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The Stronghold of Youth

By Leland M. Hawes, Jr.

The odds were solidly against the survival of a new amateur press association in the mid-1930s. After all, the United States was still in the grip of its worst business depression. Even though the bands blared "Happy Days Are Here Again" and Franklin Delano Roosevelt had been elected a second time, there was little money to be flung around for non-essentials like hobbies.

But it was also an era of discontent. The status quo had been found inadequate to deal with the problems of industrial slowdown and widespread unemployment. Splinter parties sprang up. The Townsend movement, Father Coughlin's "Social Justice," and Huey Long's "Every Man a King" were symptoms of the gullibility of Americans to gulp political nostrums to "cure the country."

Yet amateur journalism was experiencing relatively good times in the early 1930's. Flashier forms of entertainment cost too much, and printing presses could produce a little "pocket money" for the younger people traditionally attracted to the hobby.

Fortunately, there had been a renewed emphasis on "young blood" which brought a virtual return from the dead for the older organizations, the National and the United.

Vincent Haggerty and Edwin Hadley Smith had pumped new life into NAPA with a boy printer recruiting campaign that brought energetic youngsters like Ralph Babcock, Harold Segal, and Jack Bond into their prime activity.

The United Amateur Press Association of America was also thriving with a new

generation of amateurs, many of whom were Lone Scouts with printing presses.

Nurtured through the dreary years of the 1920's by two Seattle politicoes, Judge Roy Erford and Clyde F. (Doc) Noel, the UAPAA gained vigor from the newcomers who lived in rural and small-town environments. It also benefitted by the success of local amateur press clubs which boosted activity, particularly in the Midwest and Northwest.

But try as they would, none of the local clubs could wrest political control from the seat of power—Seattle. Every time the "young Turks" tried to feel their oats, Erford and Noel pulled in the reins.

The Seattle combine wasn't about to surrender control after its hard-fought victory over a rival branch of the United in 1923 (commonly called the "Lovecraft United" after its key figure, H. P. Lovecraft, one of the nation's best-known writers of grotesquerie).

They weren't going to see a bunch of brash upstarts ride off with all the spoils.

(This poses a rather interesting question: *What* spoils? Certainly there was no financial boodle to be gained by control of an amateur press organization. Conversely, Judge Erford is said to have spent hundreds of dollars subsidizing the

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Heljeson New President; 24 at Annual Meeting

The Fifty-Eighth Annual Meeting of The Fossils, Inc., was held over the weekend of April 22 at the Hotel Commodore, New York City. An innovation for 1961 was the elimination of a formal dinner, those attending being free to eat together informally wherever they chose. This plan, which made the cost of the gathering a matter of individual choice, seemed to meet with the approval of those in attendance.

At an informal get-together on Friday evening, President Charles H. Russell and Mrs. Edna H. McDonald met with Merlin Teed of AAPA and Arthur Muller of UAPA.

On Saturday the meeting was convened at 10 a.m. Ballots were handed over and counted. Proxies numbered 50, with 9 votes being cast at the meeting. Results:

President

L. Verle Heljeson 51 votes
George H. Coffin 8 votes

1st Vice-President

Edward W. Allen 49 votes
Otto Knack 8 votes

2nd Vice-President

Helm Spink 57 votes
Alma Weixelbaum 1 vote

Secretary-Treasurer

William F. Haywood 56 votes
Harold Davids 2 votes
Willametta Keffer 1 vote

Editor

Sheldon Wesson 59 votes

Custodian

Edward H. Cole 57 votes
Helm Spink 2 votes

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American APA—The Stronghold of Youth

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UAPAA through slack years. Apparently he simply enjoyed the prestige of political supremacy in the hobby of his youth.)

In the summer of 1934, a tall lean Midwesterner with a weakness for poetry as well as a passion for printing began publishing a tiny paper called *The Crusader*. It was, he said, "crusading in the cause of the United Amateur Press Association."

Writing forceful editorials on UAPAA politics, George Henry Kay soon collected a coterie of young idealists who adopted a group name for themselves—the Crusaders.

"The Crusaders' Cause" was soon outlined in a statement of principles:

"Our only cause is that of the United Amateur Press Association. The ideas we seek to advance are those which will lead to the advancement of said organization.

"We have nothing against any other organization; we have chosen the United banner and will be loyal to it, and not attempt to 'straddle a fence' or divide our time between two groups. We have no animosity toward any member or body of members in the United; we may not agree with them all, but our differences will always be friendly and sportsmanly.

"The Crusader group is not radical, nor is it conservative; it is progressive. It believes the combination of good new ideas and old proven methods to be the best course to follow."

(It's noteworthy, in view of the political terminology of the '30s, that the Crusaders chose the label "progressive" rather than "radical" or "conservative." LaFollette Progressivism, particularly in the Midwest, connoted reform. The AAPA was often referred to as "the *progressive* amateur press association" until Henry Wallace's ill-fated Progressive Party of 1948 put the term in political disrepute. More recently the American was called "the *comfortable* amateur press association," a description devoid of political ideology.)

When it came to specifics, the Crusaders sought to speed up UAPAA bundles, then circulating every three months; to discourage sectionalism (weighted heavily towards Seattle); and to stress amateur printing.

Their reforms were not obnoxious *per se* in Seattle; their impudence in speaking out was what rankled the hierarchy.

The young printers soon learned that

a "friendly, sportsmanlike" code of conduct wouldn't spare them from the bare-knuckled realities of politics, United-style.

In 1935, George Kay decided to beard the Chief Satrap himself, Secretary Clyde Noel. Declaring Noel had been accused of "many abuses of the office of secretary and flagrant violations of the United constitution," Kay chose to run against him.

Such obstinacy was too much to take in the Seattle version of Tammany Hall. The firebrand Crusaders had to be taught a lesson.

The Crusader ticket was branded as a plot by the enemy National to take over the United. A tried and true "red hering," the NAPA "menace" was dragged out again, and tossed at the Crusaders.

Seattle "dictatorship" was charged in retaliation as the election went into the homestretch at the 1935 convention in New York City.

The Crusaders could have saved themselves the trouble. For a tide of proxies from Seattle drowned the hopes and aspirations of the Crusaders for reform in the United.

William F. Haywood, who was present, wrote later that "You never saw so many people in Seattle who were amateur journalists!"

Kay was denounced on the convention floor as a "cheap literary promoter," and this prompted the reading of his prepared-in-advance letter of resignation. He had sensed the inevitable.

Slapped down hard, the Crusaders floundered in disgust for more than a year, uncertain how to pick up the pieces of their shattered ideals.

Embittered and besmirched, they considered forming a "Crusaders Amateur Press Club," unaffiliated with either of the older organizations. (There had been enough anti-NAPA prejudice built up during their years in the United to make it unthinkable to "go over to the opposition.")

There was no official Crusader ticket in the UAPAA election of 1936, but that contest left no doubt that the old regime had no intention of reforming at that time.

Jack Smith, the ballot custodian, made the sensational charge that an estimated 51 ballots had been mailed by Secretary Noel in the names of various Seattle members.

(Undoubtedly, the Seattle-ites rationalized that this was perfectly good procedure, with local members turning over their proxies to insure election of the "right" ticket.)

The retiring president, Harold Flint, sent word to the 1936 convention that ballots had not been numbered as specified by the Constitution. His protest was ignored.

This was the last straw for the few Crusaders who had held out hope for improvement.

Nobody remembers just when the idea took form, but the dissidents began talking of an independent new amateur press association, not just a club.

A letter from Walter Ward Hamill to Kay, dated July 27, 1936, shows the trend of thinking:

"I take it that the hidden meaning behind today's letter is that the discontented element should band together and form a new *ajay* association. If that is your idea, I agree wholeheartedly."

Gradually, enthusiasm picked up and the name "American" seemed to stick. Coincidentally, a classified ad appeared in a semi-professional writers' magazine inviting membership in an "American Amateur Press Association." Several of the Crusaders sent inquiries, but got no response. They decided it was a nebulous outfit—if it existed at all—and went ahead with plans for their own American.

The First Five Years

A proposed Constitution and By-Laws circulated among the nucleus members, based on policies suggested in a questionnaire. The final draft was written by Kay and approved by the group.

Most startling of the innovations was the idea of conducting all business by mail—the Crusaders' deterrent to boss-ridden convention balloting. And the official organ was to be published every two months instead of quarterly as was the practice in UAPAA and NAPA.

The official organ was named *American Amateur Journalist*, instead of *American Amateur* as it would have been dubbed if the pattern of the older organizations had been followed.

Karl X. Williams, who suggested the longer name, said there would be less confusion with other kinds of amateurs who might have publications.

A young Texan who was a commercial artist as well as an amateur printer did the design of the distinctive star emblem for the AAPA. Hiram Ira Swindall, the designer, explained his choice of symbols: "The star in the design suggests that AAPA stands alone, independent of all similar clubs and their nefarious practices."

The first application for membership came in during the formation period—and ironically, it was not that of a Crusader. Clarke W. Walton, of Monroe, N.C., became technically the first member. He printed *Mannettism* until his death in 1938.

Although the American was not set to begin official operation until Jan. 1, 1937, the heady enthusiasm of the founders was too much.

First papers to bear the AAPA emblem and open affiliation were Robert Price's *Modern Amateur* and Williams' *Amateur Giggles*. They were distributed in September, 1936—accounting for the fact that September is now considered the founding month and is so celebrated 25 years later.

Seldom has amateur journalism witnessed such a fired-up wave of enthusiastic activity as characterized the American Amateur Press Association during its first year of operation.

The Crusaders had assembled some 30 members by Jan. 1, 1937, and had elected the first official board. Both Robert Price and Karl X. Williams wanted to edit the official organ, but Kay diplomatically suggested that Williams' press was in better shape for the big printing chore. So Price settled for the presidency.

George Henry Kay shouldered the mailing duties on a monthly schedule—and went about making sure the bundles were solid.

Burton Crane, an astute observer of amateur affairs who had just returned from Japan, was among the doubters standing on the sideline to "listen eagerly for the soft 'plop' with which the AAPA falls to oblivion."

But the infant association stirred up such a clatter of activity that Crane soon ate his words and joined the new group, too. On a later occasion he recorded what happened:

"In 1937, the first year, George Henry Kay put out 19 issues of nine papers (not including those printed for others), Jim Francis did 16 of four papers, Bob Price nine of five, Wilson Shepherd seven of

three. Ten members turned out 79 issues of 36 titles containing 435 pages . . ."

