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oops!

We've all done it. In some instances one might call it a typo. An "error" sounds too mild. Perhaps gaffe, blunder, blooper or to class it up—*faux pas*? Then again, some use other words that maybe shouldn't be printed here.

Regardless, a few of our members shared some of their "favorite" moments in letterpress.

I think the reaction in reading these will be: "been there, done that."

John Henry #324

❖ Sometimes the small mistakes are the worst as they get by without being detected. I found a wrong character in the title of one poem in a book I had printed — *after* 500 copies were printed and bound. It was a Cap "E" in the place of what should have been a Cap "F". Not a surprising error which, no doubt, was due to careless distribution or a big paw reaching into the wrong compartment of the case while the "tunes" were blaring away in the shop.

I was able to save the day by scratching off the lower bar with an X-acto knife, and the change was barely detectible in the end.

Proofing is something which is critical to prevent this sort of error, but it is always better to have someone read the proof carefully. Errors like this in small type are sometimes difficult to catch. Our minds tend to interpolate the wrong characters into those, which should have been there for the text to make sense.

I did experience an ink problem a

few years ago when a friend asked me if I could imprint his store information on the back cover of some brochures which came from the manufacturer of the items he hoped to sell. I said "no problem" then proceeded to print with what I thought was normal ink on the surface. It turned out that the ink was rubber-based ink and the brochures had been coated with a UV-cured poly varnish. I didn't notice a problem until after they all were printed. The next day I picked one of the brochures up and the ink was still smudge-able. It took two full weeks for that ink to properly dry. I gave a few copies to my friend right away, but had run them through our microwave oven so he could have a few copies right away. The rest finally did "set up" and dry.



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T.J. Ray #690

❖ About a year ago the little gang that periodically runs the TBZH Print Shop at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum were asked to do a special printing. One reason was that I retired from the University that made the request. Another is that we have an 1859 iron handpress.

A wealthy benefactor wanted a special presentation made to last year's graduates. Very special and expensive paper was ordered as well as frames. All that was done without talking to us. The text was to be the amendment concerning freedom of the press.

Five of us spent most of a day setting and checking type. Finally decided it was good to go so ran 525 copies (12"x18" as I recall). Two very tense days, interrupted many times with visitors coming into the shop.

Happily, I put them on the dean's desk the fourth day and he was ecstatic.



As I learned later, he and his secretary went straight to framing after I left. Later someone reading the text realized that we had argued for the right to partition government. It would be a gross understatement to suggest the gloom that settled over the School of Journalism at that point.

More paper had to be ordered. The gang had to make another 150-mile trip to Jackson to correct and print the correct copy.

We've not been asked to do any special printing for the school. Nor has our open invitation to introduce journalism to letterpress printing had any reception.

Lance Williams #785

❖ When I was just out of college, and in my 3rd year of working at the family printing business (first full-time year), I set the type and worked on the press run for our annual advertising self-mailer. At that period of time (Sum-

mer of 1984) we were pushing out around 125,000 pieces of advertising a year. We printed these pieces two color, with headlines and highlighted text in blue and the basic text and halftones in black on a pair of Miehle Vertical V-50's. These sheets were the maximum sheet size for the press, at 14"x20," so there was a lot of type composition, and it was printed on both sides.

After setting up the forms, setting up the presses and handling registration between the two colors, we passed the first few printed sheets around to everyone for proof reading and handling any corrections then doing the final makeready for the run. To work things through the two presses, the other press operator and I decided to split the stock between the two presses instead of the usual running a lift through the black press and then running it through the blue press. We then proceeded to run 65,000 or so sheets on each press and then did a mid-stream type change. Yes, since we do not do "deep impression" printing, we can easily get 65,000 impressions out of our Intertype and Ludlow composition.

At this point, we once again passed the first few sheets around for proof reading to make sure we did not transpose any lines, etc, when changing the lines of type. It was at this point *two* existing typos were found on the first side of the printing!! Of course, one had to be in the black form and one in the blue form, so all 130,000 sheets had an error. I guess that is better than 65,000 or even all 130,000 pieces having two errors. Well, things being the way they were financially, we could not afford the loss in time or paper to toss the ton of printed items, so we continued with the run after making the needed corrections for the two errors.

