

IDAHO CENTER FOR THE BOOK NEWSLETTER

In This Issue



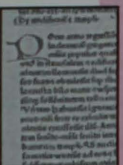
High Ground:
Art Notes From the Plateau
by Ross Coates



Idaho by the Book
The Magical Literary Map
Arrives!



The Vardis Fisher Bequest
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Vardis Fisher Collection Overwhelms Beneficiaries

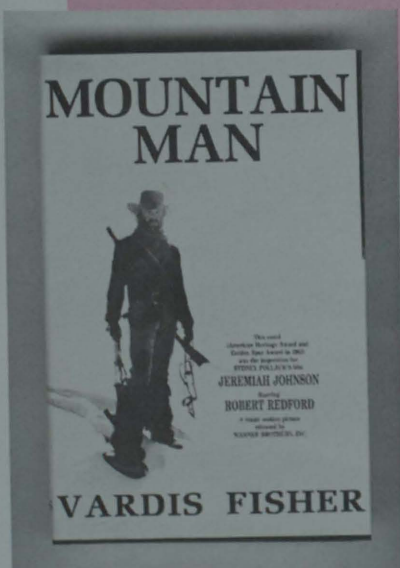
by Tim Woodward
The Idaho Statesman

When the reclusive widow of author Vardis Fisher died alone at her forbidding home in the Boise Front, no one knew the extent of the literary fortune hidden inside. The result — papers and books from a man credited with the first significant fiction from the Rocky Mountain region — has overwhelmed and delighted its recipients.

Investigators found Opal Laurel Holmes' body on July 30, 1994, in a basement room of a dilapidated home obscured by overgrown trees and shrubs. Drawn drapes and "keep out" signs discouraged visitors. Rooms were strewn with unopened mail and uncashed checks. Trails wound through towering stacks of books.

Holmes, 80, rarely left her cluttered refuge, where she survived in part on royalties from a Robert Redford movie [*Jeremiah Johnson*] based on one of her husband's books [*Mountain Man*].

It has taken nearly two years to examine her effects and settle her estate, with Boise State University, Yale University and Albertson



College of Idaho emerging this month [June] as the primary literary beneficiaries.

Yale will get Fisher's papers, including personal and business correspondence and two unpublished manuscripts.

"One of them has some appeal," Grant Fisher, the late author's son, said Thursday. "I think it might do quite well if it were published."

Its title is *A Whore and Several Men*.

Albertson College and The Idaho Center for the Book at BSU are the recipients of Fisher's published books and part of his enormous book collection. BSU also received some books through a special arrangement with the University of Idaho.

Fisher's books join a partial collection of his papers previously given to BSU, which also is the repository for the papers of former Gov. Cecil D. Andrus and Sens. Frank Church and Len Jordan. Its Idaho Writers Archive contains

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IDAHO BIBLIO CONTROVERSIES

"Can Ezra Pound Come Home?"
by Troy Passey



The answer is "Yes," if we believe one major Idaho daily which headlined its coverage of an Idaho Humanities Council-sponsored Pound Symposium "POUND NOT ANTI-SEMITE."

"The Case of the Cross-Dressing Librarian"
by Jon Winegarner



Plot: isolated, small town, mysterious disappearance of a young girl, arrivals of a travelling artists' book exhibit and statewide anti-Gay initiative.
Sub-plot: reports the town librarian is cross-dressing. The (ex-)librarian tells his story in this ICB exclusive.



Idaho by the Book is a joint project of the Idaho Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, and the Idaho Council of Teachers of English. Both Idaho organizations are committed to literacy and an appreciation of what is called "biblio culture."

Biblio—or book—culture is what is presented in *Idaho by the Book*. We have not been content to merely site and/or profile noteworthy Gem state authors. Although our map does contain information about our authors, it also contains a wealth of important, related information about presses, printers, publishers, bookstores, and libraries—an Idaho biblio food chain, from inspiration to ingestion. Moreover, our map is a democratic smorgasbord. If an Idahoan made or makes her or his living from or has dedicated her or his life to writing and publishing literary works, he or she was eligible for inclusion on our map. Accordingly, we have Harper, Newbery, and Nobel Prize-winning authors published by major publishing houses, and we have self-published authors for your consideration. In terms of genres, we are equally eclectic, featuring authors who write poetry, Christian Romance, children's literature, and Cyberpunk sagas.