It was the energy of the obsessed! For the zeal of the founders was unsurpassed, as the young printers proved to one and all that their crusade had not been in vain.

Disaster almost washed out the endeavor before it was a month old. On Jan. 27, 1937, an Ohio River flood struck Portsmouth, home of Official Editor Williams. He was evacuated in a row-boat after sticking the box containing the first *American Amateur Journalist* in the rafters over his attic.

The lapping flood waters stopped short of that little box which was so vital to the toddling AAPA. A month later, first copies were mailed to an eager membership.

Williams was able to print one more issue before having to bow out as editor in the aftermath of the flood. George Henry Kay filled in and finished out the year.

And what a year! Altogether 196 papers were published. Five enthusiastic issues of the official organ were circulated, topped off by a 16-page Year Book. There was even \$20 left in the treasury.

Membership had zoomed up 400 percent to 129. Included among some of the recruits were Wes Wise, Bob Kunde, and Bruce Smith.

The impact on the world of amateur journalism had been electric, for the old maxim of failure for any third group had been disproved. The first—and most difficult—hurdle was overcome.

Price won a second term as president, winning over Alabaman Wilson Shepherd in the election that December. Prospects were bright for more bounding enthusiasm in 1938, but the pace began to weaken.

James Francis, who had won plaudits for his well-printed *Dakota Dust* during 1937, took over as official editor, vowing issues of at least 12 pages. He was able to produce only two numbers of that size before illness hampered his efforts. Two more issues of eight pages each were all he was able to turn out before he was stymied by stomach trouble.

Four at First Convention

In mid-June, AAPA held its first convention in Chicago. Only four members attended—Bob Kunde, Bruce Smith, Harold Smolin, and James Francis. They set the trend for conventions to follow—no official business, lots of conversation.

A proposal to amalgamate all three

amateur press organizations—with a semi-professional national headquarters—stirred a hornet's nest of opposition among sovereignty-conscious AAPAns. Two stalwart advocates of the plan, Walter Ward Hamill and Wilbur Close, were so stung by the outspoken opposition that they withdrew from activity.

Officers were unable to continue the high-tempo activity that had set the pace previously. Younger printers Bob Kunde, Wes Wise, Bayard Oxtoby, Walter Hoxie, and Harold Smolin carried the load with buoyant publications.

Business setbacks in later '38 were felt with a diminished rate of activity which carried over into 1939 when a listless election put the ailing Francis into the presidency.

As the new administration got underway, there were signs the youthful group might be running out of steam. For President Francis was unable to pan out—his silence began to alarm insiders. Worrying over the lack of leadership, the founders discovered the North Dakotan actually had been elected after his membership had elapsed!

This provided the technicality necessary for removal, and stalwart George Kay stepped into the breach once more. He was named president because he had received the second highest number of votes.

With the lack-of-leadership deterrent out of the way, AAPA popped back with its first full-fledged teen-age activity upsurge. Hempstead, Long Island, became a hotbed of youthful press prodigies, led by one William H. Groveman.

A Metropolitan Chapter merged Long Island talents with those in Manhattan and New Jersey. A tall Weehawken girl with all the vicaciousness of a high school cheerleader (which she resembled) threw her full energies into action. The initials HAV soon became well known as those of Helen A. Vivarttas.

The Metchap sponsored the 1939 convention in July, dangling the World's Fair as an added incentive for attendance. It was a decided success, with several dozen in attendance.

Meanwhile, Midwesterners were organizing on a state level. The Michigan Majors and the Wisconsin chapter began vying for the 1940 convention. Under a compromise agreement, Milwaukee won the affair, with Detroit scheduled to get the 1942 confab (a bargain which World War II prevented).



George H. Kay
(1955)



Robert H. Price
(1950)

FOUNDING FATHER,
FIRST PRESIDENT

FIRST CONVENTION: CHICAGO 1938



Harold Smolin Bruce Smith James Francis



Above:
Charles Lee Riddle, Vivian
Chatfield (Swindall), Louis
Woods, John Vaglianti

Left: Clinton Folin Right:
Michael Phelan

(All photos 1937-44)



Parker Snapp



Frank Miller



Erich Werner



Charles Hoye



1942 CONVENTION: Left to right, front: John Bradley, Willard Smith, Elmer Gabaree, Vincent Haggerty, Robert L. Smith, Jr., Michael Ryzuk. Center: Felicitas Haggerty, Burton Crane, Walt Strombach, Helen Vivarttas (Wesson), Sheldon Wesson, William Holton, guest. Rear: Jane McCarthy, Albert Lee, Elizabeth Nelson, Paul Jackson, guest, Norman Levine, William Haywood.

President Kay published his *American Journal* at regular intervals, and Price (now official editor two years after his original ambition) turned out the full quota of six *AAJs*, hand-set and in two colors.

A combined year book for 1938 and 1939 underscored the solidity that had been achieved. It contained a number of names of new members who figured in AAPA affairs for years to come: Clinton Folin, E. H. Gabaree, Jr., Norman Levine, Robert Smith, Alonzo Leonard, and Frank Lodwick.

The vivacious Miss Vivarttas charmed all the boys with her competency as critic and manuscript manager. She was elected overwhelmingly to head the association in 1940.

Her coeditor in publishing the *American Dawn*, Erich Werner, of Michigan, wound up as second vice president, and

Kansan Wes Wise became official editor.

With these dynamic young people at the fore, AAPA swept forward to its first full-fledged boom. Membership vaulted up to 250, and the bundles were crammed with papers.

Many of the journals were modest efforts, printed on colored newsprint in "thumbnail" sizes, but they effervesced with the excitement of youth.

The so-called "Cinderella man" of the year was the son of a Texas newspaperman, Ralph Brandt, and his personality took the spotlight before the year was out.

State chapters continued to generate activity, with the Wisconsin group sponsoring the Milwaukee meet that summer. A radio program and a cruise on an excursion boat provided new twists to the regular routine—and there was a properly appreciative delegation in attendance.

The association's first feminine presi-

dent did her best to stimulate interest in improved writing and printing through exhortative messages in the official organ.

And she sounded a defiant "Don't Tread on Us" policy towards the National and the United at the outset. AAPA's assemblage of remarkably assertive young talent had attracted the attention of recruiters in the older groups. They were put on notice to keep their ajay-pickin' hands on their own side of the fence.

(The concern over recruiting raids from NAPA was not simply a bugaboo drummed up to create "loyalty" in the face of outside opposition. The picking off of AAPA prospects by National recruiters was very real, indeed. Within a month after my name appeared as a new member in 1942, I had received a packet of NAPA material—along with an application blank—from Edwin Hadley Smith. What irritated AAPA officers in particu-

lar was the fact that the younger association was doing the arduous legwork of finding new members previously unaffiliated with any group. Just when they joined and appeared interested in activity, the NAPA would dangle an invitation to "try greener pastures." What the chagrined AAPA leaders in the 1940's failed to ascertain about the problem was this: Their flailing at outside recruiters didn't beat them off. The approach should have been redirected to an internal solution—bolstering activity within the association so that outside entreaties lost their allure.)

This was a period when the AAPA membership list was jealously guarded for fear the rival recruiters would raid the most promising prospects.

So when George Trainer printed the entire list in his NAPA-oriented *Brooklyn Sun*, consternation crackled. He narrowly escaped being booted out by the board of directors.

One Kenneth Francis Weiser figured in the news, too. As the official organ noted, "President Vivarttas has asked for the resignation of Ken Weiser as president of the Pennsylvania chapter, because of his announced plan to change this AAPA chapter into National affiliation and control."

It was some years later before Weiser apologized, returned to AAPA, and resumed activity.

The American's exuberant juveniles jumped the gun on electioneering in 1940, soliciting votes as early as June for the election in December.

It seemed a natural consequence that scholarly Erich Werner should follow his coeditor into the presidency in 1941. Backed by the strident Michigan chapter, he won over Michael Phelan by a vote of 64 to 51.

Wes Wise was reelected official editor but promptly resigned. The new president named his election opponent, Mike Phelan, to handle the official organ. Although hampered by late printers, Phelan did a top-ranking job filling the 60-page volume with pertinent material.

The reactive slowdown that followed the frenzied pace of 1940 was not helped by the new president's virtual retirement at mid-term. He wrote that community duties were taking all his time.

Many of the "fly-by-night" recruits of the previous year failed to sustain their meteoric flings in amateur journalism and dropped out.

Texan John Vaglianti decided it was

time to purge the association of NAPA subversives in the recruiting field. He called a series of "investigations" and led a movement on the board of directors which resulted in the ouster of Edward H. Cole.

Cole had committed the sin of paying the dues for several teen-agers in the American who were inducted into the National as well.

The brusque treatment of one of the hobby's most respected members brought a kickback when Bill Groveman bowed out, too. He said he was disgusted at the board's action.

The 1941 convention was held in Houston, but nobody attended but Texans. They made up for the lack of out-of-state delegates with a goodly crowd and a full program.

Although quantitatively, activity simmered down, better journals were in evidence. Printed papers showed more attention to typographical details, and they were larger.

Bob Kunde's *American Banner* hit its zenith, Bill Haywood's *Topix* was a slick literary publication, the *Texas Star* put Johnny Vaglianti on the map, the Weaver Brothers' *Amateur Quill* scored its points sharply, and *Northern Lights* emanated from Wisconsin.

The attack on Pearl Harbor cast a pall over the association, with a good many doubts being expressed that it could weather the storms of war.

"Our nation is at war, and the activities of our association thus appear trivial, but I am sure many of you feel, as I do, that we must preserve as much normality as possible."

The words were William F. Haywood's, and they appeared in the *American Amateur Journalist* for February, 1942. He was newly-elected president of the American Amateur Press Association, assuming office a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

A slender-faced artist on the New York *Daily News*, Haywood provided the cool competence needed to hold things together at a time when many of the hobby stalwarts were leaving civilian life.

Another solid source of strength was Michael Phelan, the "Connecticut Yankee" who edited *AAJ* like clockwork, cramming every inch with useful material.

Almost immediately the new official board plunged into the tedious task of overhauling AAPA's five-year-old constitution. There were grammatical weaknesses

and offices which experience had proved could be eliminated from the original document.

By round robin, a new version was honed to the satisfaction of a painstaking committee working from a meticulous draft prepared by Secretary Linton Clark. At year's end, it was submitted to the voters. Major change was the switch to a new fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 in 1943—instead of the traditional Jan. 1 kickoff.

