

Idaho Center for the Book



newsletter

Upcoming Biblio Events

April 30-May 2
Conference of the Movable Book Society
 Los Angeles California
 To register, contact:
 The Movable Book Society
 P.O. Box 11654
 New Brunswick, NJ 08906

May 8-24
Book Craft Courses
 "Old Ways of Hand Papermaking" (May 8-11)
 "Old Ways of Hemp and Flax Processing for Thread and Papermaking" (May 13-15)
 "Old Ways of Making Hand Tools for Bookbinding" (May 17-19)
 "Old Ways of Making Wooden Book Boards with Clasps" (May 21-24)

For further information contact:
 Jim Croft, Traditional Hand
 POB 211
 Santa, ID 83866

May-July
American Academy of Bookbinding Summer Program
 For complete schedule of classes:
 P.O. Box 1590
 Telluride, CO 81435
 (970) 728-3886

July 31-August 3
Sun Valley Writers' Conference
 P.O. Box 957, Ketchum, ID 83340
 (208)726-6670

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"The Great Threat"
 by Karen M. Glennon



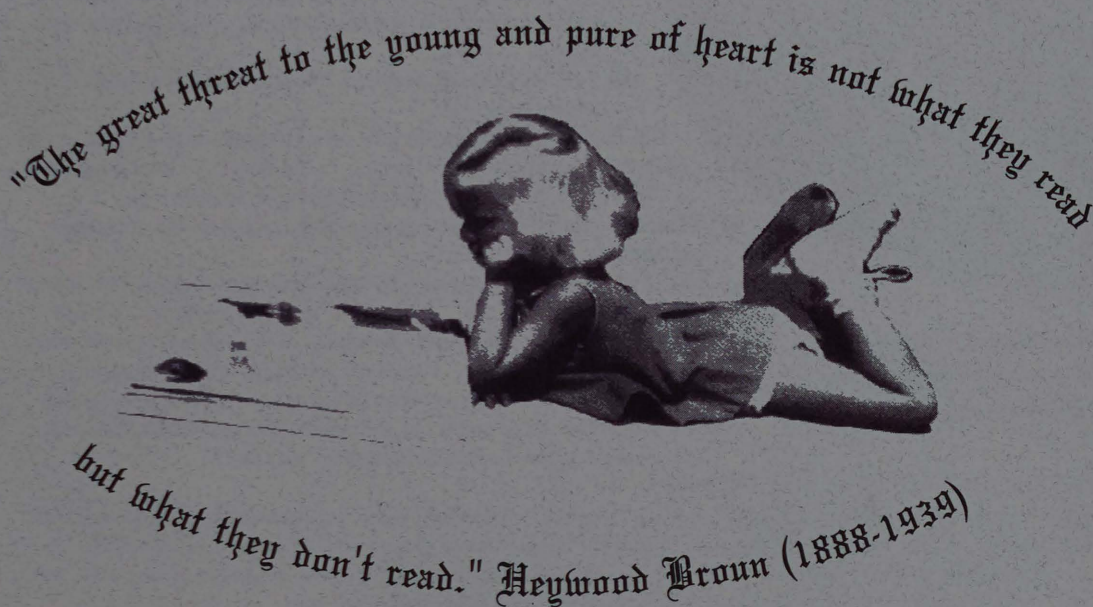
"Do Come"
 by Bret Fowler

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

"The Great Threat"

by Karen M. Glennon



Karen M. Glennon's T-shirt design.
 The design features an insightful quote by Heywood Brown.

When I first began the T-shirt project I decided to look for quotations on topics about reading which were of interest to me. Two main categories of material are important to me because of what I do for a living and my past life experiences.

I teach high school and am inundated with students who read from the first to fifth grade reading level in my ninth grade classes. Since the books on the recommended reading core list have reading levels beginning at a seventh grade level, this is a major problem for my students, and for me as their teacher. I am furious at the state legislators who in their vast knowledge of the subject and their classroom expertise voted to eliminate reading at the high school level in 1997. Without reading skills, most of my students are doomed to a lifetime of struggle.

