



Rich Hopkins starts off with an article in this issue. Being January, thought it was appropriate to include a photo of Rich's front deck in West Virginia.



Four years with
Tolbert Lanston / p2

Bah to serif types! / p6

Newly minted mailer / p8

A letterpress hotline? / p9

That activity rule / p10

2009
2010
2011
2012

A simple project ended up taking four years

By Rich Hopkins

The meaning of magnum opus never really cluttered my mind until most recently when I started taking a retrospective view of a book which I just finished writing—*Tolbert Lanston and the Monotype: Origin of Digital Typesetting*. I am a hobby printer and things like hobbies aren't supposed to be all-consuming. This book has been my fixation for over four years.

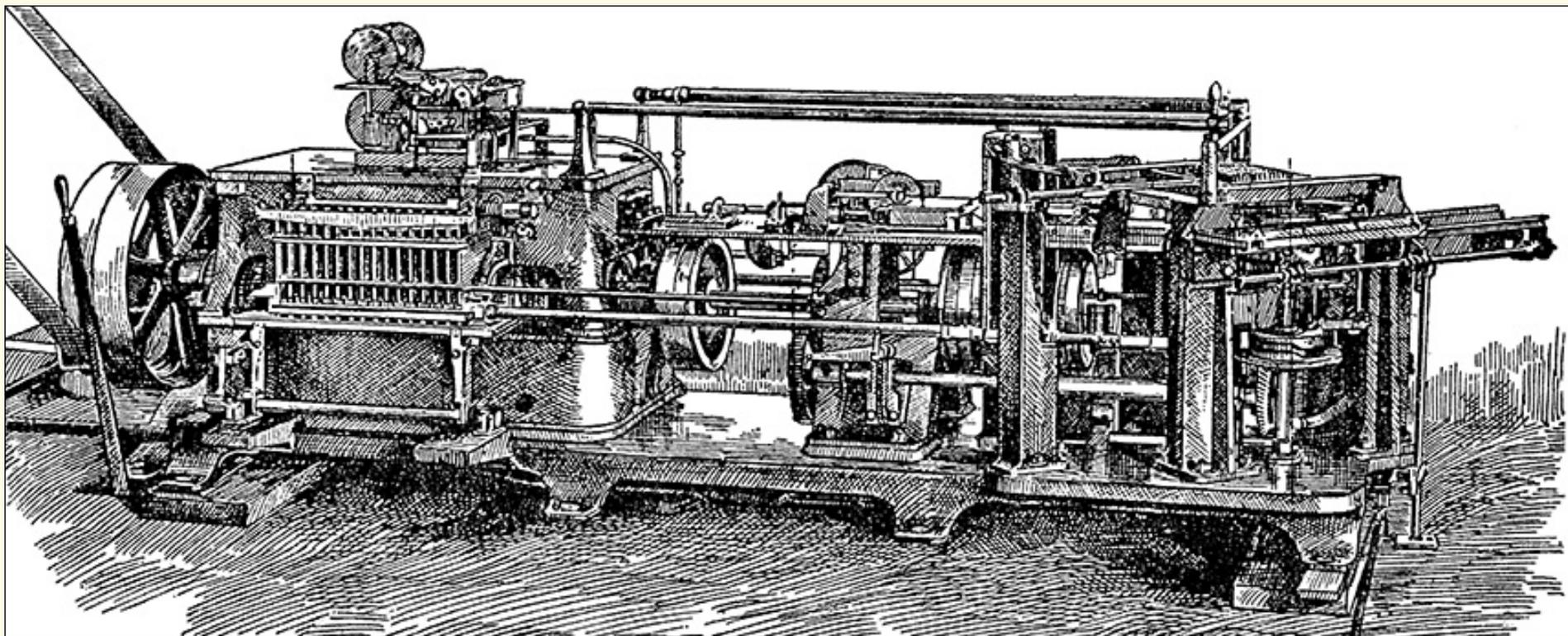
Wikipedia distinguishes magnum opus as a bit more than “masterpiece” in that it is a work on a large scale, and generally is regarded as among the creator's most substantial work. Maybe it didn't start out that way, but this book certainly grabbed hold me and shook me real hard for over four

years. What started out to be a brief discussion of the origin of the Monotype ended up being a 214-page book telling the whole story of the Lanston Monotype and its inventor, Tolbert Lanston, complete with over 300 illustrations. I consider this machine to be a very significant development in the automation of typesetting.

