affected by the mental waves. Gather up the cards in the same order and again place the

packet in the middle of the remaining cards and have the pack cut. Casually ask what number was chosen. We will suppose it was twelve. Deal again and when the key card comes out count that as one and keep on going until you reach twelve, which will be his card. So far as effect is concerned, it makes no difference whether the number chosen was thirteen or any other. Snappily worked the trick is a knockout". – J. N. Hilliard

*This effect is very strong when presented correctly, but have some confidence in the psychological force of the number 13, which is really the underlying method in play here.

Please note that the word 'berate**' had a different meaning at the time this book was written. It was used in the sense that you 'have fun with your helper', or, 'make a joke out of it'. Do not insult your spectators, and if they choose a number other than thirteen, make a joke out of it or put the blame on yourself for not being intuitive enough – anything to keep the 'sting' off of your willing audience members.