So, for the 1984/1985 advertising season, we sent out 125,000 or so pieces of advertising, half of it with a blue headline to a customer testimonial that said "A Pleasant Surprise!" in 24 point Tempo Medium Italic. However this was *not* a pleasant surprise for us, to say the least! Then someone found the typo on the black text half in an item description with a double "the"



split at the end of one line and the beginning of the next line:

Popular with the ladies as well as the gentlemen, Club Stationery is also

At least this error was a little less obvious, but it was still sticking out there in 12 point Futura for all to see!!

But, we printed the opposite colors without errors on the rest of the stock followed by the reverse side, also in two colors. Everything got folded, inserted with assorted samples, addressed and put in the mail/ At least we had no errors on the back half, at least that we ever noticed.

But, I have never forgotten about those errors!!

Then again, there are the 46,000 glassine envelopes an employee printed with the incorrect information because he neglected to change the type he was supposed to. They got to our customer, who supplied the blank envelopes to be printed before the error was discovered, and it really hit the fan. We ended up printing the whole order again and had to reimburse the cus-

tommer for the 46,000 envelopes (about \$900), and we also had to pay the hourly wages for the same employee to print the order again!!! Plus, I think the original invoice for printing this order was about \$300, so we lost close to \$700 on that job!! (circa 1999/2000)



☛ There have been so many bad ones, I've lost count.

The next bunGle will have a new "worst" one, however: My own invitation to a Thanksgiving open house gives the wrong year. It was printed in the first color, but I didn't notice until they were finished and ready to mail.

Fortunately, the printed invitations were done as a bunGle piece, while the effective invitations were done mostly by email. On the few that were actually mailed, I scribbled in the correct numeral. (Next year, I can use up the left-overs by scribbling in the "new" correct days and leaving the year as-is.)

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Graham Moss

#710

❖ I used to make small howlers too frequently for my own happiness, library and such-like, and after misspelling Tegetmeier on a title-page as Tegetmieir, was determined that the next book would be perfect, and advertised, by way of contrition, that if anyone found a typo in it, they could have the following book free of charge. So I was doubly careful—the book was hand-set in Hyperion, Berthold Wolpe’s delightfully curious design. I checked and re-checked each word, each line, each poem, each page, each galley. As luck would have it, only one person noticed the switch in the end-notes, where 1658 became 1568, giving the poet a life of some 140 years, and he kept quiet about it. The book is out of print now, as is the one that followed it, and I think I’ve learned to pay a lot more attention.

Graham Moss from Oldham, England used the word "howlers"—his definition: "Things that are so obvious they cause the reader (recipient) to howl out loud! So a howler can be a ridiculous joke."

Ron Hylton

#874

❖ For ten plus years I printed funeral memorial folders while in Portland—set hot metal and run on a Heidelberg. I literally printed thousands over the years. So when I purchased my own funeral home, it was a given that I’d continue to crank out the memorial folders. I do to this day.

Back in the early 90s I hurriedly set and ran some folders. The of-

Jen Farrell

#749

❖ My biggest gaff was spelling Massachusetts incorrectly on an invitation. Unbelievable! It was spelled correctly on the proofs and was approved, and after setting the type, I added an ‘s’ and didn’t notice it. The clients didn’t notice it when they picked them up, but then called a few days later. It was a very short run (only about 30), and they were tempted to let it slide but felt

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ficient was “my” minister from the Presbyterian church: Dean Mead.

The type was set, the folder ran and the next day passed out at the service. The officiants name: **Dead Meat**.

You’ve gotta admit that I couldn’t make this up. This actually happened. And what were the repercussions? Well, it was good for more than a few laughs. Dean thought it most humorous and for years when he did other services he’d always pick up the folder “just to make sure that he’s name was spelled correctly.”

“It” happens.

that it should probably be corrected given that it was a wedding invitation. I quickly reprinted, feeling like an idiot, and when they came to pick them up we all had a laugh and they gave me money to buy a pizza. All in all, not a bad ‘bad’ experience, though it happened 10 years ago



and still haunts me when reading over jobs now!

