

The WAYZGOOSE GAZETTE

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Dr. Miles and the Proof Press

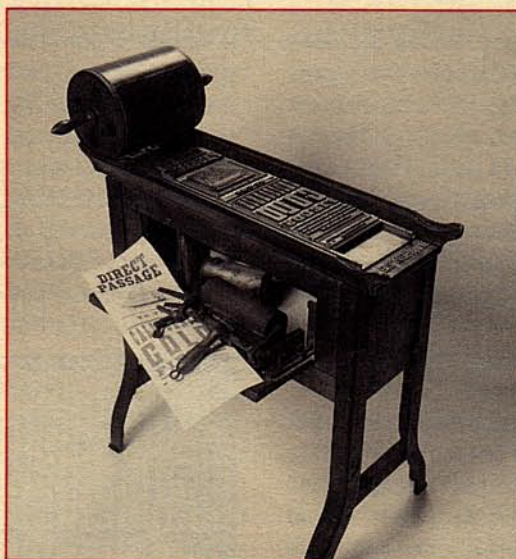
As many can testify, printers always need a method to check their work for elusive *typos*, and this has been traditionally the case. Proofing printer's type prior to the mid-19th century required a rather simple technique. The compositor placed the composing stick or galley of type on top of the composing stone, inked it by rolling a brayer over the type; after a sheet of paper was positioned over it he then plane on top of the paper and struck it with a mallet, with hopefully enough pressure to create a satisfactory impression. The quality of the image varied and certainly wasn't used for reproduction, but it served the purposed of checking the type for errors. This technique required a skilled hand to create the image while not smashing the type in the process. In smaller shops or when saving time was a

factor, this process of proofing was used as long as letterpress remained king of printing methods.

But in 1850, R. Hoe & Company devised a simple press that would perform the function of proofing and with superior results that with the mallet and plane. It was called a galley proof press and consisted of a heavy cylinder and an iron bed measuring about 10" x 38" with iron rails on each side of the bed. The galley of type would be placed in the bed of the press and then inked up by hand with a brayer. After a sheet of paper was placed on top of the type, the heavy cylinder would be rolled along the iron rails over the type to print an image on the paper. Probably one of the simplest presses ever designed. The legend goes that one of Hoe's employees came across the idea by accident when a cylinder rolled over some type, creating an impression.

The early Hoe galley press was successful but unfortunately few survive today; more common are the improved models from around 1870. Because of its simplicity and low cost, the press was widely copied by various manufacturers such as the Challenge Machinery Co., the Cincinnati Type Founders and others. The improved model was similar to the original but it had a lighter and larger diameter cylinder. They were sometimes made large enough for a twenty-inch wide galley.

Some time in the 1870's, a patent medicine doctor by the name of Dr. Dexter Miles from Elkhart, Indiana, approached the Challenge Machinery Co. with a novel idea. He asked them to make a quantity of the improved proof press for him, but rather than having the name *Challenge* cast into the frame he wanted his name and



product—*Miles Nervine* at one end of the press bed and *Miles Pain Pills* at the other. Dr. Miles then traveled the country and offered his proof presses to editors of country newspapers in exchange for free advertising space, promoting the curative power of *Miles Nervine*. He had two different castings made, one that included the phrase *Miles Pain Pills* and another with *Miles Heart Cure*. Though probably closer to a straight shot of whiskey than genuine medicine, Miles' advertising techniques must have met some degree of success since many of the presses survive today as well as the Miles Laboratory (considering their reputation, the country editors might have been his best customers, insuring Miles' financial success!). The presses can be found among hobbyists and collectors today and Alka Seltzer has replaced Dr. Miles' restorative *Nervine*.