Ottmar Mergenthaler (originator of the Linotype) blew his own whistle and had lots of others blowing it too. But Tolbert Lanston (who barely saw the success of his machine before his death) while alive was unwilling to make much noise about the work he was doing in developing his idea. Unfortunately, that “silence” prevailed even though the Monotype machine became highly successful. Indeed, it was preferred



Tolbert Lanston around 1900



This is Lanston's first operational machine. It was a giant of a machine and was demonstrated in 1891. It actually cast type and did it well enough to provide composition for the article which discussed its development. Although no physical dimensions are known, the device most likely was at least 10 feet long. The "final" model of the Mono-

type went into production in 1900 and it was this machine which Lanston continued to improve with retrofittable modifications until the company's last years in both the US and in England, where the machine also was manufactured. Unlike the Linotype machine which had many models, a Monotype built in the 1960s closely resembled the 1900 model

and they had hundreds of interchangeable parts. M&H Type in San Francisco still has in production the very first machine the company purchased—it was a demo machine brought to San Francisco by Lanston Monotype for the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915.

over Linotype and Intertype by discerning typographers. I came to realize how little was known about Tolbert Lanston when I first was captured by his machine's "magic" nearly fifty years ago.

Many members of the Amalgamated Printers Association are guilty of helping me get this thing wrestled to the ground.

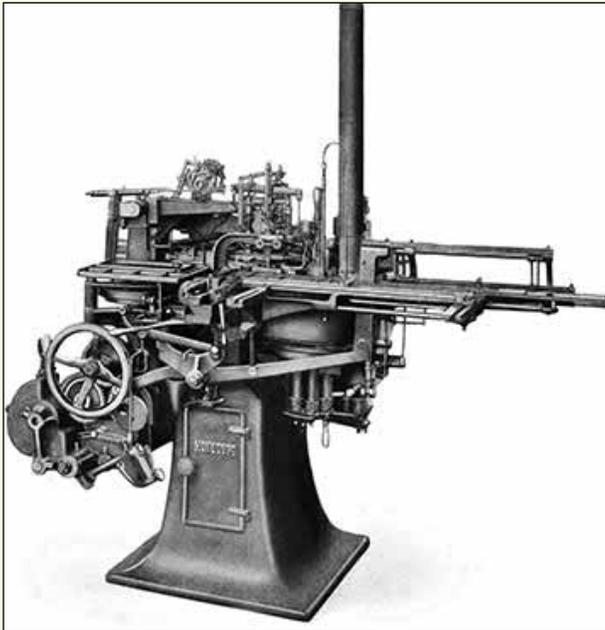
Steve Saxe sent me a Xerox of a very rare Lanston Monotype newspaper. Dave Peat gave a three-volume set of Lanston patents. Greg Walters went along to Philadelphia with me and helped in doing my research at the Franklin Institute. John Horn loaned me several of his editions of *The Inland Printer*, where I found invaluable informa-

tion. Dan Jones spotted an original Lanston letter on Ebay and bought it for me. Mike Anderson gave me a whole series of English Monotype newsletters and magazines. There are many others too.

After I started publishing the *Newsletter* for the American Typecasting Fellowship in 1978, people somehow figured I was red

hot for information. If they had a pile of “stuff” in their shops concerning the Monotype, they mailed it to me saying something like, “study it, keep it, or toss it out—I don’t need or want it.” My “pile” of Monotype stuff grew and grew to where it now consumes four or five filing cabinets. Whenever I showed this “stuff” to an unsuspecting visitor, he’d chime in “you ought to write a book.” Sure! And the next suggestion? “You should cast it on the Monotype and print it letterpress. Yeah. Sure!

You just don’t do a lengthy book on the



This is a 1921 edition of a “combination Monotype machine. It can cast up to 36 pt. and also composition. It was truly a “one-machine shop” for it also had available attachments for casting strip material.