Susan DeNeef #603

• The best blooper I've ever printed was the very first piece I printed. It speaks for itself!

The 5x8 Craftsman came with a composing stick, a font of 8 pt. Century Expanded, and some vague instructions on how to set type. It took over an hour and I pried the type about 3 times before I could get it in the press. I printed another copy which is much neater and framed it, and a year or two later, put it up at the print shop door. Best part was when Scotty [former APA Byron Scott] came over and looked at it, he broke into a belly laugh and told me he had done the very same thing first time he printed. It's a good reminder of where I started!



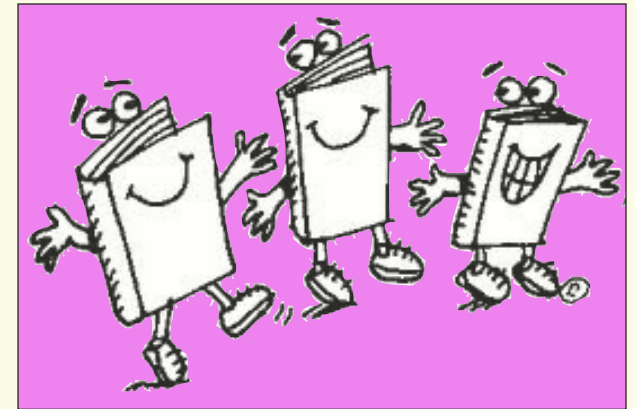
Mike O'Connor #1

• I've printed three books to date. All have been handset and printed one page at a time on my 8x12 Golding Official. I've got enough type that I can set four pages then of course have to distribute. I've got the system down for me. Prior to setting type, my copyfitting has finally developed to the point where the count is so accurate I print out each page out in Word (there is, at times, very minor editing). Then I set type from the Word page—thus one Word page equals one printed page. Because of this, I don't have to print the pages consecutively. I print four pages at a time. Therefore, when I print a page, the next page doesn't have to back up the previous page. It can dry and wait for another day. So I can jump around depending what is dry for a backup.

You can imagine I have these piles of pages laying around the shop at various stages of completion. I am very careful about checking the page before being printed so that it is backed up right.

You know where this is going. One time I had three of the four pages printed. And of course the type for these pages had already been distributed. The fourth page I added to the other three was not the correct page. How it happened is still a mystery. Well, no mystery—I'm an idiot!

So I printed the page I had set up on a clean sheet (yes, I had to order more



paper to complete the book). Then I had to reset the other three pages and of course print them again.

I swore then (oh many times!) I was through with book publishing. But the truth is, I'd do it again if the right project came along. I do enjoy setting type! If I do, I hope I learned some sort of lesson!

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Craig Starr #591

❖ Back in the 1980s, when I was just getting really wrapped up in this letterpress thing, I bought out the remains of a quality letterpress shop in our county seat, Manchester, Iowa.

In that purchase, I got several fonts of wood type, mostly 8-12 line. Then I saw an ad from Nashua, Iowa, some 90 miles away offering “Wood Type For Sale”. When I called about it, the owner told me “I run a newspaper, and my printer died; I just want to get rid of this stuff — there’s a cabinet full of it”.

The price sounded reasonable, so off to Nashua I went. I found some pretty interesting stuff in that cabinet, and then the owner said “Oh, yeah; there’s another cabinet of mixed up type over there. It all goes”. Checking out the 2nd cabinet, I found several cases full, but mixed fonts, as if it had all been dumped at one time, and someone just picked it up off the floor and put it in the cases.

After I got home and sorted it out, I had 14 more fonts of good wood type. Serendipity!

Now that I had all this wood type, I really needed a big press. Mr. Chuck Dunham of Deep River had a 325 Vandercook setting on his trailer, and he was headed my way. A deal was struck, and I began to print large posters. I soon found I had large type and I had small type, but needed some *bold* type, around 15 or 20 line for headlines.

