

IDAHO CENTER FOR THE BOOK NEWSLETTER

"...because people read t-shirts."

VOL. 2/NO. 1
April 1995
(Four Idaho Presses)

*The Redneck Press
& the Redneck Review of Literature*
by Penelope Reedy

"There's no freedom of the press unless you own the press." A.J. Liebling

The other day I received a letter from the Idaho Center for the Book. The request in the letter forced me to admit that I have been in small press publishing for 20 years! Is that possible? Where did the time go?

The term "publishing" in some minds conjures up plush slick offices inhabited by men and women in business suits flanked with a "staff" of high-powered assistants. I laugh when writers and subscribers assume such a scene when they reach me by telephone. I merely allow them their fantasies while I clear books and piles of manuscripts out of my living room chair while I talk.

In order to maintain some semblance of sanity these twenty years, I've had to continuously reinterpret the meanings of words like "adventure" and "mission," as well as acquire a taste for thin bean soup. I've also had to adjust to displacement due to two divorces—not to mention the cultural and social disorientation that returning to college as an adult brought about, a return inspired by a lust for knowledge as well as a need to establish intellectual credibility. I grew weary of blubbing insecure responses to questions like, "And just what qualifies you to publish this magazine?"

What began as an innocent means of winter entertainment for myself and a couple of friends in the ranching/farming community of Camas County, Idaho, during the winter of 1975 has somehow become my life's passion. *The Redneck Review of Literature* has evolved from a simple tabloid called *The Camas* to a full-fledged national literary magazine, a "fiercely independent" publication, as another publisher friend calls it. "Independence" is an important element of my publishing philosophy; the thought of turning *Redneck* over to any form of board of directors or editorial committee is repugnant to me. My years serving on the Idaho Humanities Council in

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Caxton Printers, Ltd. in Caldwell, Idaho circa 1930