As the year rolled on, the call to the colors cut into active ranks, lopping off Bob Kunde, Wes Wise, Sid Cohen, Joe Curran, Sheldon Wesson, Walt Strombach, and E. H. Gabaree.

There was a fortunate infusion of teenage talent like Dean Rea, Jim Sellers, Lee Hawes, Roy Lee Barron, Jr., Ed Wall, and Paul Jackson. Several of the newcomers were members of a "Florida Boy Editors Exchange," ready-made amateurs.

Gordon Rouze, of Imperial, Neb., kept up a steady stream of *Chimes*, while Charles Lee Riddle set the pace for the mimeographers with regular issues of *Fort Smith Ajayer*. George Kay commented frequently in *Kaynotes*, and President Haywood's *Topix* provided a well-printed variety of content.

Karl X. Williams and Del Forkey, charter AAPAns, returned to activity after several years, and an off-beat journal on kraft paper kept members light-hearted. It was Mailer Robert Maney's *Pied Type*, featuring the "Wacky Wabbit" from Moylan, Pa. Another whimsical paper was the anonymous *Haranguer*, which poked fun at members.

One of AAPA's most successful conventions was held at Hempstead, Long Island, in August, the last organized get-together possible during World War II. More than 20 members fraternized at the informal affair sponsored by the Long Island amateurs who had taken the lead from Bill Groveman. The Smith Brothers—Bob and Willard—and the Jackson Brothers—Paul and Bill—along with Norman Levine and Tom Erhard were some of the most active.

Major tragic note of 1942 was the death in January of one of the AAPA founders, Francis W. Miller, of Massachusetts. He was a workhorse, handling prospects attracted by ads in *Open Road for Boys*, then the American's No. One recruiting source.

Membership had sunk to 132 at mid-year, but strenuous recruiting brought the total back to the vicinity of 200 as George

These Are Some of the Titles that Sparked the Early Years

H. Kay was elected president for the shortened January - through - September 1943 changeover year.

Agreeing only to serve "as long as possible," Kay nevertheless began confidently enough. He called for "business as usual" despite wartime sacrifices and vowed the association would survive.

Kenneth Kulzick, editor of thoughtful *Trouvere*, took over *American Amateur Journalist*, and the official organ suffered in appearance. It was commercially lino-typed for the first time, and the result was esthetically disappointing. Kulzick kept the content adequate, however.

Mailer Karl X. Williams stuffed bundles and rolled out bright issues of his *Wrong Font* until called into service. But his wife carried on without fanfare, handling the chores until the end of his term.

But the official board was soon riddled with resignations, and the gloom didn't help activity. By June, George Kay resigned as president—and almost a third of the official board had quit. The first vice-president, the historian, and two directors had to be replaced.

Helen Vivarttas stepped back into the top spot and immediately countered the trend downward. She appointed as many officers as she could round up and struck up the band.

Her remedy for revitalizing the big chunk of membership in the Armed Forces was a group known as "American Ajay Hostesses"—AAPA's version of the USO girls.

They went to work enthusiastically writing letters to AAPA servicemen and encouraged whatever amateur activity was possible between such matters as KP and calisthenics.

The spunky gal from Weehawken, N.J., turned the tide again. She won election by a rousing vote for the new 1943-44 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

She promptly took another important step and married her *Siamese Standpipe* co-editor, Sheldon C. Wesson. This meant she couldn't be a "stay-at-home" AAPA president, for Wesson was in the Army.

Helen followed him from base to base, keeping up a steady stream of correspondence and publishing all the way. With emphasis on wartime participation, she promote *GI-AJ*, a cooperative journal with material written by AAPAns in service. Several issues were successful, and a number of members in the military continued putting out their own papers. The February, 1944, bundle was one-third pro-

duced by AAPAns who were in uniform.

As is too often the case in amateur journalism, some of its most ardent adherents occasionally are plagued by petty misunderstandings that get out of hand and become major issues.

That's what happened in 1944, when several of the founding fathers lined up in opposition to Helen Wesson's administrative approaches.

Several underlying factors were probably involved: (1) Although they'd never admit it, several of the old-timers undoubtedly balked at "female control;" (2) she believed in a loose interpretation of the constitution to get things done, running counter to the "strict constructionists;" (3) appointment of her husband as official editor seemed to smack of a concentration of power that disturbed several of the Old Guardians.

A mixup in the mails heightened the tension surrounding the appointment of Sheldon Wesson as official editor to replace the resigned Ken Kulzick.

Bob Kunde, newly-released from service, had gotten the impression *he* had the appointment, but his letter of acceptance never reached Helen Wesson. Receiving no reply, she named SCW.

George Kay put the case into print before knowing Helen's side of the story, and the breach began. The *Haranguer* soon reappeared—but it was no longer whimsical. It shot bitter barbs at the president and official editor.

Mailer Gordon Rouze was accused of responsibility for the anonymous journal, but he vehemently denied any connection. He had been among the Wesson critics after a tiff over supplying a mailing list for publication. Rouze resigned as AAPA mailer in June, was elected NAPA recorder in July.

Meanwhile, Sheldon Wesson was turning out exceptionally meaty issues of *American Amateur Journalist*, including a 24-page recruiting number which was the largest in association history until then.

Even the weighty official organs drew jibes. Wesson was wrecking the treasury, the critics charged. He declared he was spending no more than predecessors; extra pages were subsidized by contributions.

Chairman of the board of directors Linton Clark began regular assaults on the Wesson Team that summer. He centered his fire on a Wesson proposal to raise 75-cent dues to \$1 "to spread more evenly the cost of maintaining the mailing bureau."

Clark insisted the constitution didn't allow the earmarking of any funds for mailing.

The bitterness deepened when Clark's report as chairman of the board was omitted from *AAJ*. Editor Wesson rejected the report because he said it contained Clark's personal opinion, not board action. Clark maintained it was an official report which Wesson had no right to refuse.

It was a long, hot summer which climaxed in one of the nastiest election battles AAPA has ever seen. The over-riding influence topping individual races was whether the association would endorse or reject the policies of the Wesson administration.

Helen Wesson sought election to the board of directors, while Sheldon Wesson ran for reelection against a rather-unwilling Karl X. Williams.

The results were disappointing to the husband-wife pair. Sheldon was narrowly reelected editor, while Helen placed third in the board—not a very overwhelming endorsement.

Embattled and embittered, Helen Wesson had written a stinging message of resignation from the AAPA which was submitted to the *AAJ* before the election results were known, detailing the wrongs and grievances as she saw them.

Sheldon Wesson continued as editor under the new president, Edward Wall, a *Miami Herald* reporter who had achieved quick amateur prominence with well-written *Wallpaper*. He had served as AAPA first vice-president and carried on an aggressive recruiting campaign which had netted 30 new members.

Wall's flair for the spectacular put AAPA into the spotlight in several fields. In September, 1944, his article "Hearsts of the Hand Press" gained national readership in a publication called *Newspaperman*. It was AAPA's first nation-wide publicity.

Wall lined up prominent laureate judges in allied professional fields—Kent Cooper, general manager of the Associated Press; Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*; Lawrence Spivak, Robert St. John, Hervey Allen, as well as Glover A. Snow, president of the Kelsey Company.

With overseas duty imminent, Sheldon Wesson resigned as official editor in February, 1945. Russell Paxton, with an automatic press in his basement, took over the job and began printing colorful, varied issues of *AAJ*.

With more than a quarter of the membership in service, Wall ran up against a perplexing problem—AAPA bundles weren't being delivered overseas. Mailer Irwin O. Brandt had no explanation, and the Army investigated the matter at Wall's request. The affair remained a mystery.

Crown achievement of the Wall administration came with publication of a 44-page Year Book, edited by Paxton and "dedicated to all the American members of the Armed Forces." More than 80 names appeared on the AAPA service roster.

The Year Book contained an historical resume by William Haywood, an account of AAPA members in service by Helen Wesson, the membership list, and the Constitution and By-Laws.

Although the rankling that had tormented AAPA previously had dwindled, the association was not yet free of factional bickering. Ed Wall was reelected president in September, 1945, and within a month he found himself on the frying pan.

It was essentially the same difference in philosophy which pitted him in opposition to the Linton Clark school of strict constitutional construction.

Several developments put a new light on amateur affairs that September. World War II ended with the surrender of Japan, and prospects were good there'd be a grand homecoming of activity in the bundles.

That same month, the United Amateur Press Association of America was split—with a new generation of dissidents claiming to be the "only legitimate UAPA," drawing its heritage from pre-Erford-Noel days.

Anthony De Marco, Haig Anlian, and Meyer Perlmut were the most prominent names in the "new, original United" which drew most of its support from the Jersey City area. They drew sympathetic responses from members in the National and in the American, who thought it'd be fun to watch a new group get underway.

At the United's first convention, De Marco promptly proposed a loose federation of all major amateur groups (although he avoided inclusion of the Erford-Noel UAPAA). He called his idea the "Joint Cooperating Committee of Amateur Journalism," and suggested each association be represented by three members.

Although the group would have no

OFFICIAL ORGAN of the American Amateur Press Association: Left, the first issue, dated February 1937; right, a recent number with cover design suggesting the Silver Spur movement. Originals 6×9 inches.

powers, it smelled of old-time "amalgamation" to wary AAPAns who had long avoided any thing that smacked of entangling alliances.

In October, President Wall made the proposal that the American participate in the cooperating committee with three representatives. In addition, he suggested a joint convention with UAPA in 1946.

After a deceptively calm response, the explosion came in January, 1946. Linton Clark lashed out at the cooperating committee as a new version of the old bugaboo—amalgamation. And he questioned the legality of a referendum undertaken by Wall to determine if the membership favored participation.

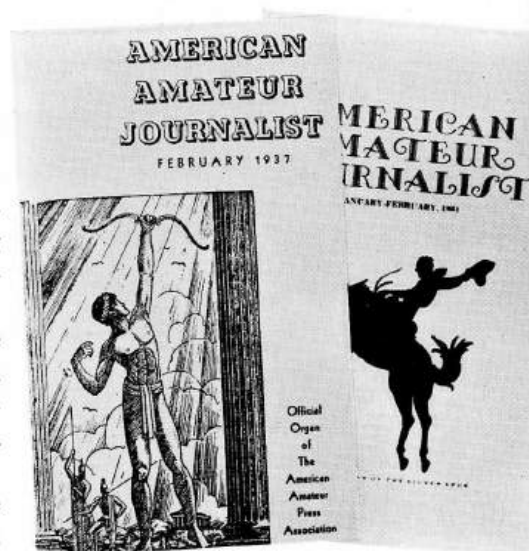
The issue was thrashed around heatedly by mail and in the bundles. Wall ordered Mailer Irwin O. Brandt to print and to distribute copies of the referendum questionnaire in the bundles. At Director Clark's behest, Brandt refused. Clark said only the board of directors could approve a referendum.