My helper and I took a specimen book of antique styles, picked out one that was bold and fancy at the same time, made up an expanded specimen sample with multiple letters (I always had to have 4 r’s for Three Starr Press). We made up a Kodak PMT (glossy black & white) and sent it off to Ord Engraving, in Ord, Nebraska, my favorite zinc engraver. They gave great service, and it wasn’t long till I had in my hands two large zinc-on-wood plates, about 12x18” each. I carefully measured and cut between the lines, doing some finish sanding to keep the base lines even. When all the lines were cut apart horizontally, then I started separating individual letters. Three or four A’s, set in a galley looked OK, then a couple of B’s, but when I came to the C’s, there was no way that

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looked correct to set them down. Then I noticed, all these letters were “right-reading,” not mirror-reversed as type needs to be. Over \$200 worth of engravings, and practically nothing but O’s were useable!



I called Ord Engraving and explained our dilemma. On the other end, I heard a loud groan, “Oh, no!” “We’ll have to do them over for you; we’ll flipped the negative.” When I asked if they wanted the “wrong” plates back, they said, “No, if they’re no good to you, they’re no good to anyone.”

So, we did it all over again, and we eventually ended up with a nice bold font to use. I did find an antique dealer who was happy to give me something for my backwards letters; they would look better in a wall display than the correct ones. Everyone was happy except the engraving company! ■

Joe Warren

A PRINTER BY VOCATION AND AVOCATION

This year's Wayzgoose coordinator from Lansing, Michigan, Joe Warren, has had printing ink running in his blood from an early age and it looks like it's going to be racing through his veins for a long time to come.

It's amazing how many letterpress printers got their start with the Superior Swiftset Rotary presses. Joe can be counted among them as when he was in grade school a neighbor sold him a Superior press. These presses used rubber type. But this press only whetted his appetite for more.

When he was a junior in high school,



Joe Warren stands at his 8x12 C&P with his 8x12 Golding at his side. Joe has come a long way

an uncle, who was in the printing industry, gave him a Baltimorean No. 9. However, Joe confided that it printed so bad that he later acquired a Kelsey and confessed, "I thought it was a great press!"

The Kelsey is a far cry from his holdings today which include: a 10"x15" Heidelberg Windmill, Miehle V50,

since his early days of the unprintable Baltimorean and the Kelsey!

8"x12" Golding and a 8"x12" C&P. Other equipment includes a 19" Challenge Lever Cutter, Ludlow Model M with 6 cabinets of mats. He also has in his shop a Rosback TruLine perf/scorer with microperf and about 450 fonts of handset type.

Joe didn't get serious about collecting until he bought his home in 1989. He

said that his employer wanted to get rid of two double cabinets of type. This was his start. He confessed that when he was younger it seemed like it took forever to find that first Kelsey. Once he started collecting, Joe said he never wanted to pass up items and quickly acquired quite a bit. While he is currently encountering “room problems” now in searching for more equipment he also confesses that “stuff” is getting harder to find.

The Warren printshop does some



Some of the cabinets holding his 450 fonts.

commercial work for a select few customers. Such work includes crash numbering, perforating, scoring and die cutting. Joe did confess that numbering jobs are disappearing but he feels letterpress is still the best for die cutting. Joe did confide that if his equipment wasn't all paid for, he wouldn't recommend doing work for the trade. He also said most of his commercial work is repeat work.

His shop at home first started doing commercial work and then the hobby aspect came about along with the collecting of all things letterpress. While it can get busy at times in the shop, Joe does admit that he likes to “putter around” with his letterpress “toys” more than produce.

When he leaves for

his daytime job, he doesn't leave printing. Joe is into digital production for the Commercial Printing Co. in Lan-



Neatly arranged cabinets holding, type, mats and other supplies.

sing. He runs the Indigo and Xerox iGen Digital Presses. Previous to that, he was supervisor of the camera/stripping department.

When asked where commercial printing is going as we've known it, Joe's answer in short was, "It's going away." He further stated that there are fewer players and the turn around on jobs is now hours, not days.

APA No. 648 joined APA in 1995. Joe found APA upon a visit to St. Louis and was looking for something

letterpress related to fill in some time (Joe's wife Sharon is from St. Louis). He had read about a press that APA member Mike Anton had restored so he contacted Mike and spent the afternoon with him and APA entered the conversation.