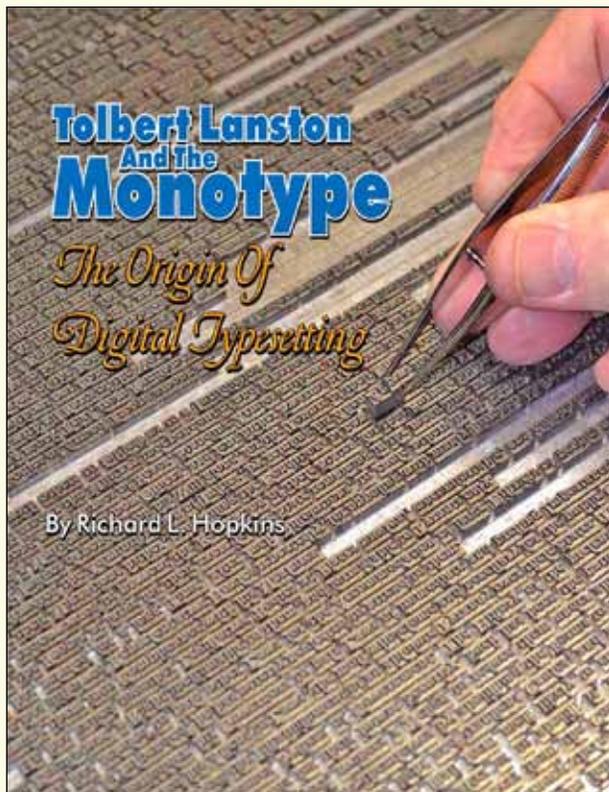
Rich Hopkins at the Lanston graveside monument in Washington, D. C. Photo by APA member Stan Nelson.

Monotype these days, especially if you intend to use lots and lots of color illustrations. But just to prove I can and do use the Monotype, I opted to do a keepsake commemorative to accompany the first 300 copies of the Lanston book using my treasured letterpress equipment. You hobbyist buddies of mine put the guilt trip on me and I ended up doing about 15,000 impressions on my Heidelberg Windmill, doing this keepsake in three and four colors on every one of its 24 pages. Of course I cast and composed all the type used in the keepsake,

as well as all of the ornaments.

The book itself? When I carried advance notices to the APA Wayzgoose last summer, I thought I was finished. Turns out I still had a couple of chapters to write, for new sources of information had come to light which I had never expected, and this information improved the scope of the book immensely. Richard Mathews and the University of Tampa Press came to my rescue by offering to publish the work and they took their involvement seriously. They allowed me total freedom in writing and designing and type-

setting the book (using InDesign and the computer, of course), but they scrutinized every paragraph and footnote, catching inconsistencies, wrong facts, and huge numbers of misplaced commas, repetitive verbs, and the like. This all consumed a whole lot more time than I had anticipated, but I am very thankful for the way they helped me improve the finished product.



Here is the dust cover for Rich's book. The photo is of the typeform of the Declaration of Independence. It was cast by Rich. The script typeface is Artscript designed by Sol Hess. All the text throughout the book is Goudy's University of California Oldstyle.

I know I have failed at providing all the information about Monotype which you would expect. I don't know how many thousand machines were built over the company's 70-year existence. And I don't know how much money the company made, or how many employees worked at the Philadelphia plant. All these records were destroyed when the firm was liquidated in 1970. The company now has been dead for nearly 50 years and there are only a few former employees still living. Even so, I have been remarkably successful at gathering sufficient information to paint for you a fascinating portrait of several of the people who made this machine such a great success, and I also give you a complete rundown on the Lanston Monotype Machine Company from its founding in 1886 to its miserable disposal in a scrap heap on a pig farm in Canada in the year 2000. (You'll have to read the book to find out why all my dates and numbers don't jive.)

I start with a discussion of what typesetting was all about at the end of the 18th century. You got it! Everything was hand-set. Lanston had to invent everything from matrices, to molds, to type assembly mechanisms, to keyboards, to a whole system for type measurement. In many instances, geniuses who worked with him, such as John Sellers Bancroft, had to invent the tools

and machines necessary to mass-produce 5 Monotypes. The machine definitely came at the very start of the mechanical revolution, and it survives as a supreme example of mechanical perfection.

