

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

Hello and welcome to the Ex Libris article for August, 2015!

This month I am going to focus on a book that most of you are familiar with and even if you have never read it, you have at least heard of it. This month, we take a look at *The Stars of Magic*.

*The Stars of Magic* was released by a company called The Stars of Magic, Inc. in the 1940s and 1950s as a series of individual manuscripts. The material was gathered from top magicians of the time and originally, the series was authored by Hon. George Starke, who was not only a judge but also an amateur magician. The photos were supplied by George Karger, a professional photographer who was a regular contributor to Life magazine and good friends with Dai Vernon and John Scarne. The manuscripts were sold individually for a period of 7 years and eventually sold as a bound, hardcover edition book. D. Robbins & Co. purchased the rights to the material and later by Meir Yedid, who bought the rights to both the original and current editions.

The manuscripts were priced between \$1-8/USD and the complete collection sold for \$12/USD. The last two series, numbered 10 and 11, sold for \$10 each and were available directly from the Stars of Magic, Inc. (which was based in New York) and through most magic shops around the country. At these prices, it was very expensive for the time but they were priced to keep the material out of the hands of the “merely curious”. The leatherette editions sold through Max Holden in the early 1950s were priced at \$25, compared to the \$94 dollars that it would have cost a few months earlier for the total of 30 manuscripts that were issued.

The first series (Volume 1) was supposed to be from Dai Vernon, but seeing as he had to leave for a cruise ship job, this delayed the work on his particular series. Starke and Karger were eager to begin, so they decided to start with John Scarne, which Dai Vernon said was a good choice. Vernon and Scarne were good friends, so there were no hard feelings on this end.

In 1952 The Stars of Magic, Inc. quite publishing the individual manuscripts and almost immediately offered the entire series bound in a brown leatherette pressure binder; there were two different colored binders issued, one black and one burgundy, but nobody knows why. Both colors had the gold *Stars of Magic* logo hot stamped on the front and on the spine, the burgundy was sold for many years and the black leatherette covered issues became quite rare. The During this same time period in 1953, the “New Master Lessons” by Vernon and Slydini appeared in the advertisements for the Holden shop; they also used the same cover design as the ‘Stars of Magic’ hardbound book. The ‘New Master Lessons’ covered the Vernon “Royal Monte” and the Slydini “The Art of Using the Lap as a Servante”. Both of those two lessons were photographed by Dr. Jacob Daley.

Nobody seems to know the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the rights to *The Stars of Magic* but in 1959, Lou Tannen published a hardbound library edition of *The Stars of Magic* and that edition contained all 11 of the original series *and* the two extra lessons, the Vernon and Slydini lessons, which originally sold under the title of *The New Master Lessons*. The library

edition sold for \$25 dollars. In 1961 Lou Tannen published a hard cover book with the entire series plus the two new lessons, which sold for only \$12.50. The first printing of the hard cover had two-color cover with pictures of the contributors to the book; the subsequent printings had a blue cover with the title hot stamped in gold on the front and spine. The Yedid edition is a new style of printed (no hot stamping) cover with the *Stars of Magic* logo and a photo of the 11 contributors in a gold star shaped graphic. Earlier editions of the book from Max Holden were bound in a red cover with the title in gold, hot stamped on the front.

Since the original photo plates were lost somewhere in time, the photographs in the Tannen edition were quite poor and since the D. Robbins & Co. did not rescreen the photographs properly when the new negatives were made for printing, this poor photograph quality continued with their editions. The Meir Yedid edition also contains the same poor photographs, but they were digitally enhanced as much as they could be. This helped sharpen the images a little bit, but nothing compares to the quality of the photos from the original series back in the 40s and 50s.

There were some truly landmark effects in this collection of manuscripts which went on to become what many of us consider the ‘standards of magic’ today, effects such as Dai Vernon’s *Triumph*, Francis Carlyle’s *The Homing Card*, Slydini’s *Paper Balls Over the Head*, the Malini/Bey *Chink-A-Chink* (Max Malini and Mohammed Bey) and the John Scarne *Classic (3) Ball Routine*.

