

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the first Ex Libris article for 2020! Happy New Year to you all! My faithful readers will know that each year in January, I consider it a chance to go back to basics, back to the beginning or an elementary level, if you will. As such I always write about a book that is considered a must-read for beginning magicians, but which can also be of use to advanced practitioners.

This month we will focus on *Mark Wilson's Complete Course in Magic* by **Mark Wilson**, originally published in 1975 as a large-format, comb-bound book, then again in 1988 as a 472-page hardcover book with a dustjacket. It was published by Ottenheimer Publishers, Inc., for Courage Books. It has since been republished in various sized softcover formats.

This is a book that has it all – cards, coins, parlor, close-up, mentalism, illusions, stunts, flourishes and more! There were quite a few famous contributors to this book, including but not limited to the likes of **David Roth, Alan Wakeling, Ulysses F. Grant, Don Wayne** and others. The effects are all described, followed by the secret and the preparation, the presentation and finally, any additional comments and suggestions.

The first major section deals with cards and card magic including definitions of card-related terms (i.e. spot card, court card, etc.), various common shuffles, methods for false shuffles, many effects with normal cards and even some using jumbo cards! There are a great number of flourishes taught such as the *Charlier Cut (a.k.a. One-Handed Cut)*, the *Arm Spread and Catch*, the *Boomerang Card*, *One-Handed Fans*, *Springing the Cards* and more. Also included in this section is his work on the *Out to Lunch Principle* using his popular Genii Cards, which are business cards with the requisite Genii coming out of the lamp with the speech bubble printed on the back. If you ever bought the video edition of this book, these cards were included.

The second section deals with Money Magic. It details most of the major sleights used with coin magic, followed by some excellent coin effects including a *Copper/Silver* effect using a handkerchief, *Coin Thru Trousers*, *Coins Through Table*, *Coin in Ball of Wool* and more. This is followed by magic with banknotes, including a Torn & Restored bill, a banknote production and the ever-popular *Bill in Lemon!*

The sections that follow are dedicated to Rope Magic, Silk & Handkerchief Magic, Impromptu Magic, Mental Magic, Make-at-Home Magic, a Sponge Ball effect, Billiard Balls, a Cups & Balls routine complete with final loads and finally, Illusions. Whew – it really is a lot of magic!

The Make At Home section stands out because he teaches you how to make your own versions of classic apparatus, which you can construct with the materials given in the book, or with the right tools and skills, you can make out of things like wood or metal. You will learn to make paper cones to produce and vanish items like silks and confetti, *Afghan Bands*, *the Square Circle*, *Black Art tables*, *Foo Can*, *Lota Bowl*, *Dove Pans* and more.

The Illusion section is like the Make at Home in that he suggests ways to make about ten different classic illusions on a budget, but again if you have the skill and the right tools you could easily make nicer versions of them. The essays all give very good advice and make excellent points that you will want to pay attention to.

I learned a lot of my card flourishes and some of my very first bits of close-up magic from this book. Earlier I mentioned that this book is aimed at beginner-intermediate magicians, but there are some things in here that even advanced magicians can use. I chose this book particularly because sometimes we need that sort of reset that beginner-level books and props can offer – things we missed or overlooked when we were beginners.

Next month I will be taking a nice trip in the Way-Back Machine to visit and older tome – please come along with me!

Yours in the Secret Art,

Dr. J.