This discussion began with me calling it my magnum opus. I claim this, for in my many years of writing, printing, and publishing, this book definitely is more than I ever expected to claim as "mine." Whether it also proves to be my swan song is yet to be determined. I hope the Good Lord allows me a few more years so I can continue to exploit the myriad details of this fascinating letterpress legacy we all admire so much. But in the meantime, you can help me out by buying a copy—and maybe even reading it?

To buy the book...

The book sells for \$75.00 plus \$8.00 shipping in the USA.

You can buy it online by going to this [link](#). Or you can order the book by writing them or calling.

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Serif type

Baah!

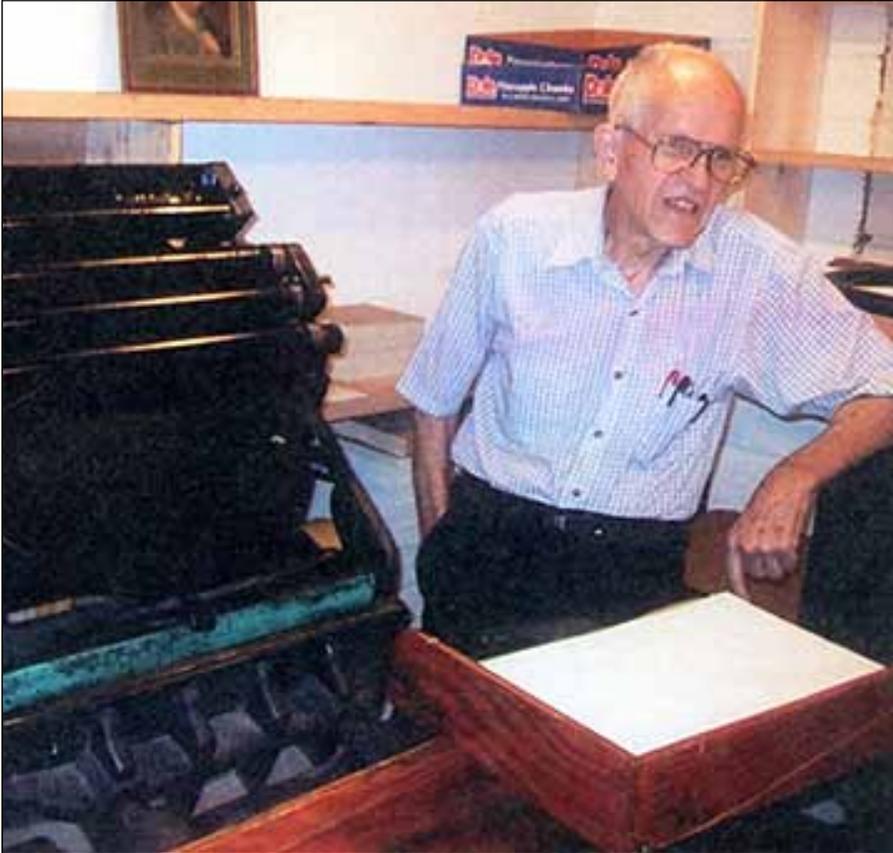
Editor's note: Some may have passed up fully reading Gene Thomas' (#775) holiday letter in the December bundle. Aside from the usual family related items, one section contained Gene's views on serif type. I thought his commentary was interesting on this age-old question on usage of serif and sans-serif type. I hope printing this article again might produce more bundle commentary on not only type, but other aspects of our letterpress world. Gene consented to letting me reprint that portion of his letter here.

By Gene Thomas

In July I had some time to spare from yard work and did a little writing including some conclusions I've come to about typography and where I seem to fit into the subject.

A few years ago I realized that I didn't want to collect type for the sake of collecting, and in 2009 sold off many of the fonts I had collected. Then this year I had a life-changing experience after reading a book on typography that Wally Dobbins gave me some time back. Among other

things this book talked about the idea that type should be invisible, that is that a reader should look at printing and see only the message and not really notice what the type looks like.

