

## ***Ex Libris*** by Joaquin M. Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for July 2018! I hope all our northern hemisphere friends have been enjoying the heat and the mugginess...blech! It is only min-June and we have already had a couple of days in this area top 36°C/98°F. Time to take it easy and rest in the air conditioning or relax in the pool if you have one. I have the perfect book for you to try out this month; it is quite an easy book to Read and the book is called *Thanks to Pepys* by **Bob Read**. Yes, I went there...

This book is a 60-page spiral bound book self-published by Bob in 1973. If you do not know the name Bob Read, you should! Bob was a brilliant magician from England and a very funny guy. His specialty was not only being a comedic magician but also a very smooth and polished one, thus making him very deceptive. Nothing he did really required elaborate props and most of what he did depended on borrowing all necessary items, or at the very least, being able to find them anywhere you happen to be.

This book is written in a bit of a different format than most books. The whole intent of it is that if you follow this book to the letter, and give everything the practice they deserve, you will end up with a polished, professional 12-minute close-up act that is completely impromptu! The book starts out by introducing **Sam Pepys** (pronounced like 'peeps') and an idea for using a violin case to transport any props.

After that he tells you everything you will need to do everything included in the book. After you gather the necessary things and are ready to begin, that is where the layout is a bit unusual, but not in a bad way. Bob used a lot of word play jokes and gags, and because of that there were certain points during the effects where certain lines should be used. Well, he took care of that point for you too. On the left page you will see the handlings and the descriptions of the moves/sleights/etc. On the right-hand page, the text of the script appears adjacent to the appropriate move in the description. Because of this, some of the right-hand pages have a lot of blank spaces.

The entire book reads as if Bob were speaking to you, right down to his use of the vernacular. To be fair, some of that comes from the gags and puns, but even the instructional portion reads that way. The descriptions are thorough but not so detailed that it takes four pages to describe a two-second move. You might have to read some passages more than once before they make sense to you, but everything is there, and the instructions are complete.

Normally I would encourage you to read things and make things your own – the same can still apply here but the whole point to this book was that Bob Read was giving you a *complete, polished, professional* impromptu close-up act with which you can do a whole twelve minutes, all without having to carry a bunch of stuff around, complete with lines, jokes, gags and script, as long as you give it the practice it deserves. Now, having said that, of course it is not necessary to do everything in this book – you may not even like everything in it, but that is okay too. Any of the gags and effects herein can be used on their own.

So, that is a lot of information on the teaching and intentional parts of this book. What is actually in it? Quite a nice variety, really. One thing that Bob Read was very well known for, his stunning production of a full, sealed bottle of Champagne, wine, etc. is described herein. He describes a great Coins Across where at the end, all four go across at once, there is his *Knife Through Coat*, there is one card effect, and even his handling for Miser's Dream which he calls the *Miser's Mouchoire*. There is a total of eight effects, plus additional sight gags.

Put all these features together and it makes this book very easy to read and a lot of fun to think about how you would use the effects, jokes, gags and lines in it. If you are not familiar with Bob Read, check out the ***Impromptu Miracles of Bob Read*** from L&L Publishing, and, the ***Bob Read Collection***, which is a series of four DVDs. Much of the work in *Thanks to Pepys* is detailed in the L&L videos, in addition to some effects not in the book, such as his wonderful and fooling *Transpo Tumbler*, along with some extra hints and tips for things that were not in the book.

If you enjoy impromptu magic or would not mind learning more about how to become a better performer (impromptu or otherwise), be sure to pick up a copy of this book. It really is fantastic! Join me again next month as we travel a little further back into 20<sup>th</sup> century and over to the Far East...sort of!  
– **J. M. A.**