Our map is unique in that it utilizes the tetratragon format. This magical structure with its mantralic name contains over 150 years of Idaho biblio culture, history which literally "unfolds" as you manipulate the map. Bargain hunters will also note what a deal *Idaho by the Book* is: purchasers get three maps for the price of one.

In other ways, however, our map does or does not do what conventional literary maps do or do not do. Like other literary map-makers, we have not included journalistic, academic, self-help or how-to, or historical writers. Nor have we included posthumous "literary" collections—unpublished letters, diaries, essays, poems, etc.—selected, edited, published by someone other than the author.

As other state literary mapmakers, we have had to decide when a book was a book, not a broadside, pamphlet, booklet, or chapbook. Here we have fudged a bit. International standards define a "book" as possessing a minimum of forty-nine pages; we, however, have generally recognized a thirty-six page publication as "book." Generally, too, we have not automatically raised our literary eyebrows at self-published or "Vanity Press" authors, recognizing that Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Carl Sandburg, George Bernard Shaw and a number of other authors foolish enough to have not been born in Idaho, indulged in such practices. Because of space limitations, however, we have required that "mapped" authors must have published a minimum of two books, preferably by nationally or internationally recognized publishers.

Unfortunately, authors—as other literary map makers will attest—have feet and are far too peripatetic for, if not their own good, certainly the good of biblio cartographers. Take Hemingway, for example. He is on everyone's literary map: Illinois (born in Oak Park), Michigan (the sum-

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

VOL. 3 / NO. 2
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"Read" in fourteen languages—from the McCain Endowment Fund t-shirt, Boise State University, Albertsons Library (proceeds for purchase of library materials). To order, see p. 2.



Marilyn Lysohir and Ross Coates

HIGH GROUND:

Art Notes From the Plateau

by Ross Coates

On a warm November day in '94 several of us were talking about the amount and quality of art activity that happens on the plateau (which we loosely defined as eastern Washington and Oregon, Idaho and Western Montana) and that people here do not know about. Like those old Shirley Temple movies ("Let's put on a show!") we decided to start a magazine. The title suggested itself, being both descriptive and providing us a double entendre philosophical advantage.

I started to talk to people about writing articles, we fooled around with design ideas, and gradually the participants in that original discussion drifted away and Marilyn and I were left. Should we do it alone? Yes, with some important caveats. The original idea was two or three issues a year. Not possible, so we settled on one issue. In order not to compete with weekly and monthly art mags on newsprint with page after page of advertisements, we decided to really design an artist book, a limited edition, and to provide a magazine that people would save and look forward to. We also told ourselves that if the sales went well (and I retired from my teaching job), we could do two a year, or three. But, generally, our idea was to do something that met a need (what is happening between the mountains?) in a way that was reminiscent of those European magazines like *Minotaur* or *Der Sturm*.

So articles came in, we searched for a designer who shared Marilyn and my vision of how the magazine should look, and through friends met Roy de Young of Temel West Design in Boise. We hit it off and he put the first issue into a form the printer could deal with.

The first issue came off the presses in September 1995. It features articles by Albert Borgmann about the artist-run Festival of the Dead in Missoula, and by Deborah Haynes about the Russian-American artist exchange that has been happening for several years between Vladivostok and Pullman. There is also a review of the work of one of the Russian visitors, Rurik Tushkin, by Jake Seniuk of the Port Angeles Art Center. We did an extended interview with Mark Anderson, the founder and director of the Walla Walla Foundry, and a shorter interview with David Bates, a Texas artist who was working there at the time.

We include profiles of two artists from the region, Paul Pak-hing Lee who works in digital imaging photography, and Vic Moore, a folk artist who works in carved wood. Loretta Anawalt gave us three poems, and there is a lot of other stuff, too, in envelopes in the magazine: a floppy disc with an art show of Paul's work, a slide of one of Vic's sculptures, a bag of lentils, recipes, and even a balloon. And a form to send in for a drawing at the spring solstice with a print being the prize for three lucky winners.

There was a lot of hand work on the first issue. Friends, and my sister, came by and helped us stamp and

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from *Idaho by the Book*



Historical Photographs Collection, Washington State University

Mourning Dove/Hum-Ishu-Ma/Christine Quintasket Bonners Ferry (1888?-1936) - Westerns
America's first Native American woman novelist, a mixed-blood Okanogan, wrote her first novel (*Cogewea*, 1927) on a battered manual typewriter in a flimsy tent after working sun-up to sun-down in the hop fields and apple orchards of Washington and Alberta, Canada, then saw it edited (and rewritten) by friend and editor Lucullus McWhorter. At the hands of her alcoholic second husband, Mourning Dove suffered further abuse — abuse which may have precipitated her death.