My family was given wings by books. My life experience has taught me that reading gives people the hope of a better life. It is important to me that other children get that choice as well. Therefore, I looked for quotations about early reading and statistics on literacy.

My first T-shirt logo attempt fit my categories, but I later decided it was too didactic. I made a square on my computer and around the square I ran the words, "READ TO YOUR BABY." Inside the square I wrote literacy statistics; for example, the number of illiterates in prison, on welfare, money earned in a lifetime by a high school dropout, etc., all in a large block inside the outer square of words. Then I put a large red circle with a slash through it on the top of the words.

I also played with a quotation from a National Council of Teachers of English publication which noted the state of Michigan calculates the number of prisons needed in twenty years by considering the number of

nonreaders at the end of the third grade. It was just too discouraging.

The other reading topic that I am concerned with is censorship. In most schools in Idaho a parent complaint can get a book pulled from classroom shelves. *Chocolate Fever*, a fairly innocuous book with the theme that too much of anything is not good for you, was pulled out of a classroom in Meridian, Idaho because it dealt with the M word: magic. It is only one book of many so treated. Most are quietly pulled off library shelves by a school principal. It is so depressing because often what is left is milktoast or classics too difficult for any but the top students to read for pleasure.

I liked a quote by Henry Heine, "Where books are burned, human beings will in the end be burned, too." Flames were an easy piece of clip art to find, but in the end I decided that since I had heard the quote before, perhaps it would be too familiar to others to use as a shirt logo.

Another quote I considered said that what we saw in a book was mirrored by what was in ourselves. I found a clip of the See No Evil, Speak No Evil, and Hear No Evil monkeys and planned to use the clip with that quote, but in the end I decided to drop that idea as well. I was learning to kill my darlings.

The quote I finally chose combined both of my main themes and was much less didactic. I found a quote by Heywood Brown which reads, "The great threat to the young and pure in heart is not what they read, but what they don't read."

First a child must be encouraged to love to read and to read well and widely. Parents do this when they read to their children and model reading themselves. If a child reads many different kinds of material, eventually they reach the whole of humanity with a view of both good and evil in balance and a realization that we carry both sides within us. When able to discuss with a parent or teacher what a book is about, the child gets a more complete view of the world. If never exposed to reading, their world view and coping skills are out of balance.

I wanted my shirt to visually represent the theme of innocence since the quote talks about "the young and pure of heart." I wanted the shape to look like an old-fashioned, oval picture frame. I chose a gothic lettering style because it seemed like old-fashioned advice that a parent might give. Many parents believe with some reason that their children are threatened today. This understandable fear has caused an upsurge of censorship which too often throws out the baby with the bathwater.

Next, I looked for an old-fashioned clip art I could import into the oval. I found many images that were close but none that were exactly what I wanted. When I was just about to give up I remembered a photograph my mother had taken of my older sister as a child. I borrowed the photo from my sister and it was exactly what I wanted. I photocopied it and trimmed out all the peripheral material leaving only the child, then imported this picture of innocence into the center of the oval.

The Idaho Center for the Book has produced a commemorative pen in honor of its recent "Fabulous Floating Pens" exhibition. The ICB pen features butterflies, an acknowledgment of the first printing press in the Pacific Northwest which was located at Lapwai, Idaho in 1839. Lapwai is the Nez Perce Indian word for "place of butterflies." Commemorative pens (\$4.95) and exhibit catalogues (\$3) are available from the ICB.



"Do Come"

by Bret Fowler

I first met Marianne Lawrence a little more than three years ago in an unfinished room above her husband's wood shop. The cubicle itself made for a topic about which to write, much more so than it was a place to write because of the noise and dust from Tom's assortment of saws. Nevertheless, it was there that Marianne had set up her own workshop: a poky PC centered on a makeshift table and space enough to accommodate two chairs. The room was only temporary, like its mate down the hallway that served as a studio for two. In his spare time, Tom busied himself, transforming the former machine shop adjacent to the wood shop into a house, first, to a point of livability, and eventually, into a home that boasts summer and winter bedrooms, the former replacing the computer room where I first met with Marianne.