The president removed Mailer Brandt for "disloyalty and misconduct of office." But Brandt went ahead and mailed a February bundle anyway, refusing to recognize the removal. Another bundle was mailed by Dick Branch, named to succeed Brandt by Wall.

Disgusted by the legalistic maelstrom, Wall resigned as AAPA president Feb. 15, 1946. First vice-president Leslie Boyer, 17 years old at the time, decided to step aside as his successor. Second Vice-President Ray A. Albert then became Acting President. Relative calm returned to the association.

Albert let the referendum ride, and the Joint Cooperating Committee soon went into limbo. Several issues were left hanging unsettled by vacancies on the board of directors, but Albert left the positions unfilled intentionally so the association would have a breathing period.

Despite all the fireworks and frequent complaints of the bitter bickering, activity boomed in the American. Service members returned in droves, and new names popped out with bright journals every



month. Blockbuster bundles of 20 and more papers became regular occurrences.

Monthly publication schedules kept a steady pace of journals flooding the membership—and several of these were linotyped papers. Jim Lemon's *Lemon Drop* used type from his neighborhood newspaper, but W. Don Wible and Jinks Leckbee used newspaper machines to tap out their journals in Southern Illinois.

The first concentrated effort to regain former members took place when addresses were printed in *Gator Growl*, a mimeographed monthly. A number of old-timers rejoined.

The record activity pace led to a heightened interest in AAPA's first post-war convention, held jointly with the United in New York City.

It was here, in a tense hotel meeting room, that face-to-face debates helped thrash out the issues that had kept the organization in turmoil. Linton Clark, Helen Wesson, Floyd Ackerman, and Michael Phelan were participants in the discussions.

A "constitutional clarification committee" evolved from the spirited talks, with Linton Clark and Floyd Ackerman (two antagonists) named members with Lee Hawes as a neutral.

They were urged to straighten out the election technicalities which had provoked much of the year's verbiage (primarily on the question whether the president could appoint an officer when no winner emerged in an election). Several amendments resulted which were adopted the following year.

As the year ended, it was announced that a record number of amateur journals had been published in AAPA during

1945-46. The figure—311 papers—still stands as the outstanding accomplishment of AAPA's most hectic year.

(The following portion of this account, covering 1946 to 1951, written by Lee Hawes, is reprinted from the issue of *American Amateur Journalist* in which it originally appeared.)

October, 1946 found the 10-year-old American Amateur Press Association robust, rambunctious, and "ready-to-go." Despite a foregoing year of internal disputes, peace had been declared at a New York City convention roundtable, and the organization had chalked up a record 311 amateur journals.

Winner by a whisker in a three-cornered presidential election was Russell L. Paxton, Roanoke, Virginia, who emerged the victor over Robert E. Kunde and Floyd Ackerman in a rough and tumble battle.

Publishing zoomed forward at almost as great a pace as before. A new set of faces came to the front, replacing 1946's Linotype brigade—Don Wible, "Jinks" Leckbee, James Lemon, and James Sellers.

Bundles bulged instead with papers from the humming press of Wes Wise, Johnnie Vaglianti, Rolfe Castleman, Fred Beyer, Stan Buchanan, Emerson Duerr, and Dean Rea. John Dow made his bow into amateurism with superbly creative numbers of his *Attic Press*.

The largest volume of *American Amateur Journalist* ever published came out under the editorship of Lee Hawes, Jr., with a 32-page yearbook edition bringing the year's total to 96 pages. It went in heavily for news, criticism, and history.

Twenty amateurs assembled at Paxton's home grounds in Roanoke for a folksy get-together in the late summer, and 23 more gathered in Chicago two months later.

Political activity of 1947 contrasted that of the previous year. Little attention was paid to bombastic "Brief Robert," who hurled charges at the president and proposed drastic changes in the organization's setup. Paxton went back in with a 100-vote margin, and Bob Kunde became official editor, dealing with contemporary affairs primarily.

Membership sagged from the 250 mark set late in 1946, but a large group of homeless amateurs from the defunct (but later revived) United Amateur Press Association of America helped to swell the list again. Secretary John Vaglianti plugged a recruiting campaign, and soon there

were more than 300 members on the list.

A mixed reception greeted Dr. Clyde Noel, deposed chieftain of UAPAA, who was held personally accountable by some American founders for abuses existing in that group at the time they split away from it. His proposal for consolidation of all amateur organizations did not popularize him either, after he submitted his application. But it was soon realized that Noel's days as a "menace" were over, and his entrance was eventually approved by directors.

Thirty amateurs attended a "jamboree" in Philadelphia on Labor Day weekend, 1948, climaxing the two Paxton administrations. The Roanoker was presented with a gold cup paying tribute to his "service and sacrifice" as chief executive of the organization.

With the emergence of Wesley Wise as president in the 1948 election, a new objective was charted. "We should certainly use our free press to create new and better forms, new and better thinking, new and better graphic art," he declared in his initial message to the membership.

Wise's own journals reflected a keen desire to break away from the orthodox ruts of tradition, typographically and sometimes editorially. Several months after he assumed office, a passing remark about Christianity stirred an undercurrent of comment from some amateurs.

Then in January, 1949, "Faith or Facts," a tract advocating atheism, appeared in the bundle, written by AAPA member Florence Van Swearingen and distributed from the Freethinkers of America. President Wise felt that mailing it through the bundles was justified by reason of the free press principle.

The gap widened between him and a group of members who maintained such material should be barred outright from AAPA mailings. A middle group objected to the pamphlet only because of its obvious non-amateur journal status.

The Chicagoan decided by April to resign. He released a statement which indicated his dissatisfaction with the turn of events: "It was found that my intense campaign for higher literary and typographic work, as well as my own personal religious views, resulted in considerable friction among a large number of AAPA members. I sincerely believe this friction resulted in a decline of publishing activity, and I feel that my resignation is for the best of the association . . ."

Ray Albert advanced to the presidency

in a relief role for the second time in three years, while Johnnie Vaglianti remained official editor. Vaglianti set a high standard for content in the organ, at the same time turning out some excellent issues of his *Texas Star*.

As convention time approached, Charles W. Heins and Edward F. Daas of the UAPA and United Alumni Association, let it be known in no uncertain terms that they considered AAPA's meeting an intrusion on the United's "traditional" Labor Day weekend.

What's more, they moved their own convention from Philadelphia to New York City, already chosen as the American's site, in an apparent show of strength to see who was entitled to it.

Both associations met simultaneously in hotels about six blocks from each other. United claimed a "most successful" conclave, and 45 members signed the AAPA register to make the New York convention the biggest yet.

United's claim of "priority" for the Labor Day weekend was disputed when it was pointed out that during the 1930's UAPAA met on the Fourth of July—National's "traditional" weekend. As a result, both AAPA and UAPA continue to convene each Labor Day weekend.

Bundles of 1949 were characterized by many Brandt-printed poetry journals, but giant strides were made just the same. Johnny Vaglianti printed a 24-page *Texas Star*, the "Virginia bloc" published a 36-page *Virginian*, and Jack Coolidge issued an artistic *Stripling*.

The official board took on a collegiate atmosphere in October, 1949, when Lee Hawes and Rolfe Castleman became president and official editor, respectively. Each was finishing his senior year of college, sandwiching amateur duties in amid studies.

Almost immediately, the new administration became faced with difficulties. Complaints poured in from members who said they had received no bundles for several months from Mailer Irwin O. Brandt. The December mailing apparently reached no one but the president, who was assured by Brandt that all other members had received theirs.

A quick poll soon disclosed that something had gone amiss, so Brandt was removed as mailer and the announcement of E. Bart Beatty's appointment was spread in a privately-mailed issue of *Amateur Parade*.

(Continued on Page 214)

THOSE RUBBER-TYPE PAPERS

By Les Boyer

Whatever happened to those little rubber type presses?

"What rubber type presses?" some of you newer ajayers may ask.

Careful, now. Next you'll be saying that you haven't heard of Mike Phelan, Jim Lemon, John Vaglienti, Gordon Rouze, or Dick Branch. All of those AAPA stalwarts spent many hours as youngsters puffing over those little presses, as have dozens of other AAPA members over the years.

Would you like to hear more?

Well, once upon a time (before television), a not unusual Christmas gift to a young lad was a rubber type rotary press, commonly referred to as a "Swiftset." The gadget was eagerly put to work by many youngsters across the country. The consequent flood of little neighborhood newspapers, school publications, booklets, and what have you, was staggering.

The Superior Type Co. of Chicago made (and still does, so far as I know) the presses, in three sizes—the "Cub," which printed a $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ sheet, the "Swiftset," which handled a $3\frac{1}{2} \times 7$ page, and the "Ace," which could run off 2 columns on a $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7$ sheet.

The usual type face was a 12 point "Gothic;" several other sizes and styles were also available. The type was handled by tweezers from a little plastic case, and set into individual lines or slots. The metal slots were grooved on one side, matching a similar groove in the body of the type, so that the type would stay firmly in place. The slot, once set with type, could be affixed to the cylindrical printing area.

The presses had a throwoff handle, an ink roller, and a handle on the side to rotate the drum, ink the type and pull the paper through, printing it in the process, of course.

The American Amateur Press Association was a "natural" for the really interested Swiftsetter. The makers of the press published an "official journal of Swiftset Craftsmen," the *Swiftset Rotary Printers' Journal*, with names and addresses of many Swiftsetters, along with samples of their work, thereby furnishing a prime source of prospective members.

Gordon Rouze recruited a number of members as a result, including this writer. In turn, I contacted practically everyone

whose name appear in the *Journal* for the next year or two, and must have recruited two or three dozen in the process; a few are still with us.

