



newsletter

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

Vol. 8/No. 2 • October 2001

Upcoming Biblio Events

Idaho Biblio Aid for Big Apple

Blackfoot book artist, Elena Farmer is pioneering a reading and literacy program as a teacher in one of New York City's most under-achieving schools. Farmer's goal is to create a rich learning environment filled with books, art, and exploration.

"I want to start with books," Farmer states, "How do you teach children to read? By reading to them. How do you teach them to write? By allowing them to respond to a book in their own voice and from their own experience. You'd be amazed what 5 year olds are capable of expressing."

Farmer invites us to share in her adventure by donating a children's book to her program. Have a book or gift certificate sent directly from the internet: <http://www.powells.com> • <http://www.amazon.com>

Or mail a book donation to:

Ms. Elena Farmer, c/o PS 67 The Charles A. Dorsey School
51 St. Edwards St., Brooklyn, NY 11205

A Few Amazing Facts About The Acid Press

Publishing Parties. Each new book is a great excuse for a party. Because the books are small and don't take long to read, the party isn't interrupted very long. Potluck.

Burnt Offerings. The only press that offers a spotless copy (1 of xx) as a burnt offering to the god or goddess of the poet's choice. Remains read for prophetic indications, with uncanny results. If the goddess is present, as happened once quite unexpectedly, we do as we are told – and gave the book to her directly.

Philosophy. Friends first, but we reserve the right to read all manuscripts before publishing them. After slash and burn publishing of poets living in or associated with Pocatello, we will move on.

Production Details. Acid Press books are 16 pages, an 11" x 17" sheet photocopied double-sided, folded three times, stapled into the cover, and the folds cut open with a dull paring knife. Our sweatshop production conditions are ameliorated by playing classical music, usually Bach or Vivaldi, Satie on occasion, Leonard Cohen or Patsy Cline for a break. We also like Mahler and Simon and Garfunkel. At least 1 illustration per book. This production mode enables an up-to-date just-in-time inventory, with books never out of print.

A Serious Faux Pas. Upon picking up the book, "Oh, is this a flyer for your new book?"

Acidic Paper. The heart of the Acid Press and source of our motto: "Memorize it before it returns to the state of nature." As an enthusiastic supporter said, "I like paper that is going to do something." The first book accidentally turned out acid free. Although we are ashamed, we stand by our practice of buying cheap office stock and living with it.

Our Old Motto. "Too cheap to steal, too good to pass up." Unfortunately, this instilled a feeling of challenge in some consumers, so we are in the process of abandoning it.

The Acid Press

Douglas Airmet, Publisher, Editor, Bookmaker
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Vardis Fisher State Park?

The home site where Vardis Fisher spent his later years may soon become a state park. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has received Legislative approval to purchase two properties in the Hagerman area for what would become Billingsley Creek State Park. Fisher Lake and the foundation and outbuildings of Fisher's home are included. Fisher wrote his twelve-volume Testament of Man series while living there.

The opportunity to increase wildlife habitat, improve water quality, conduct aquatic research and provide recreation access will also give the park statewide significance.

Correction: Last issue was numbered incorrectly. The issue should have been numbered "Vol. 8/No. 1-April 2001."

In honor of all things acidic, this issue of the ICB Newsletter is printed on non-recyclable BriteHue cover stock paper using oil-based inks.

Student Intern Editor: Jim Orr

The Acid Press

by Mark Brown

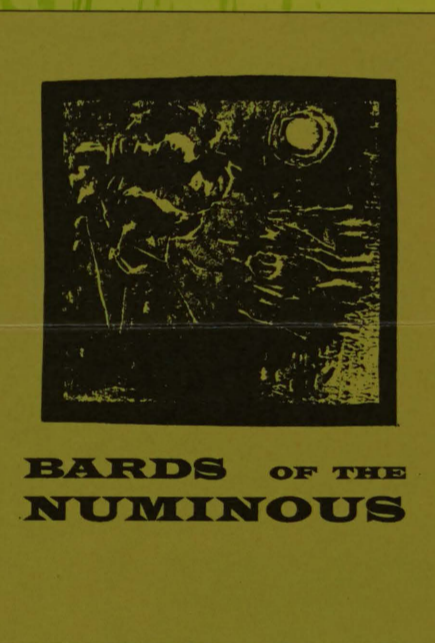
DOUG AIRMET called to say he didn't want to talk. It was Sunday afternoon and my wife and I were already late for church but we held up for a minute because when someone calls in order to say he doesn't really want to talk, something is up. "I'm just uncomfortable with trying to institutionalize and make public something that's so personal to me," he said.