Photo: Mike Taylor

Tom Spanbauer
Pocatello - Adult Fiction
From Pocatello to the Peace Corps in Africa, from writing courses at Boise State to Columbia University, Spanbauer's fiction reflects its author's diverse background and experiences. Fittingly, his second novel, *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*, though set in a fictionalized Atlanta, Idaho, will be made into a major motion picture by Spanish director Pedro Almodovar.

Idaho's Oldest Book

by Arik Hesseldahl
The Associated Press

POCATELLO — In the battle over who has the state's oldest book, Idaho State University may have fallen to third place behind Boise State University and the University of Idaho.

Last December, in an *Idaho State Journal* interview, Gary Domitz, head of special collections at the Idaho State University Library, speculated it might be at the ISU Library.

The book, *The Sermons of Maister John Calvin on the Book of Job*, was published in London in 1584. It contains 750 pages of the Protestant religious reformer's sermons and writings.

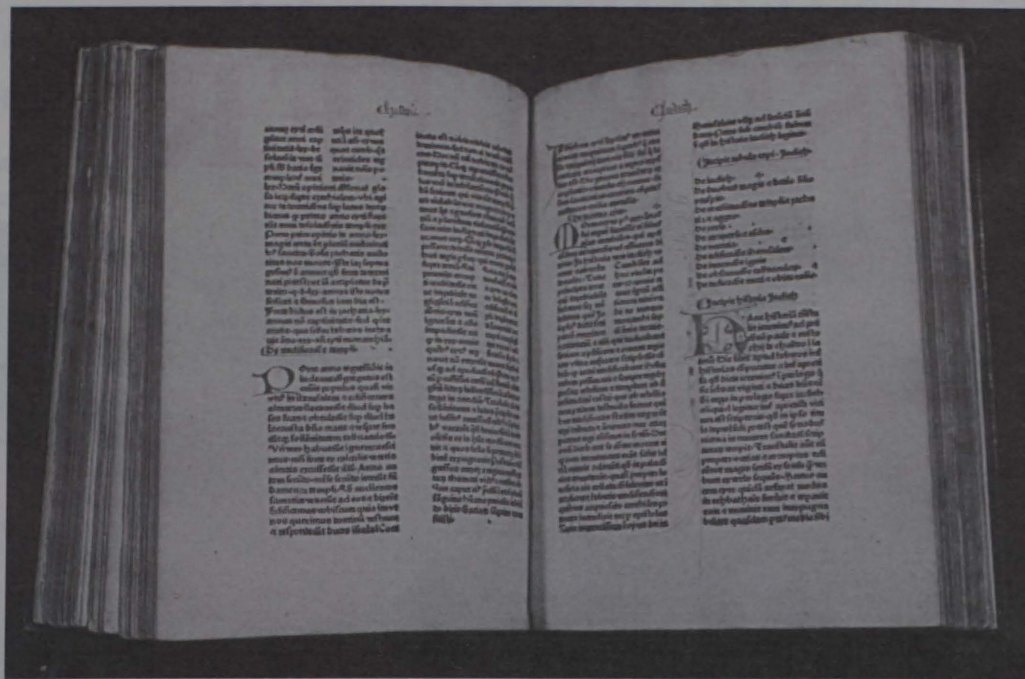
Tom Trusky, director of the Boise-based Idaho Center for the Book, read the article and had his doubts about the claim.

After some research, he came up with this conclusion: The oldest book in Idaho is at Boise State's Albertsons Library. And two other books, both older than the ISU book, are at the University of Idaho Library in Moscow.

The books are classified as "incunabula"—a term for books published before 1500.

The oldest book in Idaho is a 1479 edition of the *Historica Scholastica* by Petrus Comester, a 12th century religious historian. It is held by the Special Collections Department at the Albertsons Library.

During the Middle Ages, the book was considered the most important work of biblical scholarship. It was required reading for scholars until the 18th century, said Alan Virta, head of special collections at BSU.