The galley proof press was also one of the pieces of equipment printers brought out West with them on a covered wagon to help produce the early frontier newspapers; it would have accompanied a treadle platen press, a Washington Hand press, miscellaneous printer's furniture, type and supplies. If the printer was impoverished and the town small enough, the proof press might even have been used for producing the newspaper. In the Ernest A. Lindner Collection at the Printing Museum is a rather large proof press, 20" x 45", that was originally part of the Los Angeles Times newspaper plant in the late 19th century when the founder General Otis Chandler was still around. One of the former employees of the paper managed to save the piece from destruction

when much of the older equipment was being removed. The employee stashed the iron bed and the cylinder underneath his house, remaining there for many years. After becoming aware of Ernie Lindner and his collection of machinery, the employee mentioned the press under his house. It wasn't long before the press was dragged out from its secure location and added to Ernie's collection.

The proof press has served a noble and needed function for the printing trade, and at the same time has added many colorful stories to its history. Visitors to the Printing Museum have the opportunity to view each of these proof press and even some more modern ones during visits to the collection. There's even a bottle of that *Nervine* around somewhere.

The End of Typeslinging at Rafu Shimpo

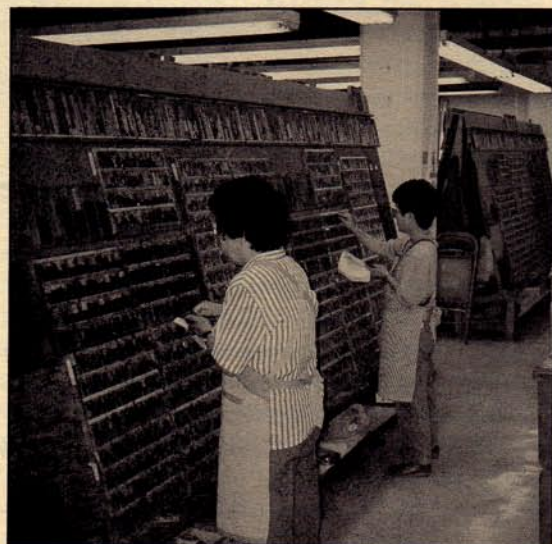
Though the computer-age of typesetting has been with us for some time now (to the point that photo-composition, the new technology on the block a few decades ago, is obsolete), in the heart of Los Angeles a daily newspaper still remained faithful to the centuries-old tradition of setting metal type by hand for a portion of its paper. Incredulous as it seems, such was the case for the Japanese paper, *The Rafu Shimpo* (meaning "daily news") until Saturday, March 14th, 1992. That fateful issue marked the end of a traditional era in typesetting and the beginning of another for *The Rafu Shimpo*.

Tediously the Japanese-portion of the the paper was carefully set one character at a time on a weekly basis, while the rest was set in English by computers. A visit to the third floor of *The Rafu Shimpo's* plant on Los Angeles Street in Little Tokyo would give you a rare glimpse of history, rare because this paper represents one of the last to use metal type in its production, whether English or Japanese.

The large room was quiet when I visited for the setting of that final hand-set issue, a handful of middle-age Japanese women wearing kitchen aprons "type-slinging," or distributing the type from the previous issue. What immediately impresses the eye of a Western printer familiar with our own era of type-slinging are the long rows of type banks, with type stretching from the floor to as high as you can reach. For the Western typesetter, a font of type consists of approximately 90 characters and fits conveniently in a typecase you can carry; for the Japanese, the number is closer to 10,000 characters. Each one of thosetwenty- foot long type banks, seven feet high represented one style or size of type!

The process of setting the *katsuji* (meaning type)

is similar to our historical method. The typesetters stands in front of the banks of type with a type stick in their left hand along with the copy they are setting, and then walk up and down the banks locating the characters they need, placing them in the stick. The set columns of *katsuji* are held in *gera*, or galleys, until the foreman is ready to assemble the page inside of a chase, or frame. After the page is assembled a black and white "repro proof" is pulled, or printed, and then taken to the production department.