The personal venture Airmet, a Pocatello resident, was referring to was the small press known as The Acid Press, of which he is the publisher. I paid enough attention in Latin class to know that the word publisher comes from the Latin verb *publicare*, which means to make public. So, in addition to talking when he doesn't really want to talk, Airmet is a publisher who doesn't want to go public. He told me, "I want to be the center of attention, the life of the party, but then, I don't anymore. That desire goes away." It was something of a puzzle but that shouldn't have been surprising as the Acid Press itself embodies all sorts of paradoxes and conundrums.

According to what I could get from Doug Airmet and a few other sources, the Acid Press was originally meant as a joke – a one-shot book made for the amusement of a couple of friends. Three years ago, Airmet spent a weekend on the Wapi lava flows in what is now the Great Rift National Monument with his friend and sometime poetic collaborator, Will

Petersen, the owner of Pocatello's only independent bookstore, The Walrus and Carpenter. Petersen had created his own ultra-small press book (four copies) about his time in the area entitled *The Flows*. As they camped, Airmet generated a slew of his own poems and the two talked about publishing a book featuring some of their lava-flow poetry together. Airmet came up with the idea of printing the book on the cheapest, most acidic paper he could possibly find so the book itself would reflect the impermanence and changeability of the area he was writing about but also because he was tired of "beautiful books with simply okay poetry." He wanted to "spoon the preciousness of making these (fine letterpress) books when it's the words and poetry that's important. . . There are so many poets out there who say, 'If this isn't non-acidic paper it's not going to be around long enough for it to be discovered what a great poet I am.'" When Petersen offered some archival paper that he had left over from one of his publishing projects Airmet replied, "No, absolutely not! This book must be done for twenty-three cents, nothing more!" Petersen later commented, "Doug loved the idea of a book that would actually do something – once he got the idea of a book that would dissolve in your hands, he wouldn't let it go."

And so, *Bards of the Numinous* was born with the frontispiece reading, "Bards of the Numinous or DOUG-BOB AND WILL ON THE WAPI FLOWS being Seven Poems in Five Voices, Three Meters, Various Forms, Multiple Fancies, and One Organic Imagination." Along with that impressive title came the now locally infamous catchphrase, "Memorize It Before It Returns to the State of Nature." The book is the size of a small greeting card and the text and illustrations were photocopied on Ivory Office Stock, a



**BARDS OF THE
NUMINOUS**

paper that will make you think of manila folders, file folders, and all things inexpensive and utilitarian.

Supposedly, that was it. A publishing party was held but more for the sake of getting together with friends and drinking than for selling the books at two dollars a pop. However, things didn't work out quite as expected. Airmet admitted, "I originally just wanted to publish a book of my own poems with a few of Will's thrown in-between. But, almost immediately after we published, Marty Vest brought me a manuscript and the poems were so good I didn't have any choice. I had to publish them and so, then I thought, 'Well, I guess I'm a press.'"

In the space of two years, The Acid Press published nine books of poetry, with the authors list including Gino Sky, Anne Mullin, Charles Potts, Ray Obermayr, Harald Wyndam, and Martin Vest. Airmet published another work of his own entitled, *In Praise of The Fine Letter-Press Chapbook*, which like all the other books was photocopied on Ivory Office Stock, only this one featured end papers made of decorative paper towels and, rather than being stapled together, was hand sewn with dental floss.

Most of this information I was able to gather from Airmet when he called to say that he didn't want to talk and from one call put in to Will Petersen during a momentary lull at his bookstore. What was still unclear to me, however, was the question of the publisher himself. I waited a week, then two and, on a Sunday night, called Airmet again to see what I could find out. I should have known that whatever I expected to happen, wouldn't. This time, Airmet was perfectly willing to talk and happy to answer any questions I had.

In Praise of the Fine

Letter-Press Chapbook



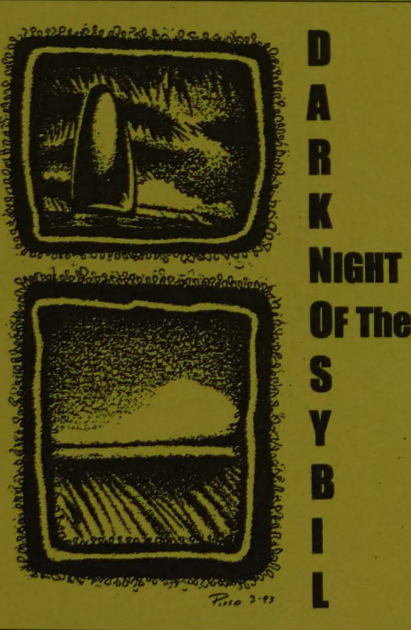
Again, the Acid Press and its associates are full of surprises. I found out that Airmet has a PhD in English from the University of Iowa and taught as an adjunct at Idaho State University for a few years. By the time he was offered a full-time position, he already had a job at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, a nuclear energy research facility situated in the Arco desert, and the potential salary of an academic just couldn't compete. "Besides," he said, "I've always belonged on the fringes anyway, I guess." So, he worked at INEL full-time and became what he refers to as a "part-time poet."