Historica Scholastica (Photo by Charles Scheer)

The book was published during an important period of history. Christopher Columbus was 13 years away from making his first voyage to the New World.

The book wound up at BSU after being purchased in 1955 by Ruth McBirney, head librarian at then-Boise Junior College.

"She went over on a personal trip to England and picked up a number of rare books for the library," Virta said.

"We didn't have much at all representing the medieval period or the Renaissance. So she went over and visited some rare books shops,

and this was one of the examples she came back with."

Two other incunabula are found at the University of Idaho. One is a 1492 edition of the biography of Pope Gregory I, printed in Venice, Italy. The second is a Latin version of the New Testament of the Bible printed in Nuremberg in 1497.

"Those are the earliest books that I know about in the state. There may be others in the hands of private collectors, but I've heard no such word from the sources I have contacted," Trusky said.

Papa by the Book, continued

mered there, wrote about it in the Nick Adams stories), and Florida. For all we know, "Papa" is also on national literary maps of Spain, France, Italy, Kenya, and Cuba. (In the latter, he lived with his cat named Boise. Almost, we rest our case.) Yet, Hemingway wrote in Idaho, built a house he lived in in Idaho, and died in Idaho. Indigenous Idaho literary whiners are quick to note that Papa never wrote "In a Clean, Well-Lighted Sagebrush" or "Hills Like the White Clouds," but literary topics or themes, alone, did not, for our purposes, an Idaho author make. (If topic, alone, were criteria, Idaho science fiction writers would be limited to Idaho's Craters of the Moon for landscape.) Accordingly, Papa is on our map.

Birthplace, alone, does an Idaho author make. This explains why Hailey-born Ezra Pound—who lived in Idaho only a brief while as a child—is on our map. But how long must an alien, in-comer, "come-here," immigrant, foreigner-from-Oregon reside in Idaho before being able to claim resident status and—of considerable more import—stake a claim on our map? The answer is: significant, either in duration (years spent in the Gem state) and/or in terms of content (Idaho playing an important "role" in the literary works). Transient troubadours, such as Oregon's Joaquin Miller—"Byron of the Sierras," as the British, who knew no better, called him—worked briefly in Idaho. Miller does not appear on our map. Neither do carpetbagging grant-seekers and trendoid literati here only for the fiscal or snow season, or

innocent vacationers, visitors, or "Writers In Residence." However, in terms of special treatment, native-born authors must settle for finding their names boxed in reversed-out type. (Non-natives are in regular type.) It is the only preference natives have received.

Vexingly analogous to establishing state residency requirements for non-natives was the problem of ascertaining intra-state residencies for native-born authors. A number of native Idaho writers were afflicted with thoughtless parents who left their rural homes to give birth to their budding Idaho author in the closest town with hospital, doctor, midwife, or weigh station. Birthplace versus hometown. In many cases, we have let authors "site" themselves; in others, we have relied on official documents, and these usually list birthplace. If we are inconsistent, it is not because we believe consistency to be the hobgoblin of small minds; rather, we are large-minded provocateurs. We leave the literary jousting field open for rival literary societies, Chambers of Commerce, and literary dissertationers.

We have been consistent, however, in considering honorifics, testimonials, awards, designations, medallions, certificates, or statuettes powdered with gold dust or plated with gold plate: we have not let them influence our selection, despite our modest mention of them in introduction, press release, advertisements—wherever, whenever we might spotlight Idaho biblio culture.

High Ground, continued

tip in reproductions and stuff envelopes. Each copy was numbered and there are only 550 available.

The 1995 issue is selling well and we are getting a good response from those who have bought it. And now we have just finished the 1996 issue for which Marilyn decided to do a fund raising project. She made a limited edition of pieces from "Bad Manners" (collectors can check out *Ceramic Monthly* December '85) available below market price to help finance our second issue. We were successful in interesting several area art museums (including the Boise Art Museum) and also several private collectors in these pieces.

Articles for the 1996 issue include a major piece on women artists from the plateau area who went to the NGO section of UN Women's Conference in Beijing this past summer. Marilyn was there and wrote and coordinated an article about that wonderful experience. We also have a piece (including interviews) with people at the Archie Bray foundation in Helena, Montana. Archie Bray has been a ceramic mecca for many years and has hosted such important clay artists as Peter Voulkos and Ken Ferguson. We again spotlight two plateau artists, one of which is Idaho deaf, self-taught artist and bookmaker James Castle. As well, there is an interview with James Lavador and the people at Crow's Shadow Institute, a school for Native American artists on the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon.