THE CAXTON PRINTERS, LTD. A Tree of Knowledge and Industry

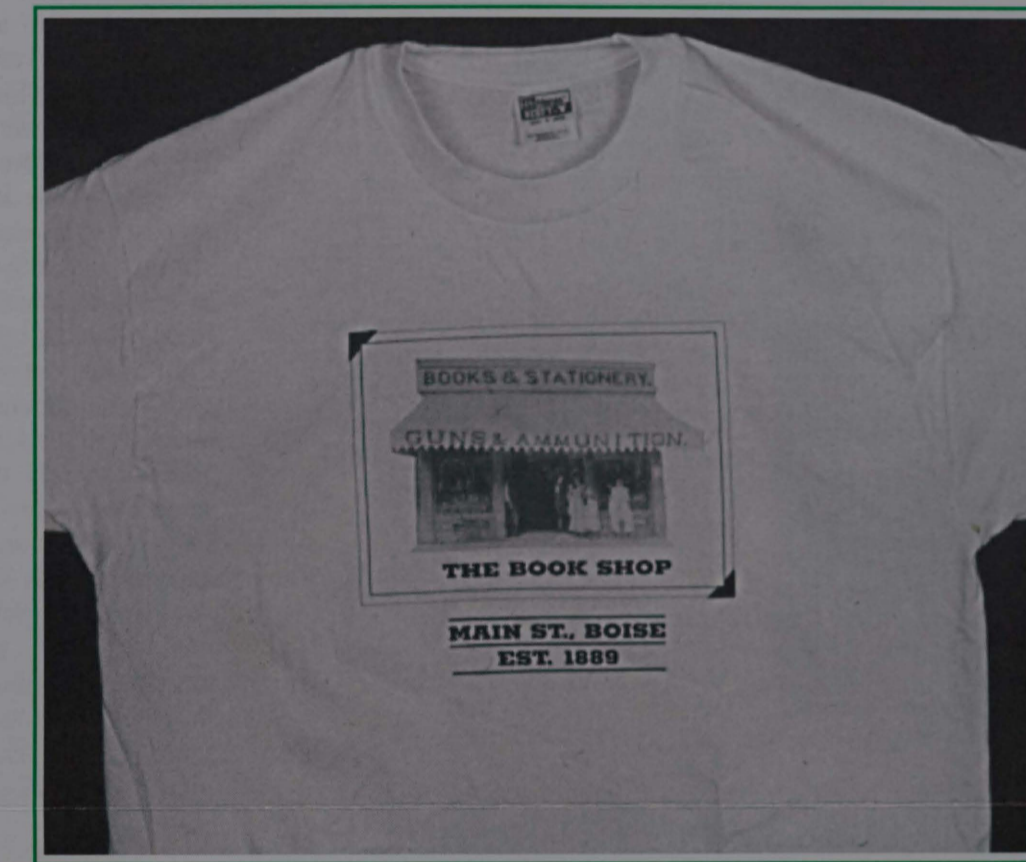
by Pam Hardenbrook

TO PLANT IN THE DESERT

In 1895, a seed of industry was planted in the newly-founded city of Caldwell, in the infant state of Idaho. The town's 575 citizens lived and worked along city streets, ankle-deep in dust, mud, or snow with the changing seasons. Agriculture was the foundation of the economy, and Caldwell's businesses provided support services for the ranchers, dairymen, and farmers. Ranchers grazed their livestock on vast rangelands surrounding the community. With water provided by the recently-dug New York Canal, farmers coaxed crops out of the powdery, yet fertile, volcanic soil. Beneath this rich earth at varying depths, was a layer of almost rock-like density. The substance came to be known as "hardpan," and few plows could penetrate its surface.

Albert E. Gipson had recently moved his family here from Colorado. A brilliant man with many talents, Albert was, among other things, an orchardman. He knew that if fruit-bearing trees were to grow and thrive in the fertile soil of southwest Idaho—where the arid climate defies the survival of non-native vegetation—roots must somehow break through the region's infamous hardpan, reaching into the underground aquifers.

But A.E. Gipson had a dream bigger than his orchard. He wanted to cultivate a different kind of "plant": a publishing plant. He realized that his enterprise, a small horticultural magazine, would take many years to mature and produce a harvest. In the meantime, he had to put food on the family table. So, Albert Gipson worked alternately as postmaster, banker, and orchardman, while producing the Gem State Rural. The paper for Idaho farmers was truly a family enterprise. Gipson's children, Lawrence (Dr. Lawrence Henry Gipson, historian) and Alice (Dr. Alice Edna Gipson, educator) both worked in a tiny composing room, setting type for the publication. In the beginning, since the company had no press of its



T-shirt of Idaho's oldest bookstore courtesy Cort Conley

own, the printing was done on the hand-cranked press of the *Caldwell Tribune*. Gipson's schoolage son, James Herrick Gipson, often provided the "motor" power for the press.

The publication struggled for success for several years, and although it attained good standing with its constituents, it was never able to break through the "hardpan" to achieve fiscal profitability. When in 1903 the chance came to sell the magazine to a Spokane firm, Mr. Gipson seized the opportunity.

Within the year the Gem State Rural Publishing Company was dissolved, and the company reorganized. Under the leadership of A.E. Gipson and a talented young printer named Bill Norton, the business was incorporated with its present name, The Caxton Printers, Ltd. The principals adopted the name and emblem of William Caxton, the first printer in England, out of

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Early and recent Redneck



Rick Ardinger

LIMBERLOST PRESS: LETTERPRESSING THE LANGUAGE OF THE TRIBE

by Rick Ardinger

"If our concern is the living literature of our tribe, we must be aware that the potential genius and power of contemporary poetry can be frittered away by the standardization, marketing, impulse, and compromise that attend technological advance."

—Clifford Burke, *Printing Poetry*

A few years ago, the poet Louis Simpson wrote a piece for the *New York Times Book Review* about why he didn't need a computer to write poetry. There was a commitment to the page that was lost on a computer screen, he said. Lines, words can be changed at a whim, tried on for size, as it were, with a computer. Writing poems long-hand and typing on a manual typewriter, he said, required that each poem, each line, each word be visualized with the inspiration of permanence before lines were put to paper, as if the vision alone were the foundation upon which important literary work rested. The computer estranges the poet

from his voice. The computer unfocuses the poet's attention to internal oral tradition. Language becomes less orally envisioned and, instead, more visual.