Airmet became a part of the tightly-knit poetry and literary community of Pocatello, happily attending the readings of friends and supporting them whenever they published. Those friends were more than supportive of him when he became something of a local celebrity for his efforts with the Press. Penelope Reedy, a publisher in her own right, interviewed Airmet for the *Idaho State Journal* and featured him on the front page of the Living section. "Suddenly, I was somebody for doing something anybody could do," Airmet said, "I mean, just give me some of your poems and let me publish them."

It's doubtful that just anybody could or would produce the books the way he did, however. Rather than simply stacking four sheets of paper together and folding them in half, each sixteen page book was arranged and printed on one single sheet of 11" x 17" paper that was then folded a certain way, stapled, and then gently torn open with a wooden folder Airmet carved himself. "I would spend anywhere from thirty to forty hours designing and getting books ready to publish," he said. The type-faces, illustrations, and blurbs would each be thought over heavily, designed, and redesigned before a finished master copy was ready to go to the copy shop. Once copied, he would stand at one of the two baby grand pianos in his house (the one he uses as a table) and spend hours folding and stapling the books together. "Folding paper was very sedative. There would be the high that you get while doing the same thing over and over again while listening to Bach."

I began to see what Airmet meant when he said that the Press was a personal thing to him and the more we talked the more I learned of his dislike for being "institutionalized." At one point, a professor from Idaho State University asked Doug to take on one of his favorite students as an intern. "It was just another attempt to corral me and institutionalize this very personal thing." And then there were the

tax woes. Airmet registered for a tax number because he's an honest guy and he was selling the books after all. So, on each two-dollar book, he religiously paid ten cents tax. Sooner than later, he started getting letters from "the tax people saying I needed to inventory my equipment so I could start paying property taxes. What was I supposed to do? Inventory my kitchen table top that I folded the books on? I think I eventually declared a



paper cutter I bought for the Press - so I eventually declared fifty dollars." When he began paying taxes, the first quarter of his sales slipped by and he forgot to pay. So when he made his next payment, he mentioned that he'd forgotten the first quarter and so, he ended up paying the two dollars in tax he owed and a ten-dollar late fee. Between events like this the withering schedule of designing, copying, folding, stapling, and selling book

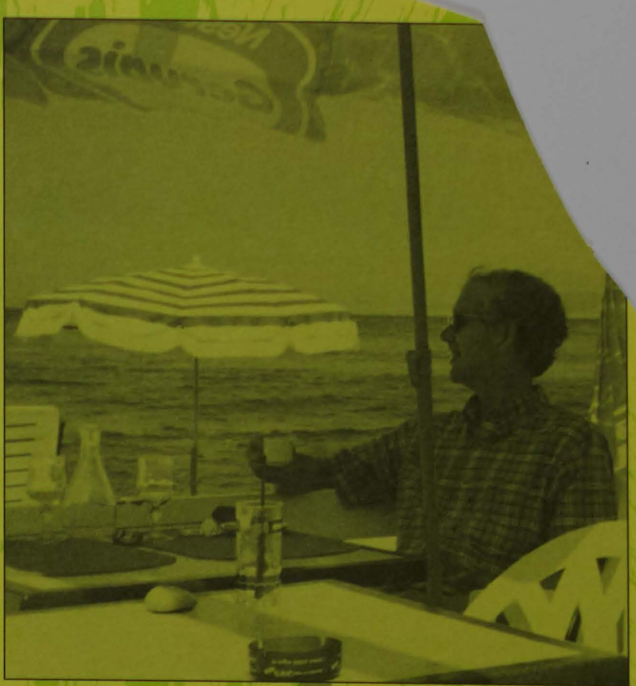
runs of two hundred every few months, "it stopped being fun and began to be a job."

It has been nearly a year since the most recent Acid Press book came out. Since then, Airmet and his wife Donelle have traveled to Europe in celebration of her finishing her doctoral dissertation, and have spent every spare moment remodeling and preparing their house in anticipation of their next production: their first child together, due in late August or early September. Though publishing has been on the back burner, Airmet isn't without his plans, or his sense of humor. "The next imprint is going to be The Oral Press, and I'm just going to memorize seven or eight poems, and then someone can just invite me over for dinner and I'll recite for them and that will constitute

the book being 'published.' It's really going to cut back on my printing costs. Very low overhead."

Will Peterson, too, has his suggestions for what may come next from Acid Press. "I made Doug promise that he'd do a Acid Press coffee table edition. We're going to do a coffee table book that actually folds out into a coffee table, with legs and everything. Then when you open the book, a cardboard coffee cup will pop up. I think it's a hilarious idea." In all seriousness, several authors have promised manuscripts for future Acid Press productions but Airmet is cautious about such things: "A promise is just a down payment on future hypocrisy, as far as I'm concerned. We'll see who actually shows up with a manuscript."