For the effect this month, we are going to focus on the John Scarne contribution called *Triple Coincidence*. It is very easy to do and is very fooling.

### **Triple Coincidence** by John Scarne

**Effect:** Two ordinary decks are introduced, each with a different back design. A volunteer shuffles one deck while the performer shuffles the other. At no time does the magician touch the other deck shuffled by the volunteer. The volunteer cuts his deck three times, each time exchanging a card with the performer. When both ribbon spread their decks, a miracle is accomplished – each time the spectator and magician turn up one of the three stranger cards in their decks, the cards turn out to be alike – a knock-out triple coincidence. Both decks are left for examination.

**Preparation:** Use two decks with backs of contrasting design. From deck #1 (which will later be used by the spectator) remove any 3 cards and insert them into different parts of deck #2, which will be used by the magician. From deck #2 select the duplicates of these three cards and place them on top of deck #2. Put this deck in its case and in your pocket.

**Performance:** Request the spectator to shuffle Deck #1 which you have just been using for some other card effect(s). Take out Deck #2 from pocket and riffle-shuffle it *face up* on the table (reason being to prevent spectator from seeing the backs of the three stranger cards). Be sure not to disturb the three top cards (which are now on the bottom as the deck is face up).

After you have both completed shuffling your decks, turn your pack face down, holding it in dealing position and push top card off onto table. Request spectator to cut his deck anywhere he

desires. Take the card at the point where spectator cut and place it on top of your deck. Then place the card, which you pushed off onto the table, in the same place where you removed the card from the spectator's deck. Request spectator to replace upper stock onto the lower stock thereby burying your card somewhere in his deck.

At this point request spectator to shuffle his deck thoroughly. In the meantime, cut your deck using sleight A or B in order to *maneuver spectator's card to the bottom without disturbing the two top cards*. Repeat the above procedure twice, each time pushing off *one of your top cards* onto table and exchanging them with spectator's cards.

Spectator now has three stranger cards separated in different parts of his deck. You have the duplicates of these three cards separated in your deck and *the three indifferent cards on the bottom*. Spectator is requested to place his deck on the table. Place your deck on top of his. Request spectator to separate the two decks. (You have thus subtly disposed of the three indifferent cards).

Each one ribbon-spreads his deck. Now point out that each deck has three stranger cards. Take advantage of this to build up the effect to a startling finish. Emphasize that the spectator shuffled his deck in the beginning as much as he wanted; that you have at no time touched his deck; that he chose any three cards at random by cutting the deck wherever he desired. While stressing these points, seize the opportunity to glimpse at two of the stranger cards in your deck by pulling the three slightly out of line, as if to make them stand out a little better from the rest of the deck.

Request spectator to turn over one of his stranger cards. Now *slowly* turn over the card that matches his. Each time spectator turns over one of the remaining stranger cards, you pick out the duplicate and *slowly* turn it over. Thus, a knock-out triple coincidence. Leave both decks to be examined at the end if desired.

SLEIGHT A: Holding your deck in left hand, with spectator's card on top, right hand undercuts a portion. In the action of placing undercut part on top, right hand little finger pushes off the spectator's card slightly, so that when you place the undercut portion on top and in line with the pushed-off (out-jogged) card, you form a step. Then undercut the lower part, place it on top and square up the deck. You have thus moved their card to the bottom, leaving the top two alone.

SLEIGHT B: Spectator's card which is on top of your deck, is pushed off slightly with the right hand first finger. Right hand undercuts and places undercut portion on top of and in line with the pushed-off card, forming a step. Now undercut the lower part, place it on top and square up the deck. This accomplishes the same thing as SLEIGHT A.

Have a magical month folks and we will see you in September, when school is back in session!

Yours in the Secret Art,

Joaquin Ayala, PhD.  
Club Librarian  
I.B.M. Ring 210/S.A.M. 88