On first reading, Simpson's essay sounds like the argument we've heard before of an old fogey reluctant to change. It sounds like something a person who's never used a computer would say. It brings to mind the fear of medieval scribes toward the invention of the printing press. And yet there's a spirit in Simpson's thesis that I want to embrace when it comes to poetry, where every word is

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Two recent U of I titles

The University of Idaho Press

by Peggy Pace

The University of Idaho Press was founded in 1972 as the scholarly publisher for the University of Idaho, the state's land-grant university. Initially, the publishing program was fairly small and narrow in focus, but the program has expanded over the years and the Press presently publishes ten to twelve new titles a year as well as some reprints. At present, the Press has approximately eighty-six titles in print.

Major publishing areas for the Press include folklore, western American literature, Native American studies, nature and the natural sciences, resource and policy studies, and history/regional studies. Imprints the Press uses are the Northwest Folklife Series, with Louie W. Attebery as general editor, Northwest Naturalist Series, Idaho Yesterdays Series—published in conjunction with the Idaho State Historical Society—and the Living the West series, which offers general-interest publications presenting facets of life in the West at various points in time.

The Press also copublishes the biannual journal *The Hemingway Review* in conjunction with the Hemingway Society. *The Hemingway Review* features articles on the life and work of Ernest Hemingway based on varied critical approaches.

While the Press still maintains a regional emphasis, it also continues to produce works that appeal to national and international readers as well as residents of Idaho and adjacent states. *The Call of the Colorado* by Roy Webb, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue: An Essay in Aristotelian Ethics* by Grady Scott Davis (winner of a

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Caxton...

respect for the British printing pioneer's fine reputation as a printer, writer, historian, and proponent of a free press in England. The young company hoped to model itself after the ideals represented by its namesake. Although their goals were lofty, their resources were few. Assets amounted to \$118 cash, a wheezy gas engine, and a sackful of type worn down to the second nick.

FROM HARDPAN TO HARDBACKS

In 1907, twenty-two year-old Jim Gipson joined his father's business as Managing Director. It was James Herrick Gipson who pushed and shoved the Caldwell company into growth. His sons, Jim, Jr. and Gordon, once described him as open minded, with strong integrity. A deep, probing thinker, he was able to analyze problems and implement solutions. Although his formal education was limited, he was one of the best educated men of his time because of his love of literature and extensive reading.

Caxton did not set out intentionally to become a book publisher. J.H. Gipson maintained that the company rather drifted into the publishing field. Early on, they did a few privately printed books for aspiring authors, mostly paper bound. Among the first customers was a Portuguese sheepherder, named DeFreitas, who wrote verse dramas. Today DeFreitas's books are remembered only because they were the earliest dramas published in Idaho. One copy of a DeFreitas play was displayed at Boise State University's Idaho Center for the Book 1994 "Missing Pages" exhibit.

In November of 1913, Caxton struck a \$30,000 deal to buy the Western Book and Manufacturing Company of Logan, Utah. According to the local newspaper, the purchase included "the machine shop, bindery, patents, and good will." Caxton bought the armory building on Main Street in Caldwell to house their expanding operation. This acquisition made Caxton the exclusive printing and binding company west of Kansas City, and one of only four such