The Rafu Shimpo began publication in Los Angeles in 1903. The paper was fully hand-set by the editor-in-chief Seiji Shibuya, business college graduate Keiji Suzuki and even a doctor, Jyuhei Tanaka. Immediately prior to the forced evacuation of individuals of Japanese descent during WWII, the publisher had the foresight to carefully pack the

Japanese *katsuji* underneath the floor of the shop in Little Tokyo, preventing its destruction. When he returned with his staff in 1945, the *katsuji* was preserved and the first post-war issue of *The Rafu Shimpo* was published on January 1, 1946. In later years, the paper purchased its own typesetter, a Koiki Typesetter (similar to a Thompson), which would cast the increasingly difficult-to-acquire *katsuji* as it was needed for replacement.

There is some ironic history in *The Rafu Shimpo* being one of the last newspapers to use hand-set type, for the invention of movable type is credited to Pi Sheng in 1041, a blacksmith from China. Later, the Koreans in the early part of the fifteenth century cast movable metal type made from copper, decades before Johann Gutenberg perfected the typesetting process in Germany. Setting type by hand did not take hold in Asia, however, which had to deal with thousands of characters. The investment in only one

font of Chinese type was so enormous that the printer had a very limited selection of sizes and styles. The process of carving whole pages on a block of wood, a technique dating back to the 6th century in China, was faster and more economical. It also allowed for the exact duplication of any style of calligraphy, giving infinite variety to the printed word. Asia returned to the use of movable type at the end of the 19th century.

This milestone of typesetting history at *The Rafu Shimpo* passed quietly by us as we continue in our quest for faster, more versatile technology. An important era is gone, and with it the craftsmen who gave it life and value. One of those is Teruko Suzuki, a 65-year old native of Yokohama, who retired with that last hand-set issue after 37 years. "I'm not a romantic," she says. "I take life step by step. I like to go forward, and don't want to look back. It's time to make the change."

Notes from the Curator

It's not easy coming up with a job description for a museum curator, not even the dictionary is much help. Webster seems to think it's only "someone who takes care of a museum." He didn't mention anything about driving a truck 2,500 miles through eight states in five days. Maybe he could of also listed (as the third or fourth definition) "one who crawls around historical society basements." This would then be a bit closer to the reality of my job. Regardless of Webster, I still have a fascinating job that seems to be the object of conversation at most parties I attend (how often do you run into a printing museum curator at a social event?).

The need to drive a truck so far was the result of some recent acquisitions. With the funds provided through the Friends of the Printing Museum membership (only \$25/ year!), the museum was able to purchase a couple of antique presses from the defunct Printers Row Museum in Chicago. One of the pieces is a half-moon Vandercook proof press from 1895, which was their first model and often nicknamed the "rock crusher." The other press is an 1872 Gordon New Series platen press, known as the "brass arm Gordon." Both presses make important additions to museum's extensive press collection.

But of course, after the joy of acquisition had diminished somewhat, the reality of having to get the pieces from Chicago to here set in. Having had unfavorable experiences with the commercial trucking business, I decided it would be in our best interest

to haul them back in a rental truck. The main advantage in this approach is the security and constant knowledge in the handling of the antiques, something truckers seem to forget as they pass through Nebraska.

My adventure began in Rockford, Illinois, after spending a few days in Wisconsin with my wife's family. I was suppose to pick up the truck in Madison but was told a day in advance that the brakes were acting up. Naturally that didn't interest me since my wife was expecting me to show up in California at the end of the week...alive! I took the biggest and best Hertz truck they had in Rockford, a thirty foot long, twelve foot high beast with an insatiable appetite for fuel, as it turned out. I needed a long truck because I was picking up another machine along the way which was fourteen feet long.

Driving one of these big yellow bananas takes some getting used to, especially around underpasses. At home my small Toyota could almost drive underneath this truck. Now I had to pay attention to those clearance numbers on the edges of bridges. I made a stop in Evanston, Illinois, which is separated from the real world by an elevated railway built before twelve-foot-one-inch trucks were on the scene. Every underpass I tried to use read "eleven feet six inches." I finally found one that gave me two inches to spare, but my problems weren't over yet.

