

The Pastime Printer

TYPESET AND BROUGHT OFF FOR HIS FRIENDS BY STEVE L. WATTS
AT THE PRIVATEER PRESS, SKYLINE HEND FARM, FRONT ROYAL, VA.

Number 2 6 Sept. 1956

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Recollections of a Decayed Printer*

BACK IN 1917, your pastimer was a C Prtr USN at the Naval Training Station, Newport, Rhode Island. Not his first tour of duty on Coasters Harbor Island, he having been processed through the boot manufactory there, five years earlier.

Before this country entered the lists on April sixth, the printer's billet at the station was a *prima* assignment, for numerous type forms were kept standing, press runs weren't long, and temporary help was plentiful. Recruits in training regiments, claiming to be qualified, eagerly sought detail to the printing office to avoid less dignified and more unfamiliar tasks in messhalls and latrines.

Came the war, and the printing department expanded to 21 men. Shortly there was a Model 8 Linotype, new cabinets, steel imposing tables, Universal saw-trimmer, Oswego power cutter, Monitor stitcher and other complementary equipment for composing room and bindery. An ancient half super royal (14x22) Gordon jobber, on which had been printed the 12½x19 sheets of halftones for *The Newport Recruit* magazine every month, was "surveyed" and knocked in the head. New presses included a Kelly and a three-roller Premier cylinder, plus a parcel of snappers. Then, saving time out for the evolutions consistent with the dual nature of a man o' warsman's duties, it can be said that we were in the printing business.

* In 1886, Thomas MacKellar, Philadelphia typefounder, proposed a GENERAL ASYLUM FOR DECAYED PRINTERS, his firm offering \$1000 as a nucleus of a fund.

Newfound
Delight in *Printing As a Hobby*

HERE appears to be dapper and favorable interest in the cloistered activities of private presses, extending even unto ye business printer who once had nary a kind word for bedroom shops, evincing a streetwalker's lack of charity for amateur competition. When times were hard and work so scarce that a printer couldn't make a living by working for the other fellow, he would pick up an old klunk and with a shirttailful of type launch a little shop in the basement. These enterprises scarcely came within the purview of the private press, but unless the dinkum idler was a moneyed man he was attainted and tarred with the same brush as the guy looking for a fast buck. Things were tough all over.

Prosperity barged around the corner. Many a bedroom printer blossomed out with a larger press and a duplicator to handle the two-bitsy short runs the big shops no longer coveted. We could name more than one employing printer who started with a 6x10 Excelsior or equivalent and who now motors to Miami for the season. You point and we'll whistle. May their plucky tribe increase!

Creative artistic ability earned industry's appreciative regard for amateur printers. Their work was discussed at a luncheon meeting of the New York Type Directors Club, on August 7. Before our shop was ready, examples of our handiwork were invited for a midwest exhibition. Trade magazines frequently reproduce meritorious examples of private printing in their specimen reviews. An influential advertising medium of the paper industry will glamorize private presses in a forthcoming issue. James L. Weygand's *Private Press of the Indiana Kid at Nappanee* last month published "A Collection of Pressmarks." Mr. R. A. Freiman of New York allows us to announce his forthcoming book, "Printing As Your Hobby," now nearly half finished.

In New York the American Institute of Graphic Arts sponsors the AIGA Workshop, supervised by such eminent typographers as Mr. James Hendrickson. In Chicago, the STA Workshop functions at Newberry Library under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Martin, accomplished designers and typesetters. Students at these workshops are not there to become printers by trade but rather to learn by doing the rudiments of printing, its powers and limitations. Most of them work in advertising agencies or publication offices where familiarity with basic techniques enhances improved liaison with tradesmen. If ink gets in their blood, many go in for printing as a hobby. Other students include self-taught hobbyists who want to learn more.

Then there's the printing plant executive who likes to get his fingers dirty but may not eschew the dictum that the master's mind is worth a dozen hands. And the instructor who talks about printing all day but must forego personal projects at school. When a scholarly craftsman works for fun, his hobby printing is apt to be above the common run.

Commencing as a hobbyist is not easy. A shop requires a bit of room and a motor-driven machine makes a racket. The romanticist who craves a rouncy buggy-striped hand squeezer for his ivory tower cannot find a small one, and a press larger than a 10x15 clamshell soon turns out to be a blanched pachyderm, much too much for its trainer.

Costly equipment and fancypants faces aren't necessary for the pastime printer. Tools never made a craftsman, and pleasing results derive from experimental improvisation. The dilettante who never labored as a journeyman is prone to ignore the disciplines imposed by good taste, conventions and common sense. Too many borders and embellishers, with gimcrack nifties of the 1880's, mixed heterogeneously or anachronously, oft proclaim an impish urge to show off.

But a plague on inhibitions—'tis impressions that count!

Right Off the Cob at Skyline Bend



ROASTING EARS are ripe at The Good Old Farm, and visitors join us in allowing dietary restrictions to go by the board. A bumper crop of wild blackberries yielded ten quarts for jelly, with a goodly share frozen for pies to entice Madge and Paul Bennett for another October tarry at Skyline Bend. Summer Rambo apples burden the limbs of the aged trees. Miz Gincy, *la cuisinera completamente*, fulfills her earthly mission in the harvest kitchen. There grows a colorful array of widemouth mason jars, needful of another Whittier to extol its beauty. A grape year, the White Concord ripen in their shady arbor. Reading this stickful to the pilot of the Yellow Peril, the lady opines we have a balm salesman from Gilead in our midst, but that isn't getting her *neuen Wagen* for the BROWNTOWN & F.R. MEATBALL EXPRESS. Our 1947 Willys pickup ain't never been the same since she tried to straighten out the icy curves along Gooney Manor Road, our own Foothill Boulevard, one doleful morn in winter. Failing to answer the helm, the craft surged upbank on the high side of the road, fished the bow fender around a locust sapling and capsized to larboard, settling by the stern, the bow secured aloft by the sapling. Obviously, after forward motion was arrested by a clout on the *cabeza*, the pilot rotated athwartships, counter-clockwise, landing on the obstructed watertight door, afoul of the wheel. Regaining equilibrium, but with all positive buoyancy expended, Ginger climbed through the escape hatch, wrathful as a gutshot ocelot. At this juncture the highschool bus stood down the fairway, weighted to the gunwales with Browntown's pride and joy, who hastened to the rescue. Meanwhile Shenandoah's ethereal blue was intensified by the victim's expletives in the Romance languages reinforced by *das Deutsch*, with further emphatic descriptive adjectives from the Erse of her Scots forebears. 'twas a memorable incident, mates. To this day, no attempts have been made to requisition a bible teacher or youth leader from Boondockerschloss at Skyline Bend. And so to press.