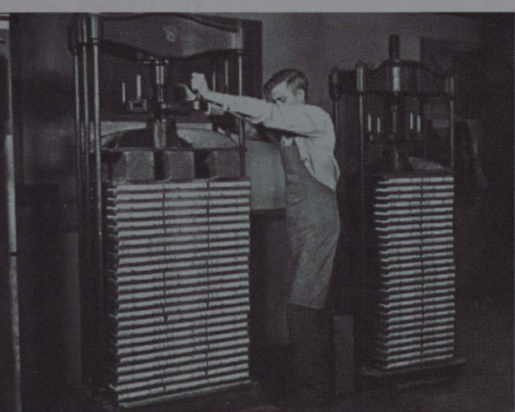
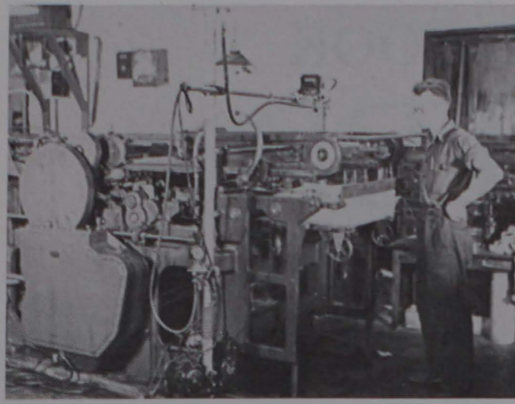
Limberlost...

a chiseled balance of grace and intensity.

To take Simpson's argument a step further, I feel it's even more true when it comes to printing poetry. I'm referring to finely printed, letterpressed editions where the attention of the printer toward paper, type, and design contributes to meaning, and the effort of it all preserves a poem's place in time.

In the summer of 1985, I was scanning the "miscellaneous" classifieds when I ran across what I was looking for: a Chandler & Price platen press for \$500. It was a big press, a 12-by-18, weighing nearly a ton. It was pretty grimy, but the rollers were OK, and the small motor worked. I bought it, a marble composing stone, a cabinet of old worn-out type, type sticks and the other necessary tools.

It didn't take too much handsetting of type to realize the fascinating power of the printed word. "Freedom of the Press" was a Constitutional right fully exploited, and it seemed sometimes that what we printed wasn't as important as that we printed. A year later I landed a modest apprenticeship grant from the Idaho Commission



Caxton book production 1940s

concerns in the United States at that time.

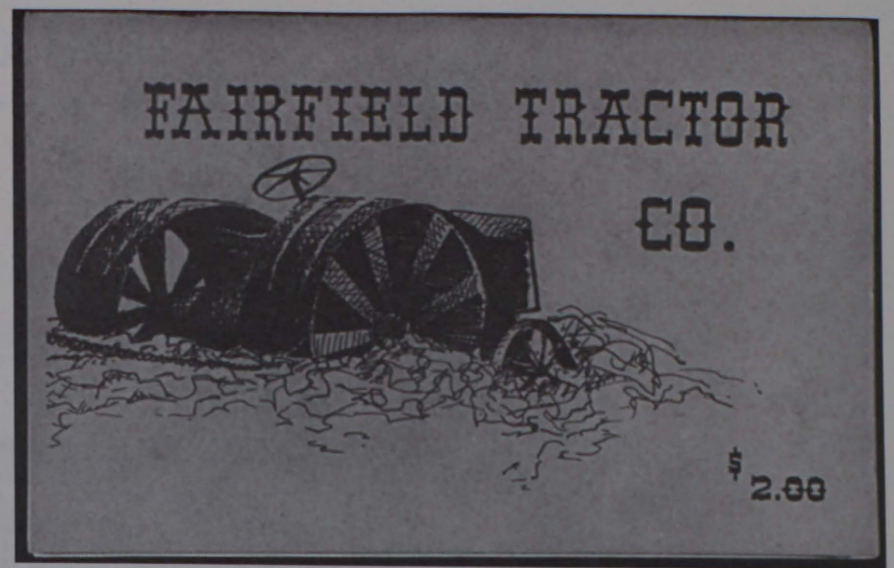
During the first twenty years of the reorganized company's history, the original investment of \$118 grew to a quarter of a million dollar asset. The company had grown into a respectable printing and binding business, and their offerings had grown to include stationery and office equipment, and a thriving school supply business. In the decade of the thirties, Caxton became (and continues to be) the school textbook depository for the State of Idaho.

The first real publishing venture was a textbook for Idaho schools. *Luken's Idaho Citizen* was, at first, privately printed for the author in 1925. Eventually, Caxton took over the publishing rights, the book became a commercial success, and ultimately became one of the state-adopted school textbooks. The success of Luken's book inspired Gipson to take a more serious look at book publishing.

