

The Ink Zone

Ink Zone # 156

Fall, 2018

W. Gale Mueller

Artist, Printer, Writer, Wood Craftsman

Dear Friend

By

Greg & Sally McKelvey

We miss you Gale, yet we treasure your talents, smile remembering your sense of humor, and thank you for the inspirations. Our thoughts are with Bonnie and family, such special people you all are.



G.E. McKelvey



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I first met Gale in 1982, as I recall, in Spokane Washington. We moved there in 1974 to work for a new company leaving the heat of Arizona for the Inland Empire. For the first time in our married life, we lived somewhere for more than 1.5 years! Long enough to unpack and even revive hobbies and interests. Sally Jo became a Leclerc weaving loom dealer, we started a real garden, and I found the bones of an old Chandler & Price 8 x 12 press on the floor of a local printing repair dealer. With refreshed

memories of my 7 X 11 foot treadle press retrieved off of Alcatraz when I was attending high school in Palo Alto, I commissioned them to put it together and get it to the basement of our home. No longer would I have to print our annual holiday card by stomping on crudely carved linoleum blocks. My memories thank my dad for introducing me to printing hoping to coax me to being a better speller. First with a Kelsey Junior, then up grading to the next sizes until the Alcatraz press found a new home. Dad's dream of teaching me spelling, a glorious failure, did sow a few creative seeds. That all ended when dad transferred to Washington DC and I bundled off to the University of Montana.

Sally, an active member of the Spokane weavers' guild and acquainted with other talented artists, somehow met Bonnie Mueller through a mutual friends gathering. Bonnie, a very gifted potter, calligrapher and just about every other art form struck up a conversation with Sally. When Sally noticed the practical yet stunning bowls and plates Bonnie had made, she sees what appeared to be printer's type punched into the clay. Bonnie, twinkle in here lively eyes, "I used one of my husband's printers type symbols, perhaps with his permission?"

Quickly they both discover that their husbands had a rather strange hobby. Letter Press Printing.



I recall one outing visiting an auction of Spokesman Review letterpress stuff. Meryl Langley, Gale, and I bid on a few things. Meryl more on linotype mattes and me on type. At the end of the auction, a sturdy Nolan Proof press remained. The next day armed with \$ 10.00 we ventured back to load it up. I did use it a few times before we moved back to Tucson. In the end, it nestled into Bonnie's pottery studio to roll clay. Now, talk about a versatile press.

All good things do end, as I took a job back in Tucson. First living in Reston VA, then after our house sold, into new digs in the Old Pueblo. Gale, for the price of type and cuts he wanted helped load a trailer with all the printing stuff.

We retain memories with treasures from these special times. I cherish one of his cuts, a collection of his fine printed cards, a few Silver Springs Journals, and a friendship forged by creativity, humor and art, fed by the collecting passion, inked with projects, swapping ideas, and bound forever as a respectful bond. Oh, we also use some of Bonnie's pottery complete with the type impressed words that started the entire relationship.



Always yours:

Sally & Greg McKevey

Thank you Ivan Snyder & Dave Tribby
for providing the photos of the 1987 & 2005 convention
and Gale in 2012.

scenes to print a few copies for everyone efforts. Somehow, we got them all done after three progressive printings for each designer. Welcoming parties at Gale and Bonnie's home started the event with the final picnic at our home complete with type setting and printing of the convention journal before the bar-b-qed salmon and beer ran out. Gale even designed a special convention logo, Northwest Impressions with one of his classy West Coast Native Peoples type designs. What a blast.