In the time that has passed since that initial meeting, I've come to know the woman who describes herself as a "plain Jane type"—but a "happy plain Jane"—to be a lover of life as much as she is a lover of language, attributing that weave throughout her children stories and newsletters like the wool she spins into yarn. Wife, mother, grandmother, farmer, rancher, baker, gardener—Marianne carries a string of life-titles out of choice rather than obligation. She is shepherdess, nurse, historian, chef, spinstress, quilter, knitter, artisan; she is an illustrator, and she is a writer—although, she says in passing, "I don't hear myself saying that [I am a writer]. I do write thoughts and words on paper, and it is important for me to do so."

The thoughts and words that Marianne composes at her computer are also important to her readers, one group, a small yet loyal bunch of twenty to thirty followers, who eagerly awaits her monthly newsletter which she first began in 1984 as a means to hold together a family that was packing up and "going in different directions." At the suggestion of a friend, Marianne submitted her family newsletter to the local Council, Idaho newspaper and soon found herself writing a monthly column which she dubbed the "Council Chronicles." Moving to Nampa in 1991, the name of the newsletter no longer fit the place. The "Council Chronicles" was first renamed "The Lawrence Log"—for one brief month—and then "Bits and Pieces as We Saw It" (both titles a play on words concocted in honor of Tom's wooden box business).

Now moving into its thirteenth year, Marianne's newsletter promises to report the good luck as well as the bad luck, the events that occur during a daily routine that Marianne defines as simple: "The day starts before sun-up. Let the cat in or out, depending. Read a few minutes to learn something. Spin or work with my wool while the morning is still quiet. Turn on the news. Start the wash. Greet the day, Tom and my mom." Although the routine may be simple and the events ordinary, the ritual is not necessarily common to a generation that buys its eggs at Albertson's and, according to Marianne, "eats some of the best foods of the world but has no idea how the food arrived on our plates." Perhaps that is part of the newsletter's appeal: not only does it set a place at the table for the reader, but also, it passes on the recipe to all of those who find themselves full following the meal.

One of her goals as a writer, Marianne states, is to capture her own lifestyle, "made up from the influence of three generations, mine, my parents, and grandparents . . . to preserve part of me . . . and a past. I'm in my sixties. I feel a sadness at the loss of the past generation's quality of life. I like the conveniences today's world has given me, but at the same time, I think it has separated us from our connectedness [to the land] and our roots." Marianne's prose echoes a voice of connectedness to place. "My voice," she writes, "is of one who came forth from picket fences and rose gardens into a world that is racing down freeways. I don't want to race. I want beauty." The fast lane does come up missing in her prose. From morning to evening, the world of which she writes certainly runs at a different pace than the one the majority of us are used to. When asked to explain the course of her day, she replies:

"Around eleven lunch is started, which is our main meal of the day. After lunch my pace slows, and I either make boxes [alongside of husband Tom] or work on a hand craft project of my own, do errands, or write letters. The evening meal is simple and easy. Help with animal chores and wind the day down with wool gathering and spinning. Not very exciting, but I enjoy and like my life."

Rejecting the race of nine-to-five, Monday through Friday, Marianne draws the reader nearer to a pageant that celebrates life's simpleness, and whatever she writes, the themes of enjoyment and delight are embedded in her work.

Although Marianne claims that her life as well as her days are uneventful and lack excitement, the reader simply has to open the month's newsletter to reveal a truer picture. In her February newsletter from 1993, for example, she writes:

"Our big news of the month is that Tom cut off the tip of his right ring-finger the first day of February. Actually, it would have been easier and less painful if he had really cut it off with the saw blade, but instead, he smashed it off while using the saw. The doctor evened up the jaggedness with a scalpel. Tom is doing quite nicely by now, and we are both over the shock of it, although he still has some pain."

In the very same breath, she continues:
"Anything I write hereafter in my letter will be quite flat and mundane. Like, 'Yes, we are still eating our veggies.' Broccoli and mushroom soup tonight. But we did backslide a bit Sunday night to eat a bowl of graham crackers and milk. I have exploded the myth that vegetables are less fattening than other foods, because I have just gained five pounds since we have been on our new 'eat more veggies' regimen. Maybe it's the carrots: they are super in muffins."