Other biographical information on Joe Warren is that he has been married to his wife Sharon for 27 years and they have a son

Timothy, 21 and daughter Kelsey, 16. Joe is 48 years old and has an Associate of Science Degree in printing from Pensacola Christian College in Florida. He had considered going directly into the printing trade from high school but while in school received a full year's scholarship to Pensacola. ■



Joe's ludlow is in the background with the Miehle V50 to the right.



Is Joe's shop this organized and neat when he's hot on a print job?

WANTED RESTORED



BRINGIN' 'EM BACK TO LIFE...

by Jim Daggs

In the more than 40 years that I have been in the printing business, and the letterpress hobby, I can't begin to count up the number of discarded, dismantled, left-for-dead, rusty-crusty, stuck-tight, destined for the scrap-yard, presses and printing and binding equipment that I have rescued and brought back to life.

In fact, I enjoy doing that sort of thing, and consider it a part of my letterpress hobby (and/or my thrifty Scot bloodline).

Right after the first of this year, I

acquired a 1951 vintage 10x15 Heidelberg Windmill, very complete, but very dirty. Almost within the same time frame as that acquisition, a 12x18 Chandler & Price handfed platen came along that had been in damp, dirty quarters for who knows how long, and was almost completely stuck tight. But, the price was right.

Not that I needed another project, but I was confident that I could get both presses back in full operating condition - with "sweat-equity" being the main ingredient applied to both.

Windmill restoration

The easiest way that I have found to clean up a Windmill is to strip it down, and the way they are built, it is not hard to dismantle one. As the parts come off I clean them. How do I clean off the grunge? Here's my secret: I use 3M ScotchBrite pads, steel wool and WD-40, Silicone spray, and water-miscible roller wash, and finish up with Mother's Cleaner-Polish (for autos and trucks).

The Windmill had been stored for a long time in a small shop that was also used for woodworking, so it was covered with oil and sawdust. Actu-

ally that made it easier to refinish - because I battled little, if any rust.

Before bringing the press inside, I hooked up the air compressor and thoroughly blew it all off and out while outside on the loading dock. Once inside, I rolled it onto some sheets of cardboard and started dismantling it, spraying it down and cleaning off the grunge, and polishing the cleaned parts and components - storing them in a corner away from the press itself.

Once everything has been cleaned and polished, I checked out the motor and controls, and all was fine. A good share of the air hoses were shot, and I have found it most economical to buy a complete black rubber, commercial-grade garden hose, 5/8" inside diameter, and cut it into



the hose lengths that need to be replaced on a Windmill. With that done, reassembly begins, then a complete lubrication of the press, installation of the rollers, and trial run. By the way, the rollers were in fairly good condition, so I scrubbed them down with hot soapy water and water-miscible roller wash and

they are fine.

With the Windmill done, put into place in the shop, and hooked up to electricity and given a good trial run, it was time to cover it up and start on the C & P.

The C & P revival

Knowing that the C&P was virtually stuck tight when it came in, I started a routine of dousing all of the oil

holes and crevices with "Kroil" - "The Oil That Creeps". Good stuff. So, about every day - while I'm working on the Windmill - I'm going over the C&P spraying Kroil in all of the oil holes and wherever there moving parts. And, I would give the flywheel a tug or two, slowly gaining some real motion in the mechanism.

Now, ready to devote time to just the C&P, I discovered that the Kroil had loosened up the main drive of the press, so that it could be completely turned over. But, the throw-off mechanism was still stuck tight.

I closed up the press, and removed the side arms and discovered the reason why the press was stuck: the majority of the oil holes were plugged with dirt, to the point that oil was barely - if any - getting tough. I started taking everything apart and cleaning out oil holes. I even had to drive some of the shafts out and polish them up and clean and lube the bearing surfaces thoroughly.

Upon reassembling the C&P, the reward was a press that you could turn the flywheel with one finger, and a throw-off that was free and smooth as silk.