The heyday of the Swiftsetter in the AAPA was the 1943-48 period. Michael and Helen Phelan ran off several issues of *Nic Nac No* in 1943. Larry Notman distributed several little papers in the 1944 and 1945 bundles. Richard Branch published *Editor's Wastebasket*. John Vaglienti Swiftset (a misnomer, incidentally, as anyone who has ever set a page of that rubber type can tell you) a September 1946 *Global Thoughts*. Ray Higgs was responsible for a May 1944 *Copy Boy*. Stan Buchanan, from up Vancouver way, had a fine Swiftset publication, *Northern Neighbor*, in many of the 1947 and 1948 bundles.

Sixteen monthly issues of *The Echo* appeared in 1943 and 1944. The AAPA managed to keep going despite "Funny-bone Ticklers" like:

A clergyman named Fiddle refused to accept a degree. He said: "It's bad enough to be called F.ddle, without being called Fiddle D.D."

Jim Lemon graced the February, 1952 bundle with a four-page two column *Lemon Drop*, referring rather deprecatingly to his medium of reproduction in the following manner:

Hand-set and printed one page at a time on a 5×7 toy press. 150 copies this issue. All illustrations hand stamped. This should

IN MY OWN HUMBLE OPINION . . .

... the December bundle offered a good sample of amateur journalism in the form of a "copy boy" (see page 53).

PERCIVAL HEVINS TO SERVE AAPA AS LAUREATE CHAIRMAN

Police Candidate Every Office
Perceval Hevins is finally leaving the Academy, scene of his last political speech nearly five years ago. Percival Hevins has announced that he will judge ALL awards in the next AAPA Laureate competition.

All Comments and Criticisms on The Termen Drop for Will Be Welcomed

NIC NAC NO
Vol. 1 No. 2
APRIL 1943

BOOK DONATED

The AAPA Writers' Library
In receipt of a donated book from Roy Lee Barron Jr. titled Journalism for High Schools. The authors are Otto and Mary. The above volume, and any

not be confused with the type of work Paxton does for a living.

Some of us Swiftsetters thought we were in competition with the mimeographers, and that the "mimeosloppers" were on the short end of the comparison. Perhaps Swiftsetting could be little worse than the poorest mimeographing; at its best, however, while it could be neat and readable, it was no match for talented stencil work.

In late 1954 and early 1955 a few Swiftset papers appeared again. Except for that flurry (and the 1952 *Lemon Drop*) none has appeared since the late 1940's. (It perhaps need not be mentioned that there have been all too few teenagers active with any other type of press these years, also.) Obviously, the TV set has more appeal in this modern age than the bedroom printery, where the ultimate satisfaction, though perhaps greater than derived in front of the 21-inch screen, is much more laboriously arrived at.

I ran across an Ace outfit the other day, back in the corner of a nearby toy store. The box looked weatherbeaten, as if it had been there a number of years.

Who knows, though? Maybe some youngster will tire of Huckleberry Hound and Gunsmoke one of these days, dip into a little of that huge allowance kids get nowadays, and pick up that little press. A little printer's ink in his blood would certainly be quite an improvement over cholesterol.

(Continued from Page 212)

First fruits of an advertising campaign aimed at luring new printers became apparent early in 1950. Jim Robertson's *Pi-Plate* led the way, closely followed by Harvey Archer's *Inter Nos*, Milton Grady's *Spectator*, William McKay's *Et Cetra*, Ed Carter's *Walla Walla Whistle*, and Melvin Bagger's *North Wind*.

Most of the newcomers gave vent to their enthusiasm with monthly productions. Spring mailings averaged 21 papers each.

Criticism became a touchy subject, as outspoken Earle Cornwall lambasted weaker sisters and stepped on sensitive toes in his column in *AAJ*. He and fellow critic Emerson Duerr even engaged in a battle of words. Some victims took jibes good-naturedly, but others bridled and retorted in blasts of outrage.

Editor Castleman recalled later: "I have been criticized harshly for keeping Earle Cornwall on the Board of Critic. I selected a Board at the time I thought would be active. Cornwall knows writing and Emerson Duerr knows printing . . .

"But somewhere along the way, they both tore their britches. They started sniping at each other. Instead of keeping on an even keel and attempting to criticize constructively, one became caustic and the other did not even recognize there were papers in the bundle."

Interest Barely Simmers

Meanwhile, the publishing pace slowed down, almost simultaneous with the beginning of the Korean War. A disappointing attendance marred the convention in Washington, D.C., which was, nevertheless, sparked by affable discussions of the hobby.

Interest "barely simmered" in the 1950 election, President Hawes winning reelection almost by default. Floyd Ackerman became official editor, and was soon hustled off into the Navy again, but managed to keep newsy issues of the organ coming without interruption.

Somehow, the old spark just didn't catch during the year, and the membership as well as the bundles dwindled. By mid-summer, it seemed the association had reached low ebb.

Bright spot for optimism was the reinstatement of veteran members Bob Price, Helen Wesson, and Bob Kunde—all of whom became vitally concerned with the association's future.

As the Cleveland convention approached, it appeared that a "grass-roots rebirth"

of the American was needed, after five fateful years.

The downward trend that hit the American coincident with the start of the Korean War was a troublesome cycle to reverse. The decade that followed 1950 was distinguished by a number of luminaries whose stars were in the ascendant for several years, but too often they dimmed and sputtered.

Cohesion and concentrated activity were lacking for any significant lengths of time, although there were notable spurts that sent spirits soaring for relatively brief intervals.

Dips and rises were felt from month to month and from year to year, with the only real advances in activity coming during Floyd Ackerman's first term as president and Milton R. Grady's administration.

Generally, the numerical output of AAPA journals told a tale of gradual decline from the heights of the late 1940's. The first Hawes administration (1945-50) had seen some 200 papers in the bundles, but a severe setback sent the figure fluttering down to 120 papers in 1950-51.

Floyd Ackerman inherited the association's difficulties when he stepped up from the official editorship to the presidency in October, 1951. The treasury was \$80 in the hole—primarily because of an extravagant year book edition of *American Amateur Journalist*. When attendance at the Cleveland convention didn't exceed a dozen delegates that Labor Day weekend, the host hotel reneged on payment of a \$50 ad in *AAJ*.

So Ackerman spent most of his first year trying to dig AAPA out of debt. A member of the association since 1943, he doted on procedures and policies—beginning spadework on a number of approaches which resulted in constitutional amendments.

Ackerman's forte had been amateur politics rather than publishing, and he had accumulated some conservative critics. But he took bold steps to counter the association's ailments, and they were generally successful.

Prototype of the frenetic young executive, the New Jersey president succeeded in retrieving the laureate program which had slipped into neglect. A committee under the leadership of Historian Michael Phelan judged previous years' winners and started making current quarterly selections.

Ackerman set up a stabilization fund

for emergency financial needs, directing that a portion of dues be set aside. The fund helped bolster the association through dark periods ahead.

Able to travel extensively, the busy president contacted several dozen members either in person or by telephone as he ranged the country. He and his wife saw 20 members on a Midwest tour which included a Midwest meeting at Chicago in the summer of 1952.

Through his personal approach and an activity survey, the year's production was boosted upward to 170 papers.

Youngstown Emerges

A key factor in the upsurge was the emergence of Youngstown, Ohio, as a center of activity following the Cleveland convention. Around Margaret Adams, the original member, grew up an infectious group of girl and boy printers. Ohio led the association in number of members—22.

Several outstanding issue of *Siamese Standpipe* put the Wessons back into the publishing picture, and Helen and Sheldon made a cross-country tour en route to Japan, visiting a number of members along the way.

Bill Groveman stirred once more, warning that the "American Is in Danger." He cited the 1951 election when officers were named "more by default than by ability."

A well-attended convention in New York City featured discussion on joint mailings with other associations to stop the duplication of journals. But the trial balloon didn't get off the ground. It bounced like "amalgamation."

Loping along on reduced budget allowances, Official Editor Milton R. Grady personally printed four-page inserts for almost every issue of *AAJ*. His vigorous personality was reflected in his choice of material—solid fare on amateur subjects.

Grady and Ackerman went back into office for second terms in 1942. They were re-elected over an opposition ticket headed by former President Robert H. Price and Frank Egner. But the incumbents got twice as many votes as the challengers did.

Ackerman pledged to continue "business-like" administration of AAPA affairs. He was still plagued by a pinched treasury and promptly appealed for contributions to an addressograph fund.

He began pushing for a "streamlined" official board which lopped off three elec-

tive positions and made two others appointive. A special referendum vote in mid-year thus eliminated the second vice-president, printing and publishing manager, and clubs and chapters manager from the official roster. It made the historian and manuscript manager appointive positions.

Again hamstrung by a tight budget, Milt Grady had to make-do with smaller issues of *American Amateur Journalist* (in several instances, one four-page folio and cover). His material was punchy and enthusiastic, but he noted somewhat sadly in his last issue:

"Ambitious plans fell aborning. Each issue became a *cause celebre* in itself, and only by the grace of the Fates and circumstance did it ever come into being at all."

Grady's own *Spectator* continued to spark the bundles with more ambitious printing every issue. Several issues of Dick Branch's *Twigs* originated from Seoul, Korea, where he was on duty with the Army.

Wallace Tibbetts' *Cornerstone* and Wilfried Myers' multiple printing exercises were staid stand-bys in the bundles, while Martin Keffer's *Martini* cast a wry gleam frequently.

But the pace slackened a bit from Ackerman's first year—with 160 papers circulating.

Groundwork for a mid-decade upsweep was laid at an effervescent convention in Youngstown Labor Day weekend of 1953. The Adams-Kapusta combine did themselves proud with a well-planned gathering that certainly inspired events to follow.

In Ackerman's final presidential message, presented to the convention, he noted the treasury had \$100 in reserve—with \$70 tucked away in the "rainy day" stabilization fund.

Laureates Whet Interest

He referred with satisfaction to the regular laureate contests held quarterly by Historian Michael Phelan, with "preliminaries" every three months whetting interest in yearly "finals."

Secretary Ruth Kapusta, one of the key Youngstown sparkplugs, looked like a "natural" to succeed to the presidency in 1953-54. In the center of AAPA's strongest local club and a steady publisher herself, she received every vote cast in the election that year.

Her presidential paper had a distinctive title, *Gavel Gertie*, and it "rapped for

activity" regularly. Soft-spoken Ruth labored valiantly to instill renewed vigor into the American.

Nice-guy Frank Egner did his best to produce an adequate official organ, but the depression-squeezed treasury held him to four-page issues—with the exception of one issue aimed at indoctrinating newcomers.