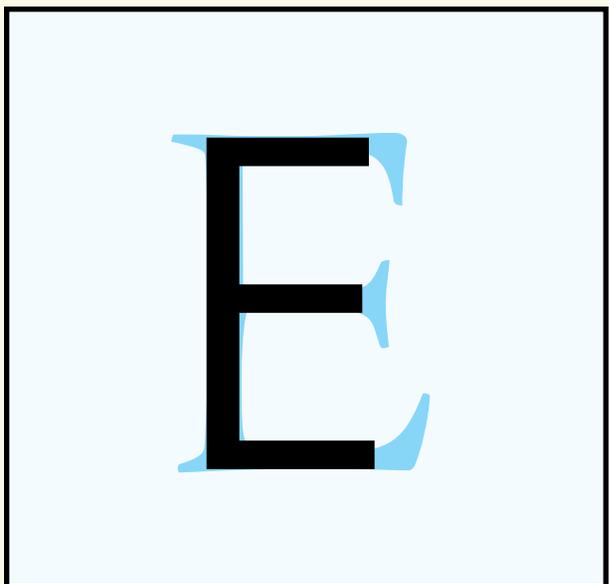


Gene Thomas

It took a while, but this idea finally really grabbed me. After thought, I found I didn't totally agree with the book though. It expressed the idea that serifs are useful in guiding the eye in a straight line, but I concluded this is not true and that sans-serif type in which all the characters are unambiguous is the best.

At first I thought I needed to get away from letterpress printing and go to computer composition, which, with the right software, makes

it possible to make type of any font in any size. But then I thought further and realized it would be hard or impossible to do some of my favorite projects, such as the Kirk Lions Club's Community Birthday Calendar, on a computer. So I decided to stay with letterpress and over time was able to sell all my type fonts with serifs ex-



cept one font of large Antique type, and I converted that font to sans-serif by sawing and filing off nearly all the serifs. I had one font of sans-serif mats for the linecasting machine and was able to get three more by trading and purchase. I've ordered two new fonts of bigger type and am now a totally sans-serif shop.

I think few or none of my fellow printers, and maybe nobody else, will agree with my thinking on this, but it suits me. I've learned that, historically, many decisions on type and other lettering decisions have been based on beauty rather than legibility and I can appreciate that. I won't fault anybody else for being a collector or for being an artist. It's just that that doesn't fit me.

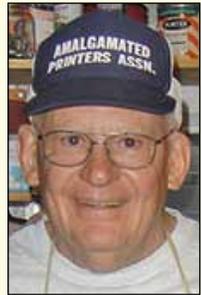
Adventures of a newly minted APA Mailer 8

By Neil Giroux, APA 676

Barb and I, retired and enjoying Sarasota, Florida, said “yes” when the chance for a tour of the APA Mailer’s job popped up!

But “yes” doesn’t begin to get the bundle into the U.S. mail truck.

From the day after Christmas and continuing up to deadline, each day’s mail brought a variety of printers’ packages, all thrust up like gold transport containers. The January bundle left on January 15th, and already several new submissions have arrived.



Neil Giroux

We bundled about 50 submissions for January. Generous APA members have volunteered to print mail envelopes for most of the year, and envelopes will be in the mail to these envelope printers in a timely order, I hope!

Now for a few housekeeping matters: Some member’s submissions are shorted in that they are fewer than 155 copies. When this happens, some envelopes have fewer items. The *problem* is that if the envelope of the Archivist is short, then the required 4 per year will not be achieved, and the

member will be dropped, and wonder why. The Mailer does not pre-count the submissions: we find the shortage at the end.

So, I strongly urge everyone to send the mailer a minimum of 160 copies—you count the items—because 145 items could

adversely effect your APA standing!

And, remember, if we receive it on or before the 10th of a month, your submission will be mailed in the bundle of the 15th of that month.



Photos to the left represent most of the items to be gathered for the January bundle. Above is Carrier Vanessa ready to haul them off to the Post Office.