OUT ON A LIMB

Along about 1927, Jim Gipson began looking over his home state for promising literary talent. At this time, most publishing houses were located on the east coast, and primarily in New York. Gipson realized how hard it has always been for new writers, particularly new writers from the West, to find publishers; authors in his immediate family were also having difficulty attracting the attention of eastern presses.

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Redneck, after The Camas

Redneck...

the early 1980's taught me the frustrations of trying to do anything unique or "fun" via committee. Any generous or meaningful interpretation of First Amendment rights gets thrown out the window while committee members argue over who may be offended by what.

As I gain age and "wisdom," I become increasingly puzzled by the concern many of us have about offending the elusive "taxpayer" with ART, while simultaneously mouthing the belief in the benign and "worthless" "time-wasting" qualities of both art and artists. Which is it? Is ART a form of power capable of offending citizens; is it (gasp) political, or is it worthless fluff? Our representatives and senators can't make up their minds about it; and quite frankly, I prefer such muddled thinkers keep their tentacles out of my mind and money.

To whom do First Amendment rights apply? "Not in projects funded by the federal government!" we're told, even though the Constitution and Bill of Rights are a federal document from which individual state constitutions must be derivative. So-called "private" corporate America silences employees by demanding loyalty upon threat of losing their jobs. State colleges and universities, although offering a traditional belief in academic freedom, muzzle untenured faculty with demands of conformity and loyalty so that by the time a tenure-track professor becomes tenured, the fight's gone out of him/her. Private colleges and universities claim that the First Amendment doesn't apply to them because they are "private" and have a right to demand loyalties to missions and doctrines even when they conflict widely with such things as scientific evidence and social consciousness. News media are "beholding" to advertisers and government threats, under such vague rhetorical restrictions as "national security." Journalism has become a discipline of mollification—of how to tell a story without giving listeners and readers any real information. The purpose of today's news, it seems to me, is not to incite outrage at social atrocities in order to affect change, but to keep the public ensconced on their couches munching chips and swilling beer. And that's exactly what most of us do while a well-trained soothing voice turns murder, rape and plunder, into a benign, "harmless" chant.

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NEWS FROM THE CENTER

- ▶ ICB gratefully acknowledges tax-deductible contributions from an anonymous donor, James P. Harold, and Susan and Max Leek.
- ▶ The Idaho Council of Teachers of English has announced their support of and partnership with ICB in the production of *Idaho-by-the-Book*, a tetraflexagon map of Gem State authors, presses, libraries and bookstores. Final selection and design criteria for the map are being drawn up by ICB and ICTE members, with the assistance of Boise graphics artist/designer Meggan Jensen.
- ▶ Northwest and Whitman College Archives 1994 Newsletter (vol. 17, pp. 10-11) has a laudatory report on the ICB "Missing Pages" dedication and exhibition by Whitman Archivist Lawrence J. Dodd.
- ▶ "Booker's Dozen: 14 Idaho Artists' & Eccentric Books," the biennial touring exhibit sponsored by ICB, is fully booked for its 1996 statewide tour. Idaho book-makers are encouraged to submit their works, sent SASE 1 May-31 July, to Tom Trusky, Director, ICB, Boise State University, Boise, ID 83725. Selectees notified October 1995.
- ▶ Next issue of *The ICB NEWSLETTER* concludes "Four Idaho Presses" and interviews the designer, editor, and publisher of *A Light in the Window of Idaho: Boise's Public Library, 1895-1995*, the centennial history of one of Idaho's first public libraries.