A stepped-up advertising campaign brought several dozen recruits into the association through classified appeals in mechanics magazines. Among the names added to the list that year were "Mrs. Lee Simpson," better known as Violet, and Alvin S. Fick, better known as Al.

Girls Start Printing

The Youngstown girls bought presses themselves and filled the bundles with sharp material. Marge Adams' *Midgette* was joined by sister Ginny's *Gin-Mill* and brother Eddie's *Third Man*.

And the feminine president alternated between a hand press and a process called Xerox which duplicated typewritten and artistic material easily.

The *Gator Growl* tackled the question "How Free Is the Amateur Press?" with a 34-page symposium in three colors, the largest publication of the year.

But Grady's *Spectator* was top journal of the year, for the Des Moines dynamo kept driving ahead with issues modeled on Burton Crane's *Masaka* on an almost-monthly schedule.

Output for the year was on a markedly higher plane of quality, but the rate of activity slowed again. About 145 journals were circulated.

A convention at the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark drew one of the largest, most convivial groups over to assemble for AAPA. It was probably the peak of the period when "thrill seekers" from the National preferred American conventions to their own—and often dominated conversation with NAPA affairs.

Several convention papers produced on the spot indicated the spirit of the affair—one entitled the *Jersey Bounce*, the other a satiric *Jersey Trounce*.

A special award was initiated by the board of directors and conferred upon Lee Hawes at the Newark banquet—he was named "Amateur Journalism's Man of the Year."

The year ahead was placed enthusiastically in the hands of Milton R. Grady, the *bon vivant* Midwesterner who had

embraced the hobby so happily only five years before.

Teamed along with him on the official board was Marge Adams, the attractive Youngstown mainstay, who gave the year impetus with a 16-page *AAJ* starter with colorful cover.

The Youngstown contingent was further represented by Ginny Adams as secretary, Ann Kapusta as mailer, Ruth Kapusta as a director, Mildred Steiner (the Adams girls' "Aunt Millie") as historian.

The team soon got the title "Grady's Ladies," and actually turned out a torrent of activity themselves. Xerox-duplicated publications occupied a weighty part of every bundle, and their printed journals put forth pert personality essays.

Grady was elected in a three-way presidential race that brought his selection over Robert H. Price and J. Richard Branch. In his first message he said the keyword of his administration would be "activity," and it was.

In December, "Shy Ann" Kapusta urged the membership to participate in a "Grady Appreciation" bundle—and it had to be mailed in two envelopes. There were 36 journals, including a memento type special edition entitled "Mister President." Grady's personal bundle was prepared by Mailer Kapusta in the form of a 44-page album with Christmas tags on scarlet sheets. It was one of the biggest outpourings of activity in AAPA history for a single month.

Ads Bring in More

Meanwhile, the continuing advertising campaign in mechanics magazines was introducing other now-familiar names to the membership: John Hurdis, John Burroughs, Donald R. Yabush, Ralph Wilkinson, William B. Hager, Gene Warner, and Garey Ahler.

Old-timer Merton Hiatt resorted to purple-hued hectographing to bring out his *Evergreen Review*, and Violet Simpson used a mimeograph for her first *Jayhawk Journal* (soon one of the neatest-printed journals in the hobby).

Conditions seemed to be ideal for massive participation, and the year ended with more than 230 journals going through the bundles. It was the biggest blast of activity since 1948.

The buildup for Chicago's convention at the Graemere Hotel began early, with Marge Adams cramming the July *AAJ* with convention pictures from other years.

SOME REMINISCENCES

By Bruce W. Smith

D. Ralph Brandt was the teen-age son of a Houston daily newspaperman executive when he came on the ajay scene in 1939. Ralph was a slight, blond boy with a pronounced deep-South accent. He had been active in pen-pal clubs and had organized a far-ranging pen-pal group called the Pencoratory society. Ralph spirit-duplicated papers for the membership. He also did some rubber-type printing.

Ralph came to Milwaukee for the AAPA gathering that summer. An evening social event was a lake cruise aboard a long-gone excursion boat. Ralph smoked his first cigar on the cruise and when it was smoked down, ate the remains, ashes and all.

I first met Erich H. Werner when he was a second-year student at a teachers' college in Marquette, Mich. Tall, blond, and wearing glasses, Erich was definitely the student-type. I think his interest in ajay was less from the journalism standpoint than as a medium for discussions of topics which interested him.

Michigan and Wisconsin members both wanted to sponsor a convention in 1940. There was some real rivalry for a time, but Bob Kunde spearheaded a team effort which resulted in holding the meeting at Milwaukee. At the time, Green Bay, Wis., had six AAPA members, which

It was a 20-page number, including a revised printing of the Constitution and By-Laws.

Grady took himself out of the running for another term early in the spring. He suggested Blake Chatfield, George Kay, and Robert H. Price as likely candidates.

In a later message he said, "Many were disappointed that I decided not to run for re-election. The decision was arrived at not through disenchantment or any rancor. Stated simply, there were jobs to be filled, and I went after one that needed filling."

He ran for the secretary's post, and his election was assured.

A rather bitter presidential race took place in the vacuum left by Grady's decision. AAPA's first president, Robert H. Price, had been prodded for several years into seeking the post again, but he had

fortified the local Milwaukee contingent.

James H. Muckian of Sturgeon Bay, Wis., came on the scene while I still was a high-school student, in the late 1930's. I met Jim at the Wisconsin State Reformatory near Green Bay (we both were visitors), when his basketball team—called the Arabians—played a team of inmates. Jim was a competent writer and proved a good manuscript manager.

David M. Gradillas was one of the most unusual ajays I met. He was a Mexican-American who lived in Los Angeles and was a prolific AAPA publisher for about three years. I visited Dave in January of 1945 when I was public information officer at Santa Ana, Calif.

Arthur Robinson of Seattle lived on a houseboat. He dreamed of making a fortune from direct-mail papers, but had more fun out of AAPA. He was active in the mid-1940's.

Bill Groveman and I spent one fine summer day in 1939 at the New York World's Fair. We appeared together on closed-circuit television. For nearly two years, Bill and I wrote each other a letter every day of the week—and we talked about almost everything under the sun, including our batting averages in local

been unsuccessful in opposing Floyd Ackerman and Grady.

He and James A. Lemon emerged as the two contenders for the top post in the September, 1955 election.

Unfortunately, a yellow-sheeted *Expose* thickened the rancor that had carried over from previous political battles between Price and Floyd Ackerman.

However, the board of directors instructed Mailer Kapusta to hold up distribution of the charges in *Expose* until Price had an opportunity to answer them.

This took place, and the membership evidently was satisfied with his explanation of a delay in transmitting funds when he was secretary in 1953-54. For Price was elected president with 51 votes to Lemon's 32.

Results of the election were announced in the September *AJ*—another 20-page

softball leagues. I have not seen Bill since then.

In 1943, when I was stationed at Houston, Tex., I met Ralph Brandt's red-headed sister. I've forgotten her name, but double-dated with her a few times that year when I was in AF cadet training.

I shall not soon forget the 1938 convention in Chicago, with only four present: Harold Smolin, a protege of Charles L. Detrick of Western Springs, Ill.; James Francis of Minot, N.D.; Bob Kunde; and I. I had arranged for a "banquet" at the old Fort Dearborn hotel (next to the LaSalle Street Station). We ended up eating roast chicken at \$1.50 per person in the coffee shop!

Of all those who contributed to the early success of AAPA, the late Francis W. Miller of Holyoke, Mass., probably was directly responsible for gaining more members than any other person. Frank was an early secretary of AAPA and to him went the multiple inquiries resulting from letters to the editor of the "Open Road for Boys."

In the 1940's, Bill Groveman wrote an article looking back a few years to the start of AAPA. I remember vividly his commenting on Karl X. Williams whereabouts in words similar to these: "Where is he today? Perhaps another bum on the mighty Mississippi!"

issue, bringing the size of Marge Adams' volume to 80 pages. Her graphic, fast-paced issues were solid evidence of the heavy impact an official organ can make on the forward impetus of an amateur press group.

A record attendance crowded the Chicago convention, with 49 names on the register. It was notable in several other respects—presidents of the National and the UAPAA were also present, as was AAPA's Founding Father, George Henry Kay.

Grady pointed out, in his final presidential message, that the membership had taken a jump from a "dangerous 109" at beginning of the year to the "ideal 200 mark." And the treasury had risen from a "microscopic \$8.60" to a solid \$240.

Newcomer Al Fick took four laureates in his first year with a best and an honor-

able mention short story as well as runner-up in best journal and poetry categories. The Wessons' *Siamese Standpipe* was designated the best journal.

One-time Lone Scout printer Robert H. Price took over the AAPA presidency in October, 1955—a little less than 19 years after his first election to that position.

"While it has long been one of my fondest dreams to once again serve as president of the American Amateur Press Association, I almost have to pinch myself in order to prove that it isn't just a dream," he wrote.

The forward motion of the Grady regime carried over for a few months, then the momentum slowed somewhat.

The pipe-smoking president promptly launched a pet theory that amateur journalists ought to return to the Lone Scout approach—a "sincere and honest imitation of the professional field of writing and publishing."

Page after page of that year's *American Amateur Journalist* was taken up by tedious arguments over various points of Price's proposals. In his January message, entitled "Amateur Journalism vs. Deathless Literature," the Coloradoan observed:

"From a miniature world of journalism—of fictionists, verse writers, reporters, columnists, etc., we have devolved into a miniature would-be literary clique of essayists, critics, and art-above-all typographers."

Sandor Esterhazy disputed Price's conclusions in an "Open Letter" published in the March *AAJ*, asking what branch of the varied fields of professional journalism he wanted amateurs to follow.

This prompted a two-page reply, "To Mr. Esterhazy, et al," in addition to the usual presidential message in the same issue. Price said AAPA didn't have as many teen-agers as before because it wasn't encouraging them to "play-act" at being "real-live editors, reporters, and publishers."

The presidential pronouncements continued in the May and July issues of *AAJ*—along with a series of how-to articles by Price, "Hints on Fiction." Editor Marge Adams was never at a loss for material that year.

Sparks struck again when L. Verle Heljeson, a National onlooker in the *American*, caustically assayed the situation in an article in the official organ entitled "Catalysts and Carnivals."

Without mentioning names, Heljeson wrote: "I believe the president of an amateur press association should be a strong executive, instead of pontificating platitudes or purveying warmed-over literary counsel."