LETTERPRESS HOTLINE

...a new voice in a crisis

Phone hotlines, for the most part, are associated with crisis situations. So who says a letterpress printer on a deadline to get a project printed but runs into problems beyond his/her comprehension isn't a crisis? Not **Letterpress Hotline!**

Allison and Daniel Nadeau, owners of **Ink Meets Paper** in North Charleston, SC seemed to think letterpress printers needed a hotline and started one last February.

Up until now, the main players in assisting printers have been the likes of Briar Press, Letpress, Vanderblog, etc. Allison and Daniel felt there was a need for a hotline in letterpress—some voice contact. “While there are already fantastic textual resources like Briar Press forums and now, the Letterpress Commons, there wasn't a great way to actually work through a problem with a fellow printer by voice,” Daniel

said. He also stated that he and Allison had been so thankful for the all-too-rare conversations they have had with other printers to discuss printing techniques and tips. They felt the Hotline would be a great fit.

Awareness of the hotline concept came from a friend and fellow Savannah College of Art and Design alumni,

Chap Ambrose who started a project called **Pocket Hotline**. This is a web application that allows anyone to create a community-powered help line about topics that one cares about. Upon learning about this application, Allison and Daniel thought this would be a great fit for letterpress.

While the Letterpress Hotline is still in its first year, they are pleased with how well it is doing. Currently their **seven volunteers** receive three to six calls a month. As the Hotline becomes better known, they expect both the calls and the volunteer list to increase.

The story of Allison and Daniel's entrance into the world of letterpress printing mirrors that of so many others

who have found letterpress printing fascinating this past decade or two. In their instance, Allison had taken a class at a local art studio and immediately she was hooked on letterpress. In 2008 they had located an 8x12 C&P press in Jacksonville, FL. From that time on they started doing small custom projects and as Daniel said, “learning the ropes.” In 2010 they launched Ink Meets Paper and their greeting card line.

While building Ink Meets Paper, both Allison and Daniel also work out of their home full-time doing contract graphic design, programming and copy-editing.

It's interesting how this current world of huge technology advances like we've never seen before have assisted in giving a huge boost to a 500-year-old technology.



Allison and Daniel Nadeau. Photo by Olivia Rae James.

PREZ
SE3:

JIM DAGGS



That four-times-a-year thingy

Problems can present themselves as good or bad things, and sometimes as both.

As the end of 2012 came around, your APA officers began to take a look at the number of members who were short on their bundle printing requirements, and the growing number of new member applicants who were making up the waiting list.

Interestingly, the two sets of numbers were growing simultaneously and reached the 11-13 number as the year drew to a close. As you should know, the minimum number of printed bundle contributions per member is four, however, we encourage as many bundle pieces per member as they are able to produce and contribute.

In the past, if the waiting list of new member applicants has been

slim, we have allowed members with two or three bundle piece for the year to remain on as members, and keep our member count close to 150. But, those numbers were larger this year, so an "Oval Office" decision needed to be made. The easy decisions were those who had only printed one or two pieces for the year. Then we decided we would drop the "threes", as the list of new persons waiting to get on was still outweighing the current members who were in arrears.

This resulted in some concerns voiced by some of the "threes" who should have requested waivers earlier for health and other reasons. We made allowances for these members, and were still able to accommodate virtually all of the new members on the waiting list.

This year-end "shuffle" is an opportunity to stress the importance of your bundle activity throughout the year. We all look forward to, and enjoy the

monthly bundle, but it depends on every members participation. And, it is not only the quantity, but the quality of bundle printing that makes the envelope full of goodies enjoyable every month.

There are no contests in the APA for quantity or quality when it comes to the bundle, but those attributes for bundle pieces are always encouraged. With that said, I welcome our new mailer for 2013 — Neil Giroux. Help Neil out by getting your pieces shipped to him early.

As a reminder, here are the basic bundle piece requirements: 1.) For a regular monthly bundle, items may not exceed 6"x9" flat, or 5.5"x8.5" folded. 2.) For the special November bundle, items shall not exceed 8.5"x11" flat, or 8"x10" folded. 3.) Members shall furnish no less than 155 copies to the Mailer of each item intended for bundle distribution.

PHOENIX 2013 GOOSE

June 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 2013
Phoenix, Arizona

It's gonna be one of the best!!!

CHECK OUT THE >WEB SITE<.