The press had a long fountain on it,

but it was rusted tight, and I saw no need to have a fountain anyway, so salvaged what I could from it and put the rest in the scrap pile. I had a good, old, three-phase 1100-RPM motor, and decided to belt it to the flywheel. The press has a Horton speed pulley on it, but I abandoned trying to restore that

—but it does also function as a press brake, so I use it for that.

The rollers on the C&P were totally shot, and I had sent the cores in to get them recovered while the rest of the work was underway. The feed board and delivery board were totally rotted away, so I cut new ones from oak boards saved from an old



Rosback perforator - so, yes, there was some "transplant" work that took place, too.

Cleaning the bed of the press revealed the serial number, which dated the press at about 1919. With new rollers ready to go on, it was now time to ink it up and test the platen adjustment. I like to set the platen for a pressboard

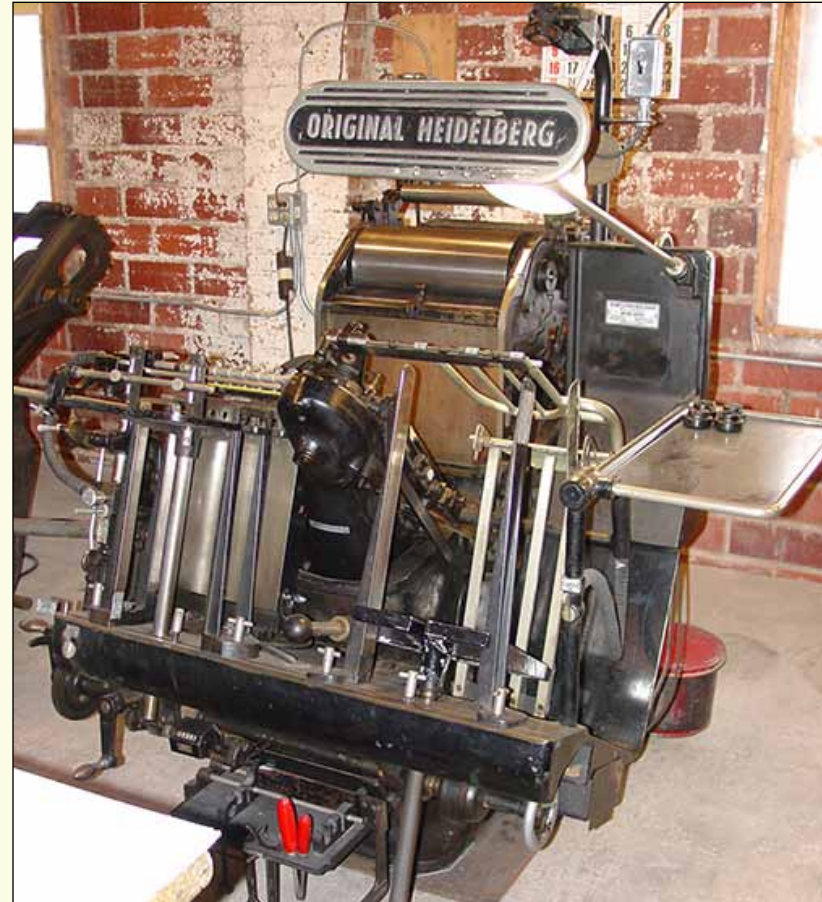
and about 5 sheets of 80# packing. The test is made by locking up large, 96 pt. letters or numerals in the four corners of the chase and doing a test print. Some minor adjustments appeared to be all that was necessary, but another glitch was found when trying to adjust the platen bolts - one was broken.

The platen was pulled and a replacement bolt was procured from Roy Dunham of Dunham Printing Machinery at Deep River, Iowa. Everything was reinstalled and minor platen adjustments made, and the first job was printed on it.

Great!

I have an 8x12 C&P Old Series to tackle next — another winter project . . . maybe. So, yes, there are old presses and equipment out there - some working fine and ready to go, and others needing some "sweat

equity" to bring them back to life. I'm always glad to answer questions and offer advice for anything pertaining to letterpress and its equipment. If you need someone closer, just ask around. Most letterpress folks are eager to help in any way they can.



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