He went on to say "The American . . . is not a training ground for writers, and its consumption of serious prose and poetry must at best be fragmentary. To expand, it must feed upon itself—upon its own personalities, their ideas and idiosyncrasies, their perambulations . . ."

Price struck back with another *AAJ* reply, "Let's Face Some Facts," in which he placed Heljeson in the category of old-timers in the hobby trying to remake it into "something more to their liking but which in no way is the old-time hobby."

And he said that concern with the hobby alone would ultimately result in "criticism, more criticism, and criticism about criticism."

While all this talk was going on, activity dropped suddenly. Editor Marge Adams asked "Where Did Everybody Go?" Chunky bundles had become slim, although there were still some provocative journals being published.

Wes Wise returned to activity, and his *Wise Owl* was the standout of the year for crisp typography and pungent essays. Jim Lemon published several *Lemon Drops* in the wake of the Graemere affair, and George Kay some notable *Kay-Notes*. Price's own *Lorelei* carried out his own convictions of content—fiction and "professionalized" material.

But Grady's *Spectator* and Al Fick's journals indicated dwindling interest in AAPA affairs. Price had warned of proselyting from other associations, and it was true that the National seemed to be gaining some stalwarts.

Output: 150 Papers

Some 150 papers were published. A repeat of the previous year's lineup of presidential candidates pitted Price against contender Jim Lemon again.

Lemon was a host at the Washington, D.C., convention in September. Becoming used to the role of AAPA's "William Jennings Bryan," he was the target of a "Meet the (Amateur) Press" inquisition by four delegates as entertainment one night.

Price won a fourth term (1937, 1938, and the previous year) in October, 1956, and leftover troubles continued to hound

him. His margin of victory over Lemon was narrowed this time, and the battles had gotten bitter.

Discovery that Price himself had won the short story laureate—and that the president had served on the judging committee—set off a furor at the Washington convention.

Price insisted that although he was a member of the over-all committee, he had "remained aloof" in selections involving his own material. He was backed up by other members of the committee.

But the yelps of criticism that he had committed a "moral" wrong nettled him no little. In his January message, he complained:

"Not since the days of Helen Vivarttas Wesson . . . has any president been subjected to such vituperative and entirely unwarranted criticism."

It seems that after jumping on him about the laureate matter, the critics then took him to task for using *AAJ* space "to air personal opinions."

Although the disputes simmered down, amendments appeared in the May *AAJ* proposing more precise procedures for laureates—excluding members as judges.

The official organ, incidentally, was edited by George H. Kay, who kept it interesting with contemporary hobby discussions and personality pieces on members.

In September, 1956, the membership list showed 244 names—probably the last time it was that long. Secretary Marion Snyder warned, "In view of constant expirations and additions, this list will be inaccurate in a short time."

He was so right. For it contained a number of names of members whose dues had run out months before. And Snyder decided it would be convenient to tuck in their arrears notices along with the election ballots. This procedure drew at least one squawk, since the ballots technically were going to those whose memberships had already expired.

But nobody disputed the election results.

Veteran Bruce Smith, a member since 1937, had been prodded into the presidential race by several friends, and he swept into office with 95 votes of the 110 cast.

Jim Lemon, who set his sights a bit lower and tried for the official editor's job this time, lost again. Wes Wise won by a slim margin—59-52.

The Cleveland convention had drawn 33 delegates, with Charlet First as convention chairman. A paper, *Carter's Little Liver Pill*, was printed on a 5×8 press at some rowdy sessions that were all good fun.

The fourth Price administration had ended with 133 journals, but prospects seemed brighter when Bruce Smith assumed the responsibilities in October, 1957. A successful editor of a national trade magazine, Smith had the experience and drive to lead effectively. He looked upon service as AAPA president as an opportunity to repay the group for his fun in boyhood years.

Wes Wise revolutionized the official organ with clean, one-column typography and led with his chin editorially.

In an analysis of "AAPA Problems of the Day," he asserted the association's most demoralizing problem had been solved with the retirement of the Price administration.

'Problem in Defeatism'

"It was a problem in defeatism," he said, "generated by the renowned Mr. Price, whose heart was broken because the boy printers of the later 1930s were not boys any more."

Wise concluded: "Price's refusal to bend with the changing makeup of his beloved association caused this once-great leader to end his AAPA career in bitterness and hopelessness. His defeatist attitude permeated the association and darkened its whole outlook."

The stocky official editor took it on the chin himself in one of the frankest convention accounts ever to appear in an official organ. Tom Whitbread, recounting the Cleveland affair, didn't spare the reportorial facts. He described Wise as becoming "at midnight, one of the liveliest and most entertaining drunks I've ever known, sustaining the role magnificently into the dawn."

Wise's volume of *AAJ* was distinguished by sharp editing and trenchant talk on all phases of the hobby. Tom Whitbread wrote several critical articles under the pseudonym "Horace Juvenal" assessing the weak and strong points of AAPA papers. There was printing criticism, too, along with descriptions of several members' shops.

Unfortunately, Smith and Wise found themselves bucking an almost irretrievably deepening crisis of calloused disinterest. In March, the president "let off steam"

in his personal paper to blast the members:

"I am both disgusted and disappointed with a large segment of the membership of AAPA—and for once (this is really novel) I am not incensed at the never-active members but rather at the previously-active members who have stopped altogether after having pledged to back us in an effort to get AAPA back on the track to harmony and activity.

"I could name eight members right now who asked me to be a candidate and pledged their support—and I have seen or heard nothing from them since."

Smith said the AAPA couldn't survive if it dozed off any further. He concluded by asking individual members, "Where do you stand?"

The sharp tone produced many an embarrassed apology and pledge to renew activity—but there wasn't any real up-sweep. For another heavy blow hit about that time. Secretary Charlet First had allowed business of the association to slide for several months, but finally resigned at mid-term. When Roy Bitzer took over, he sent out notices, then purged the list of those with expired dues. The July *AAJ* contained the names of *more than 100 expirations*.

The sickening effect of too long a period of apathetic drifting had become startlingly evident. For many former-actives were included on the "lost" list.

The summer of 1958 dragged on with slim bundles, and 20 delegates showed up at the Chicago convention Labor Day weekend.

There it was discovered that election ballots already sent out were incorrect in several respects—they contained proposed amendments which had not been printed 60 days previously in *AAJ* as required; and two offices were listed which were no longer elective.

A new batch of ballots was sent out. Although there were contests for several offices, interest was not fired up.

The Chicago convention had a session described as "unofficial, temper-flared" by Wes Wise in his *AAJ* account. It evidently dealt with the ballot deficiencies and the fact that the earlier ballots had been opened mistakenly by the ballot recorder.

Although there was little written about it, personal animosities were aroused, demoralizing and debilitating the association even more so.

President Smith said later he "got a

stomachful," and Official Editor Wise resigned after being re-elected and putting out one four-page issue of *AAJ*. He, too, said privately, "It wasn't worth it." At least one other member referred to the Chicago affair, resigning "in disgust."

As best as could be pieced together, discussion had developed into harangue and personal abuse. The targets felt it was more than they had to take.

Bruce Smith and Wes Wise started new terms in October, 1958, but both were scarcely in buoyant spirits. Although there was about \$162 in the reasury, Wise's first (and only) issue of the new volume was restricted to official reports.

Seventy-one ballots had been cast in the delayed election, and the year got underway slowly.

"... Wes Wise resigned for varied reasons," it was announced in the January *AAJ*. Actually, he had lost heart that the American could overcome its masochistic tendencies to harm itself every time advances were attempted.

Ken Weiser, who had lost to Wise in the election, was appointed editor by Smith. Weiser, who had been elected a director by write-in vote, resigned that post to become editor.

This action tripped off a year of charges by Jim Lemon that it was unconstitutional and illegal. But the membership at large didn't seem concerned, and Lemon gained no significant backing in his contention. The board of directors ruled the appointment legal. At year's end, Lemon published a 24-page issue of *Lemon Drop* containing all the correspondence he had written and received on the subject.

Lee Hawes, again vice-president, resumed advertising for printer prospects and had a two-color leaflet printed by Ralph Babcock to describe the American concisely.

Activity Picks Up

Activity picked up slightly during the year, with about 135 papers circulating. John Feeney's *Quest* was a notable newcomer, as was Alfred Klinke's *Work-Up*. Old-timers Dean Rea, Les Boyer, and George Kay were represented at regular intervals. Largest journal of the year was a 48-page *Gator Growl*, dedicated to Edna Hyde McDonald to commemorate her 50th year in the hobby. The presentation, a surprise, was handled by Verle Heljeson at the Fossil Reunion in New York City in April, 1959.

Editor Weiser relied on biographical

sketches of members and a few contributed articles for content. He complained of poor responses to his requests for material.

One news item written by the editor aroused comment:

Noting activities of the Amalgamated Printers Association, "a new live-wire group of both amateur and professional printers," Weiser commented:

"The AAPA in recent years has failed miserably to champion their cause (that of printers) or to encourage their active participation in the hobby . . . A warm welcome to the new progressive organization founded on some of ajay's ruins—Amalgamated, the printers' association."

As if this weren't enough to cheer lagging spirits in AAPA, Weiser devoted two pages of *AAJ* space to reprint sayings of Benjamin Franklin "On Free Speech and a Free Press."

The editor also printed a proposed complete revision of AAPA's governing document which he had personally rewritten with some advice from John Hurdis.

It set up a calendar to govern the year's activities and revived the position of second vice-president to handle laureates. New laureate classifications were listed. A reserve minimum of \$50 in the treasury became mandatory.

Despite a last minute appeal for rejection by Lee Hawes, on the basis of grammatical slipups and other flaws, the revised Constitution and By-Laws was approved by the membership, 41-30. It went into effect in July, 1959.

Membership rose from 140 at the beginning of the year to 160 during the second Smith administration, and 131 journals were published compared to 115 the previous year.

While President Smith toured Europe the summer of 1959, election machinery was in the hands of Secretary Roy Bitzer. He encountered difficulties which delayed the distribution of ballots at the regular time.

When a dozen delegates met at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto, for the annual convention, ballots still had not been accounted for. They were eventually sent out—but so late the whole election was arbitrarily delayed.

There were few candidates listed, but somehow a full slate of write-in choices was elected. Joseph W. Curran, a long-time member from Cleveland, was elected president, and Ken Weiser was named to a full term as editor.