Whether the tone Marianne brings to a piece is light-hearted or earnest, the mood that weaves throughout her narratives testifies to a natural order of things and a life that Marianne sees as "dependent on seasons." According to her, "Seasons are becoming devoid of meaning. . . . In the early spring come lambs and chicks, then garden planting, sowing, watering and harvest. Shearing and spinning. Gathering and preserving. Even the pine boxes are made in season—and because of a season—the Christmas season. My writing reflects this daily living with seasons, the earth, and a relationship with the Creator." Marianne's work, in fact, invites the reader to a place that is warm in winter and cool in summer, offering her guest a time to retreat, no matter the visitor's own season.

I had asked Marianne some time in October if she would chat with me about her writing. I was the first visitor who appeared that mid-November morning, but while I sat at the kitchen table, a second visitor arrived. Rosa had come to give Marianne's mother a bath, a job she performs three times a week, relieving Marianne of one office since Marianne assumed full care of her mom. The coffee was ready when I arrived, and Marianne offered me a few homemade biscuits with strawberry jam left over from the morning meal. I settled down to a second breakfast before the interview while Marianne busied herself with some last minute arrangements for her mom and Rosa.

BF: Did you write today?

ML: Well, I didn't write anything fresh, but I went over some writing, made a few corrections. I still call that writing. It isn't fresh, but it still has to be done. My mind has begun to work on something that I want to do the next time that I come around.

BF: You have a new project going?

ML: Well, not exactly a new project. It might be something that I'll put in a future letter. Lots of times I'll put things on my computer and then bring them up later on. Sometimes they stay on there for even as much as a year before I bring them up and say, "Okay, it's time to use this." That doesn't happen very often, but it does occasionally.

BF: I know that you write during a scheduled time, but do you write during your scheduled time even when you don't feel like writing?

ML: If I have the time and this is when I need to write, yes. I have to take advantage of when that time comes around because other things are pressing and need to be done. My schedule is still pretty loose. It's like "write today." Well, I've got all day to figure out when to put that in. It's not like sit down at nine o'clock in the morning and write or at nine o'clock at night. It's just that today I'm going to do this. There are times when the day explodes. Maybe I don't get to it until the next day, but the schedule has certainly helped.

BF: Are you one of those writers who keeps a notepad by your bed in case you're inspired during the night?

ML: No. . . . Before I had the computer, I probably did. I can remember one night I had some sort of an idea and wrote down on my paper, "Remember to write it in the morning," but in the morning (laughing) I couldn't remember what to write.

BF: The computer's changed your writing, then?

ML: It's changed my writing because there were a lot of little notebooks that I would write in. In a way that was nice, but I would never go back. Of course, before the computer, maybe I'd write something while going down the road. I still have the freedom to do that, but I don't find myself doing it as often maybe as I did before. I still find that things have to internalize awhile before they can go down on paper. And that hasn't changed from notebook to computer.

BF: You've told me before today that when you write you write for yourself, for enjoyment, for healing, and even for growth. What is it that needs to be healed that would give you reason to write?

ML: Well, the big thing I can think of is our son's death. I found out about his death on Sunday night. I think it was that next morning I found myself writing. At that time I didn't have a computer so I was sitting at a typewriter. Writing helped me, and I also found out it helped a lot of other people, expressing my feelings about the death and that soon. At different times of the year, I wrote more about our son's death and his life, so it was like sort of a journey through my grief period.

BF: And the growth?

ML: In a way that's tied in with the healing because as you write it becomes a way of healing your hurts and growing through the things that have happened to you. I think writing puts it down a little more concretely, like a conversation, because someone is out there that reads what I write, and there'll be a response to it. And then down the line, growth has been just learning how to write better.

BF: The first place I met you was in the room above Tom's wood shop. Do you miss that room at all?

ML: No, I really don't. It was a nice little room, though. There have been different little rooms during my life, not quite like that little room. But, no, I don't miss it. I'm glad it was there. I'm glad it was part of the rooms of our lives.

BF: Where were some of those other rooms?