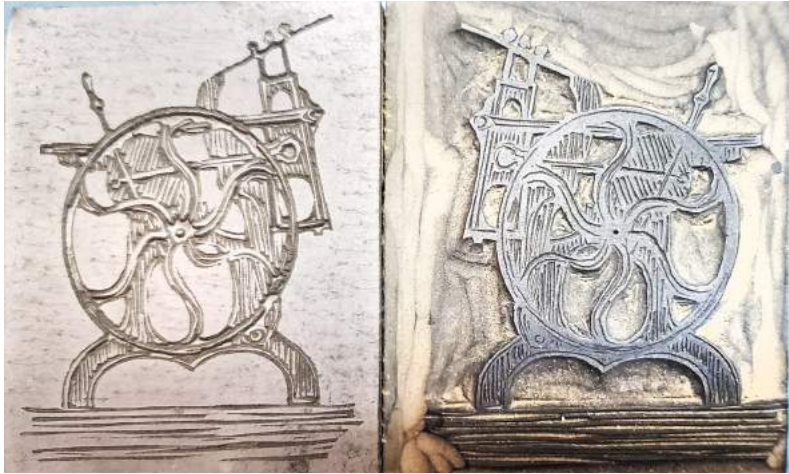
Gale, also a gifted wood carver and designer, outfitted a wood working shop above their garage and form fitted a smallish print shop in the basement. Type cabinets lined the wall and a unique Craftsman side lever press with connecting arms fashioned below the platen to allow printing longer stock center, pieced the studio.

The ladies introduced us and for the first time I found someone else that did the same stuff I did. The only difference proved that he could spell, made delicate hand carved cuts, and knew design, paper, and ink like an artist while I slogged along pressing ink on paper leaving more smudges than art. Soon we shared ideas and started on the hunt for more stuff. Earlier, Freddie Postman introduced me to the American Amateur Press Association. Soon I introduced Gale to the fun of that crazy black arts crowd. Between collecting trips, I installed a concrete floor in a garage out behind our home and we set off to fill it with presses and type. And wow did we.

Every now and a while a collection of rare type or unusual cuts came our way. Not a chance those would stay in the barn. We would sit and take turns choosing what we wanted. Yikes that was tough. He always got the best ones!

When one day when Gale saw my restored C & P, he sat down with a linoleum block and carved what he saw in as fine line detail as I have never seen. Wow what a special gift, but the joke turn to be on him. When proofed, the press printed backwards!!!. After a good chuckle, I ran the print off to Oswego and had several size cuts made, some right reading and some reversed. I think I still have the only reversible Mueller on the planet!





The pickup trucks, always ready with come-along winches, sturdy boards and ropes, journeyed out to local and distant printing shops in search of treasures. In those days, many shops still used letterpress, but less so every year. Working businesses moving toward the next decades proved reluctantly willing to part with their old bread and butter machines. In addition, the pressure was on to beat the competition! Some folks in Western Washington and Oregon also had trucks and the collecting obsession. Byron Scott, Ivan Snyder and others prowled those lands.

Always looking for new stuff, Gale designed a roller casting system to see if we could make our own rollers. Darned if that did not work. Of course, these projects were driveway pursuits, or so we were constantly reminded.

Gale introduced me to other printers in Spokane; Wayne Chapman, Bill Aller, Fred Herlinger and the Height Brothers where I had earlier found my 1902 C & P. We shared what we printed, well more like I dribbled like a drunken sailor over the fine carvings he did for this special holiday cards, birds mostly, but in such detail with unique line framing.

Mines of course, mostly the artwork of Sally Jo, depicted more what we were doing that year. Gale's were autobahn quality. Still we shared and helped, mentored and learned like Tom and Huck.

In 1987, we coerced the AAPA powers to allow us to host the annual convention. We planned organized, marketed, printed, and invited an all walks of life cast to join us in Spokane. In those days, the AAPA had over 330 members, many founding members of the association. People we only knew by their journal names and musings climbed off the plane complete with real faces and sir names to join our Holiday Inn hospitality suite. Helen Wesson, Charlie



Bush, Dave Tribby, Len Carrick, Lee Hawes, Fred Liddle, Wilber Doctor, Byron Scott, John Horn, Dean Rae, yikes the list continues beyond my albeit short memory stick. We even had the CEO of West Coast Paper and director of the Thornily Wood Type collection. Ralph Babcock, Harry Spence, and new members showed up too.

Spouses and friends filled the meeting rooms, took tours to a lithographic studio, viewed a Gutenberg Bible page at the City Library, and joined into live printing demonstrations. We did a progressive cut workshop where everyone did their own cut and John Horn and I worked behind the