

Type and Press and *Tuberous Begonias*



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THIS TALE starts off in the Fall of 1936, when the writer was working as a traveling salesman in Pacific Northwest territory. A three-weeks trip had taken him to Yakima and Walla Walla, as far east as Boise, Idaho, and back to Redmond, Oregon. Road-weary and homesick, he phoned the branch manager that he was heading for Seattle.

"No, Steve, you run down to Klamath Falls, over the mountains to Medford, and then on your way north look up a pansy ranch near Grants Pass. They are in the market for a Kelly press, and you can get the order."

"But, Boss—a pansy garden, *indeed!* From the battle-wagons at Bremerton to the woolly wilds of Wolf Point, Montana, I'm knockin' myself out to put a Kelly press in every printshop—but a pansy ranch, yet! Sure, it's all my territory, and if Adolf Hitler wants *Lebensraum* he should see me. What is a pansy raiser going to do with a Kelly Automatic? 'Tain't fitting! It's the principle of the thing. Think of my rep——!"



Friday before sundown I checked in at the Redwoods Hotel in Grants Pass and set out to find Harrolds' Pansy Gardens. All I wanted for the moment was to spy out the target area, and make my careful estimate of the situation. Circling the place for a personal reconnaissance, I noticed low-lying greenhouses, a dwelling nearly hidden by trees, and one other building that was difficult to classify. I saw no sign of a watchdog, so decided to get acquainted.

Out there in the West, you drive into the yard and let yourself be seen. Dad Harrold greeted me, he learned my mission, and said that his son, Marvin, was expecting me. We then entered the structure that resembled a ropewalk,



which turned out to be the office and a shop for their graphic reproduction facilities. We found Marvin washing up a press, so I had a chance to look around before he joined us. Shipshape it was—with a place for everything and everything in its proper place.

Marvin said they had heard about me, and they wanted to pick my brain before coming to a decision about a larger press. It was then about five o'clock, so I offered to return in the morning. Dad opened the door and hailed the house: "Laurene, put on a couple of frying-size pullets. We have company for supper, and he looks like a man who'd make a chicken-roost live mighty hard!"

Marvin presented a background picture of their needs. He showed me their modest equipment for printing. They had an elaborate layout for addressing and mailing, also a photo-lab and professional camera equipment, with special adaptations for photographing their flower specimens. The Harrolds were horticultural hybridists and seed specialists. Their direct-mail sales promotion required printed broadsides to display their posies in natural color, and an annual seed catalogue filled with half-tones, to cover a large list.

Disbelieving that a nonprofessional could produce half-tone printing equal to the samples Marvin showed me (and being by nature no more subtle than a meatax) I gambled the suggestion that they should allow graphic arts specialists, using ideal equipment, to produce their printing, so they could devote their time to their own specialty. That was obvious, Marvin allowed, but it hadn't worked out in practice. Printers knew little about pansies. Printed colors were unnatural. He tried taking flowers to the pressroom for color matching, but the printers gave him a bad time about it, and colors changed after the ink dried. Besides, why should he pay somebody six dollars an hour to print for him when he could do it better? He could get garden help for forty cents an hour. Stooping was bad for his sore lumbar muscles; it was hard to straighten up afterward.



STILL, I couldn't warm up to this prospect for a sale. Our nearest serviceman was 200 miles away. Pressmen serve a lengthy apprenticeship before being turned loose on four-color process work. Sell a man a press he can't run and the press becomes the goat, gets all the blame. You can't fight with a buyer if he stops making payments in a case like that—not if you want to remain in business. A sale like this could turn out to be a thorn in the flesh and a rankling fire. So, I had to look out for the Company's interests, as well as my own reputation and that of the press. I needed my commission on this sale, but with all the risks involved—so far I just wasn't having any!

Laurene sang out for us to come and get it. Partial to redheads myself, she had me on her side even before my feet went under the table. Dad allowed the guest to ask the blessing. My stocks went up when a remembered prayer saved the situation. Up to that time, Dad had not talked much, watching me like a kitten regarding its first woolly worm. I twigged he was sizing me up on a personal basis, which was borne out when he solicited my views respecting contemporary events as related to scriptural prophecy. *Touché!* sez I to myself, stuffing my mouth with chicken and soon conning the conversation into roomier channels.

Back at the hotel, I applied myself to the Gideon Bible, reading the Revelation of St. John. Just *in case*, I wrote up an order for the press. Before going to sleep, I concluded a peace with myself concerning the sale. Marvin's printing was pretty good. Some of his spelling seemed to be original, but that didn't affect the press. He would, perhaps, marry a lady qualified to read proof. Unlike the average pressman, he had only himself to please. When it came to downright intelligence and resourcefulness, his hair was a little finer than common. The Harrolds were enthusiastic, analytical, accustomed to using their wits, and openly honest.

When I showed up the next morning, Dad was in *his* workshop—the pansy beds. He told me the place had been

a swamp when he found it. There was a spring, but water from it was no-count for drinking. He installed a pump, using the black sulphur water to irrigate his pansies.

Sure enough, Dad again sounded me out about biblical forecasts. When I started in, chapter and verse, he hauled down his flag and headed me for the shop. Marvin was all keyed up about the Kelly, so I presented my order form and commenced firing for effect. Dad now displayed keen interest, asking questions about mechanical details. Pressing for a close, I inquired how they wanted to pay for the machine. Dad reckoned they would pay one-half cash and sign one note for the balance, due and payable come next May. You could have knocked me over with an anchor, for in those days most buyers wanted to spread payment over as long a period as they could. The Harrolds mistook my amazement for reticence, so Marvin suggested he take me to the bank for a certified check and to show me their seed crop, which would be sold at planting time in the Spring.

The crop, in tiny muslin sacks, was stored in a safety-deposit vault, valued at many times its weight in gold.

Everything turned out hunkydorily. Some few years later, Marvin installed a Linotype. Came Pearl Harbor and somebody waved a flag at me, so I was off to the wars again. I didn't get back to Grants Pass until 1950. Being in San Francisco over a weekend, I flew to Medford. Jim and Irean Grigsby of Klocker Printery took me to visit the Harrolds.

They had really branched out. Marvin had gone in for offset lithography, and he knows more about copy preparation, process negatives, platemaking and presswork than I could ever learn. Horticultural development hasn't lagged. The Harrolds have experimental stations, scattered from Northern Oregon to Lompoc, California. Much improvement has been made in size, texture, coloring, and in the plant habits of their flowers. Pansies remain a specialty, but their catalogue displays primroses, delphinium, gloxinia, fuchsia, hyacinths, amaryllis, and—*tuberous begonias*.