OTHER BIBLIO NEWS

- ▶ The Sun Valley Writers Conference, dedicated to the theme "Writers and Social Responsibility," will be presented by The Community School July 30-August 2 in Sun Valley. Participants include David Halberstam, W. P. Kinsella, Mark Salzman, Ethan Canin, Gretel Ehrlich, Van Gordon Sauter, James G. Bellows, Mary Anne Dolan, Anne Taylor Fleming, Frieda Lee Mock and others. For information call 208.622.3955 or write Community School, POB 2118, Sun Valley, ID 83353.
- ▶ The University of Idaho Art Department is forming a Book Arts home page on the Internet. For details: Byron Clercx, Art Department, U of I, Moscow, ID 83844-2471. Tel. 208.885.6146



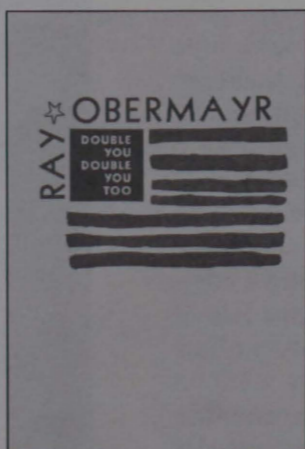
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on the Arts to study for a month with Tom and Barbara Rea of Dooryard Press in Story, Wyoming, where I had a brief hands-on lesson in design, and learned in a few weeks how to set up pages properly, how to do make-ready, and how to appreciate the subtle beauty of consistent impression.

While in Wyoming, we printed a small collection of poems by Sam Hazo, head of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh. The book was called *The Color of Reluctance*, printed in an edition of 800 copies. I remember

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Recent Limberlost Press title

U of I...

Choice Magazine annual best scholarly book), and *Island of the Anishnaabeg: Thunderers and Water Monsters in the Traditional Ojibwe Life-World* by Theresa Smith, are just a few of the recent works which reach beyond the traditionally regional emphasis of the publishing program.

Recent titles published by the University of Idaho Press of particular interest are *A Shadow in the Forest: Idaho's Black Bear*, by John J. Beecham and Jeff Rohlman, *A Ram in a Thicket: The Story of a Roaming Homesteader Family on the Mormon Frontier* by Idaho's own native western writer, Frank Robertson, and *Where the Morning Light's Still Blue*, edited by William Studebaker and Rick Ardinger, a delightful collection of essays that capture the experience of living in Idaho.

In January of 1995, the Press made Leonard Arrington's popular two-volume *History of Idaho* available in a paperback edition under one cover. The original two-volume, slipcase set, which was published in January of 1994, had sold out. Clark Spence's *British Investments and the American Mining Frontier, 1860-1901* has recently been reprinted by the Press. In the area of western literature, the Press will make available *Parallel Expeditions: Charles Darwin and the Work of John Steinbeck* by Brian E. Railsback in June. *Wild Trees of Idaho*, written by Frederic D. Johnson, Professor Emeritus of Forestry at the University of Idaho, will be available in the summer of 1995.

The fall of 1995 will see publication of three very readable volumes in the *Living the West Series*. The first is Warren Yahr's *Smokechaser*, which is based on Mr. Yahr's personal experiences as a firefighter in the Bungalow District of the Clearwater Forest in the 1940s. The other two volumes, *The King of Metamora* and *The Magic Valley*, tell the early life story of Idaho inventor Harold W. Hannebaum. *The Arams of Idaho: Pioneers of the Camas Prairie and Joseph Plains*, by Kristi M. Youngdahl, *Dire Wolf and Other Fearful and Fanciful Works* by Sculptor George Roberts, *A Pioneer of American Folklore: Karl Knortz and His Collections*, by Eleonore Schamschula, *The Sunshine Mine Disaster*, a book of poetry by James Brock, and *A Fair Barbarian*, a reprint of a novel by Francis Hodgson Burnett (author of *The Secret Garden*) will also be published in the fall.

The Press invites the submission of manuscripts in the areas in which it publishes that will appeal to scholars and general readers. Please send a query letter accompanied by a table of contents and sample chapter prior to submission of an entire manuscript. If the work seems suitable, the entire text will be invited for review. The director of the Press, Peggy Pace, is also available to discuss projects at their inception should authors prefer to develop their work with editorial support from the Press. For more information about the Press and its publishing program, or to obtain a catalog or be put on the mailing list, write to the University of Idaho Press, 16 Brink Hall, Moscow, Idaho 83844-1107.