When we were making phone calls about Crow's Shadow we were reminded about the on-going struggle of the Nez Perce Nation to get back a collection of their sacred objects from the State Historical Society of Ohio. If you wish to learn of our fund-raising efforts to assist the Nez Perce (as well as the outcome of the Nation's struggle), you must acquire our second issue!

High Ground has been a fun experience. We have learned a lot and we have met many interesting people. Since I teach at Washington State, and try to keep up my art career, and Marilyn is a full time artist and occasional teacher, we cannot devote all our time to *High Ground*. But perhaps this is not a bad thing, because for the foreseeable future it will remain idiosyncratic and personal. We hope that it fills a niche, so that those of us who live and work on the plateau will be able to read about ourselves in our own publication, and not wait till we go east or west over the mountains to be noticed.

In the first issue I quoted from *Forests* by Robert Pogue Harrison:

When one ceases to dwell in a province...one finds oneself within the dispersed Utopia of cities...The provincial dweller knows that if you pull a rock from out of the ground and turn it upside down, you are likely to find on its under-side a covert world of soil, roots, worms and insects. A nonprovincial dweller either never suspects or else tends to forget such a thing, for the stones that make up his city have already been abstracted from the ground, wiped clean, and made to order. A province, in other words, is a place where the stones have two sides.

So we will continue to turn over stones here in the provinces. It is amazing what we can find.

[Copies of *High Ground* are \$20 each (\$4 s&h and \$1 tax for Idaho residents). Write *High Ground*, PO Box 8961, Moscow, ID 83843.]

Fisher, continued

papers and memorabilia of writers from Ted Trueblood to Ernest Hemingway.

Center for the Book Director Tom Trusky has spent much of the past week examining the Fisher windfall, a daunting task.

"I'm exhausted," he said. "There were at least 250 cases of books, in addition to 75 boxes from previous shipments. We had a huge truck that was just overflowing."

At an average of 35 books per case, BSU's collection would number more than 11,000 volumes. By latest count, they include 28 of Fisher's 36 published titles. Twenty-one of the 28 are long out of print and highly valued by collectors. Each school also received a first-edition set of all of Fisher's works.

Born in a cottonwood shack in eastern Idaho in 1895, Fisher rose from poverty to earn degrees from the University of Chicago and became Idaho's leading literary figure.

A *New York Times* reviewer ranked his *Dark Bridwell*, a 1933 novel set in Idaho, among the 10 best American novels ever written.

Fisher, who died in 1968, also wrote an acerbic weekly column appearing in a number of Idaho newspapers. It was the source of his nickname, "Old Irascible."

For the reading public, the Holmes-Fisher estate provides long-denied access to Fisher's work.

The eccentric Holmes inherited her husband's copyrights and reprinted some of his books, but literally sat on them in her home, rarely parting with volumes regularly requested by distributors and dealers. The difficult-to-find books commanded prices of up to \$350 in the rare-book market.

"They were really hard to get," said Nancy Oakes of the Book Shop, 906 W. Main St. "Other than the few that had been reprinted else-



l-r: Edward McBride delivers Fisher books from U of I for Jayson Jones and Larry Kelley of BSU



where, Opal was about the only source. People were always asking for them, so Jean (the store's longtime owner) would talk to Opal. She'd promise to bring them down, but then we'd never see them."

Both BSU and Albertson College will offer the books to the public.

At BSU, the Idaho Writers Archive will have first priority on those not currently in its collection, including the first editions. Others will be sold at fair-market prices, providing relief to those long frustrated in their efforts to acquire Fisher's works.

The books will go on t h e

market immediately through the Internet, the BSU Bookstore and periodicals.

"We hope to put out a catalog and eventually have a Fisher display," Trusky said. "Some of the books are very beautiful and would display exceptionally well."

ICB NEWS

We're on the Web!

Courtesy Marshall Public Library

(special thanks to Web Mistress Susan Leek)

<<<http://www.eils.lib.id.us/icb/icb.html>>>

McCain t-shirt ordering information: Albertsons Library,

Boise State University, Boise, ID 83725 tel. (208) 385-1534

Idaho by the Book is available for \$9.95 + \$3.00 s/h, from the Idaho Center for the Book



IDAHO CENTER FOR THE BOOK

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