ML: Even before I wrote anything that was readable, I can remember writing at the kitchen table in a little barn that we built. It was a real homey-looking little barn. We were the first to use it. The animals came next. I really enjoy the room that I have now. It's pleasant, it's mine, it's private.

BF: The place where you are, then, influences your writing? Are there people who have influenced you to write the way that you do?

ML: I think both, yes, people and places. Events that happen influence me.

BF: Does your daily routine affect your writing, do you think?

ML: Yes, it would have to. I mean . . . any writer . . . what happens in their daily life would have some bearing on their writing.

BF: Where do you start to achieve your purpose, giving readers enjoyment and beauty in what you write?

ML: First of all, because I'm writing a monthly letter to an audience of friends and family, mainly friends . . . it's sort of an ongoing journey. We live kind of a humdrum life, actually (laughing), but so do most people when you come right down to it. There's not too many exciting things that happen every day. But if you take a different look at your life, you still have something to say, and it can still touch other people. Maybe it can help them to realize that life is more than "ho hum."

BF: Tell me a little bit about your newsletter.

ML: It started in about 1984. We were moving to Idaho from Oregon, and it was at the end of being a full-time mother. All the kids, four of them, had flown the coop, three of them within six months of each other. And so, we were all going in different directions. One was already in Idaho, one was in Oregon at that time, and another headed to California as we left back to Idaho. So we were spreading out. I wondered how I was going to keep everyone together. And so, it started out strictly as a family letter. I try to avoid anything personal about my own family now, although I do talk occasionally about things that are happening. Every once in awhile, somebody will write and ask how the kids are doing, and that always goes on a postscript, not in the main part of the letter.

BF: Why the change?

ML: Sometimes family members don't always like to be (laughing) put into print. I certainly wouldn't like to embarrass my family and put them in the showcase. And then, also, I don't think it's in good taste. It's sort of like bringing out your whole wallet full of pictures: "Have you seen my grandkids?" There are other parts of people's lives that I try to touch besides going through my own children.

BF: You've started an autobiography about growing up in California when you lived with your parents who ran their home as a halfway house for those who were mentally unstable or insane. What was that like?

ML: I'm definitely glad for that part of my life. It put me in touch with older people and a lot of the things that happen in life. It was a very, very good education, and in some respects it made for a very pleasant childhood. A lot of those people loved me dearly and played an important part in my life. In some ways it probably gave me a little more freedom than most children had because my mother was busy, and I got to do a lot of things because of that. I didn't have a lot of peer friends. I had some, but we lived sort of out in the country. I don't think that having all of those older people around made a lot of children anxious to be friends with me, either (laughing). But that gave me time to use my imagination, and there were people to feed my imagination, people to help me grow, people who loved me. In those days it wasn't called a halfway house. A halfway house was a house that was halfway finished, I think (laughing).

BF: What was it called?

ML: It was just called a home for the mentally ill, I think. Most of the people came out of mental institutions at that time because in those days the mentally ill were treated in a different fashion. A lot of them were just old people that they didn't know what to do with. Some were alcoholics, some were blind . . . not especially mentally ill, but the family just couldn't take care of them any longer. And that's where they wound up. Pat was my favorite—and sometimes a large embarrassment. I think he had been an embarrassment to his family, too, until finally out of desperation they had him committed. He had nine children who tried to share their home with him, but his drinking. . . . At our home it was more difficult for him to get any alcohol to drink. Anyway, Pat was Irish, short and round. He still had his brogue with thick rolled R's. He called me "Gur-r-lie." "Ah, how's me gur-r-lie, this moorning?" he'd say. "Ye look like a bonny lass. If'n ye had your scarlet scarf tied about yor neck, ye would look like an Irish darlin'." Go get it, gur-r-lie. I loved him. And I knew he loved me. . . . He sent me off to school with a grin in my heart. In my heart I knew whatever he said about my dress was right. I knew he had an eye for flare and color—and class. If he said, "Na, gurrllie, the blouse is not right," I knew it wasn't and I changed it.

(Continued in next issue)



In addition to her writing Marianne Lawrence (pictured above) does all of the illustrations for her children's books (pictured throughout article).



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