The Acid Press published a total of nine books before it went into its current



After a hard day of editing, Airmet relaxes with an espresso on the coast of Corsica.

THE MARRIAGE OF CHURCH AND STATE

The legislature meets to concoct public policy That won't upset Christians with the truth.

MY PUBLIC IDAHO

I saw Glen Taylor playing his guitar
The year Frank Church beat him to the Senate nomination. I had no idea then he'd been the Progressive party vice presidential candidate in 1948 Or that Idaho could have More than one progressive at a time.
I was there in 1948 with a cast of thousands
When Harry Truman rode a manure spreader down Main Street in Arco to commence the cover-up of the Atomic Energy Commission, now the INEL.
Grandma Coburn would be 113 years old next week If she were still alive on her birthday, October 23, Somebody started up the Old Chisholm Trail.

She said she saw Chief Tendoy move
Past the front porch of her house
With his band of Shoshones
To permanent exile on the Reservation at Fort Hall.
Senator Frank Church faced down the War in Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson, and the CIA.
Governor Robert E. Smylie slept
Through much of the commencement exercise at Idaho State University in 1965.
Half my classmates went to war,
The other half went on about their business.

HAIKU FOR CONGRESS

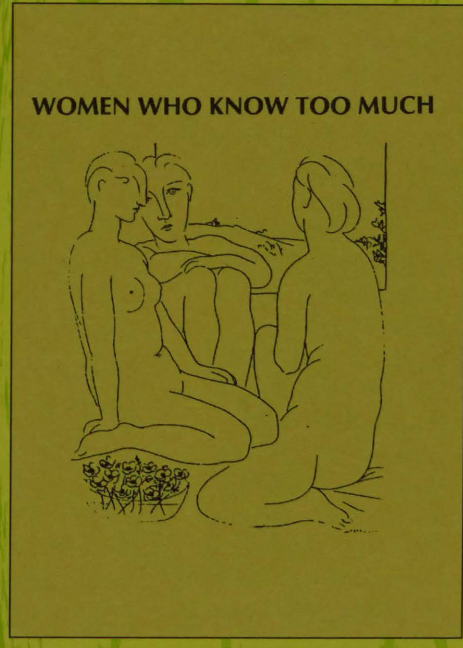
Support the Endangered Species Act:
The ass you save
Could be your own.

THIS SPACE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

state of hibernation and, coincidentally, when a poet had his or her manuscript published, Airmet gave them two complimentary "sets" of their book, a "set" consisting of nine copies. "There were nine books in a set because there are nine Muses," Airmet pointed out. The future of the Acid Press is still something of a mystery. Airmet seems to be torn between the private side of him that would perhaps like to leave the Press catalogue at that perfect Muse-number of nine and the side of him that loves the spotlight, that loves bringing beautiful words to the world, wrapped in cheap paper. Which side will win, I don't know. Maybe the Press, like the books it published, will disappear sooner than later, leaving only memories of publishing parties and

well-written, well-designed poetry only two bucks a shot. Personally, I hope to see a few more small books on Ivory

Office Stock come to life before our private publisher hangs up his printing/cutting/folding spurs permanently. I guess it will depend what kind of mood Doug Airmet is in the next time a Muse comes around to whisper in his ear. Whatever happens, I'm just glad he called me back to say he didn't want to talk.



The Booker's Dozen 2002

Consisting of fourteen bookworks by Idaho authors and artists, ICB's fourth biennial juried "Booker's Dozen" exhibit may be enjoyed at the following venues:

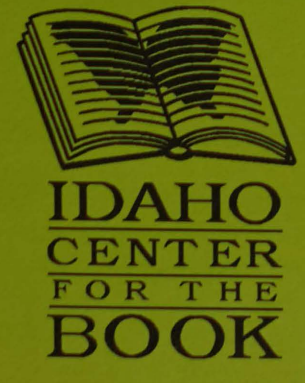
- January, 2002... Garden City Public Library
- February Moscow Junior High School Library
- March Lewiston City Library
- April Albertson College Art Gallery, Caldwell
- May Ada Community Library, Boise
- June East Bonner County Library, Sandpoint
- July Coeur D'Alene Public Library
- August Priest Lake Public Library
- September..... Idaho Falls Public Library
- October: David O. McKay Library, BYU-Idaho, Rexburg
- November Marshall Public Library, Pocatello
- December Idaho Center for the Book, BSU, Boise

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- Laurel Wagers, Sandpoint

The Mission Press 1839

The first printing press in Idaho was located at Lapwai, the Nez Perce word for "Place of the butterflies."



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