The successful underpass happened to be next to my intended destination, but have you ever tried

to parallel park a thirty-foot truck in a city? I drove around for a half hour looking for a spot, making sure I didn't turn onto a street which wouldn't let me get out. I finally decided to park about a mile away in a deserted part of town and hike back up. This parking thing was a recurring problem throughout the trip.

The machinery was loaded on the truck very smoothly at A. Frank Printing Machinery in Chicago where it was being stored. I also loaded on two additional pieces for a gentleman in Hawaii who needed assistance in getting his equipment to the West Coast (I guess that makes me a professional trucker). Jack Frank, the owner, took me on a "candy store" tour of his equipment warehouse. Letterpress and other machinery covered four large floors, with rows of platen presses, typesetters, cutters and anything else you could imagine. I had the pleasure of departing from his warehouse and the Chicago area at the peak of rush hour, but being from Los Angeles and having the biggest vehicle on the road, I experienced little difficulty.

Next destination was Denver, Colorado, with two long days of driving in between. Having learned from my Evanston experience, I gave myself some extra time for parking when I visited the Colorado Historical Society in Denver. The Historical Society has Linotype Junior in their warehouse, only the second known to exist. The Junior we acquired in January of this year is missing some parts so I was hoping to view theirs to find out what those parts might look like (having a unique piece in the world can have its difficulties when you are missing a piece and there are no illustrations of photographs of a complete model). The Historical Society acquired their machine around 1930 so the chances were higher that their Junior was more complete.

Unfortunately, the day I chose to visit the Colorado Historical Society couldn't have been worse from the viewpoint of their curator (probably a truck driver in her spare time as well). They were preparing to open a large exhibit from the Vatican in three days and they were rushing around to get ready for it. That meant the curator could only spare about thirty minutes for me to view the machine. So we made it past the Vatican security guards down into the basement where the Junior was stored behind a number of other artifacts. Since I really wasn't allowed to take pictures I had to leave my special lighting source at the front desk and work with their single bulb lighting unit. Rather quickly I climbed over a wagon from the 1850's and crawled around the Junior to start taking detailed shots. With the

light source held by my left hand and the camera in my right, balancing on one knee, I managed to get a few reasonable photographs. Their machine had the five parts we are missing on ours, which we can now work on duplicating. With the curator's foot tapping, I completed my task and crawled back out. I don't think my wife appreciated the rust, grease and dirt all over my clothes as a result of this expedition, however.

I was now off to Salt Lake City, Utah, where I was to pick up a Hickcock pen ruling machine, circa 1900, from Kelly Office Supply. These beautiful machines were used to rule the multi-colored lines on ledger paper. Described often as a giant bed because of the turned maple posts and strings looking like a canopy, the machine used brass "pens" attached to fountains where the different colored inks were stored to line the paper. They are beautiful to watch in their operation and I dare say our modern ledger papers pale in comparison to the product of these machines. They are also very large machines, measuring about 14 feet long and 7 feet high.

One of the difficulties we faced in getting the machine on the truck was an 82" high opening on the truck while two of the machine's posts measured 84" high. This required sawing off the very top of the posts. Though this is somewhat of a sacrilege for a curator to do, they can be easily reattached to the machine without any appearance of damage. Trying to saw 100 year old maple with a dull bookbinder's saw was not so easy, however. But we eventually conquered the machine and it fit nicely in the truck.

All that remained for me to do was to endure the heat of the Nevada deserts on the drive back and make it to Buena Park. Everybody except the rollers on the Gordon Press survived the 105 heat in the City of Sin, though I finally relented and turned the air conditioning on at the California border. After five days on the road and fifteen hours of Rush Limbaugh (a rare opportunity and a great midday stimulant while driving) I arrived back at the museum intact with some new additions to the collection. Just another week in the life of a printing museum curator...

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8469 Kass Drive, Buena Park, CA 90621
(714) 523-2070
Mark Barbour, curator and editor

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