George Kay, re-elected mailer although he had not sought the position, had to resign. Teen-ager John Bowles succeeded him and kept mailings going out regularly.

President Curran began his first message with a frank statement: "This administration has had some strikes against it because of the mixup on elections and getting off to a late start. We now have everything under control and are looking forward to a year of activity and fun."

Unfortunately, there wasn't much of either. Curran's leadership was handicapped by his government job which kept him away from home weeks at a time. He was able to do little to stifle the yawns of disinterest.

The *American Amateur Journalist* improved somewhat as Weiser began anew. Bundle reviews, personality pieces on officers, and sketches of new members made the organ meatier. But it was still padded with filler items such as "About the Government" and a chat on writing from Armed Forces Writer."

Weiser encountered scheduling delays, and the final two numbers of this volume were combined into one—for a total of five issues and 47 pages.

Bundles averaged eight papers a month during the spring, then shriveled to a low of three in August, 1960. Only 95 papers were produced during the year—probably an all-time AAPA low.

A move to pump up the membership list by Secretary Roy Bitzer and Bernard Schumacher resulted in a direct-mail campaign to circularize amateurs in other organizations. They rounded up 30 recruits, primarily from UAPAA. Most of the newcomers stayed for a year's look-see, then let their memberships expire.

An effort to attract new writer talent by advertising in *Saturday Review* fizzled, too. The five recruits attracted were hardly impressed by what they found, and they dropped out, too.

It was in this dismal, demoralized state of affairs that the American convention got underway Labor Day weekend in Brooklyn. But discouragement soon turned to hope and enthusiasm, for there the "Silver Spur" idea took shape.

Incoming President Ken Weiser, the only candidate for the office on the ballot, already had been considering a committee to seek the return of as many former members as possible.

Lee Hawes, who had met with Les Boyer the previous week, had been planning to suggest a similar idea—with a

Author's Note . . .

There will be some readers who will question the objectivity of this survey of the AAPA's 25 years. And they will do so rightly, for I'm the first to agree that my own opinions and evaluations have colored the telling of these events. I don't see how it could be otherwise, though.

For when one is intimately involved in the affairs of an organization during 19 of its 25 years, one is bound to have accumulated impressions and positions in the events that have occurred.

All I can hope for is the goal of fairness to the hundreds of members who have enjoyed the hobby within the framework of the American Amateur Press Association.

Leiland M. Hawes, Jr.,

. . . And Editor's Apology

I have despaired of my original goal of illustrating this magnificent article of Lee's with a picture of every paper and every old-time member mentioned. Our collection of photos was sadly depleted by the fire which burned our home in 1954. However, our collection of journals is pretty good, so that we have tried to make up for the deficiency by enlarging that department. Apologies to those who deserve to have their faces recorded in this milestone issue of *THE FOSSIL*, but who have been omitted.

Sheldon Wesson

"core" committee of long-time AAPA stalwarts working to revive the association.

Convention Chairman George Badera, Jr., had left the agenda free for discussions, so the Saturday afternoon session was turned over to a forum on how to attack AAPA's chronic illness.

During the spontaneous talk that flowed steadily for several hours, the group agreed that any recovery effort should be tied to observance of the association's upcoming 25th anniversary in September, 1961.

And in somewhat facetious manner, Hawes suggested the name "Silver Spur." It drew ready acceptance, and it was obvious that the convention had hit upon an approach that could have impact.

During the weeks that followed the convention, Hawes and Boyer contacted George Kay and broached the idea of forming a "Silver Spur" committee on an informal basis, with the three serving as co-chairmen.

Then, with tentative approval from President Weiser, the three rounded up a dozen committee members who were asked

to serve as "pace-setters" in stirring up AAPA activity in the "Year of the Silver Spur."

Members of the core committee were: Ray Albert, Frank Egner, Vernon Forney, Ruth Kapusta, Robert Kunde, Jim Lemon, Russell Paxton, Dean Rea, Violet Simpson, Bruce Smith and Helen Wesson.

Because there had been no announced candidate for mailer, the regular mailing system was slow in starting for the new year. So the "Silver Spur" nucleus decided that a special announcement mailing could give a dramatic sendoff to the idea.

Thus, the word went out in a special mailing from Boyer's home in Hartsdale, N.Y., early in December. It contained several journals as well as the announcement.

Reaction was quick in coming. Almost immediately, the pace of publishing began an upward acceleration. The group had hoped that each regular bundle would be a little bigger than the last—and such was the case.

By May, Mailer Mike O'Connor—one of the activity standouts of the year—was sending out chunky envelopes containing nearly 20 papers.

Another teen-age amateur whose energy gave zip to AAPA's upward push was Edward Carter, a member for only a year or so, who took over *American Amateur Journalist* and instilled new vitality and freshness.

Although the "Silver Spur" core committee took under study several AAPA problems, such as the contacting of new members and publishers, it concentrated on rounding up ex-members.

A "tracer" campaign produced current addresses for long-lost members, and a special mailing went out to invite them to participate in the "Silver Spur" celebration. By late May, more than 30 reinstatements had been recorded—with some of the association's "greats" returning to activity.

With forward momentum firmly established, the group turned its attention on solidifying the American's position. New emphasis was being placed on making AAPA's comeback a permanent affair, not simply a Silver Anniversary celebration.

As the association looked ahead to its annual convention in Washington, D.C., there was revived conviction that the American could fulfill the idealistic aims that prompted its founding.

For the bolstering of actives from all

Early American Antiques

By Helen Vivarttas Wesson

It doubtless came as a shock a couple of years ago to publishers who had been boy wonders in the early days of the American Amateur Press Association, to find that they had now grown old enough to become Fossils.

(Recently, Edgar Allan Martin gave those same contemporaries a second jolt by becoming a grandfather!)

And would you believe it? The AAPA is now old enough not only to have produced Fossils, but to have produced an ex-president of The Fossils!

* * *

"What a whirlwind of activity the founding of the AAPA started! Such frequent, such large mailings we have had! We can't miss the fun any longer, so here is TOPIX. It will be mailed only through the AAPA Mailing Bureau . . ." stated the publisher of the slick 5×7 *Yankee* in the thumbnail first edition of *Topix* dated September, 1937. Later, in No. 12, January 1941, Fossil Bill Haywood editorialized:

"The AAPA was well on its way when our first small press, a well-used, third-hand 3×5 Kelsey Excelsior, found that it couldn't longer restrain its enthusiasm. The first issue was a four-page 3×3½ baby dated September, 1937 . . . In January, 1938, our equipment was just as scanty, but in that month we printed another midget—with a linoleum block and two colors on the cover! In this year we bought a larger press, a 5×8. With additional type to play with, we experimented with printing technique and produced a larger paper in May—a four-page 4½×6.

"1939 was perhaps our most active year, for we did all our own printing, and produced a full quarterly schedule. Three had linoleum block cover designs, and all four totalled 32 pages. The 4½×6 became our standard size . . .

"TOPIX reaffirms now its intention to continue its policy of presenting as good a variety of contents as can be obtained

periods of the 25-year span gave the association new firmness and strength it lacked in previous activity spurts.

Where there had been gnawing doubt in 1960 that AAPA would survive to observe its quarter-century, now there was no hesitation in predicting long, vigorous years ahead in the American.

from our fellow hobbyists, to carry on in the promotion of amateur journalism and the AAPA, and to be as fair, as friendly, and as enthusiastic as possible."

Topix No. 7, October 1939, noted the 300th Anniversary of Printing in Colonial America. Number 19, June 1942, was mimeographed, and so was *Spicy Topix* when *Topix* amalgamated, matrimonially and editorially, with *Sugar and Spice* in 1943.

Topix was tempered with judicious enthusiasm, and succeeded in being "fair" and "friendly."

* * *

Ken Weiser, president of AAPA during this, its 25th anniversary year, is an AAPA-type old-timer—that is, AAPA's early years were his early years also. His publishing for the American seems to begin with Vol. 1 No. 2 of the *Weiser World*, January, 1939. The first issue was a commercial venture with subscription and advertising rates, like so many of the first amateur journals connected with the hobby in its earlier origins. By October, 1939, Weiser had changed his 4½×6 colored newsprint to *American Republic* and added more comment on AAPA affairs and personalities. He later graduated to the slicker, covered, 4½×6 *Pennian*.

Weiser has a quiet personality, compared to his rabidly enthusiastic contemporaries of the period, but he was a spark-plug of Pennsylvania ajays. In fact, he ran afoul of my presidential temper when he recruited the whole chapter into the rival NAPA. Just now, while looking through his *Haven Herald*, September 1944, I read for the first time "this public apology to Helen for my foolish actions a few years back; also to the local members since I was at fault for their chapter receiving the public disfavor of the mother association." (Now there's a man to respect; one who will admit he's wrong is a courageous rarity in this world.)

We met Ken en route to a visit to Bob Holman's printshop nine years ago . . . stopped at his door, announced ourselves, exchanged a few words, then Ken went back to his television, and we went on, adding another ajay friend to our "Have Met" list.

* * *

Fossil Burton Crane is best known in AAPA for his remark in *Masaka*, April

1937: "I . . . will listen eagerly for the sort 'plop' with which the AAPA falls to oblivion." But by the time Fossil Editor Sheldon Wesson entered the ajay scene in 1941, Crane was urging him and other recruits to join both associations for "twice as much fun."

Fossil Gary Hantke, "the high and mighty potentate behind the pages of the *Grapevine*," began his career as a printer in 1936, "when he traded his home chemistry lab for a printing press and two fonts of Caslon," according to his autobiography in the first *Grapevine*. By Spring 1940, he had "accumulated a grand total of eighteen more or less usable fonts . . ." (In a recent tape recording exchanged between the Hantkes and the Wessons, Gary mentioned that he has now literally a "bathtubful of type" and all the equipment of the professional shop he purchased for hobby printing, an enviable lay-out.) The *Grapevine* revealed then, in 1940, the meticulous printer which Gary still is, since his three issues I have rank high among those of his contemporaries.

A flash bulletin also in the Spring 1940 *Grapevine* states: "Dr. E. G. Wulling, La Crosse's professor-printer, has now established his press room here and will soon publish for the AAPA. His first amateur publication was issued nearly 25 years ago." I cannot find evidence that Fossil Wulling did publish for AAPA bundles, but I know that his interest in printing persists, and his friendship with Hantke, for we visited his printshop in the same tape recording.

The *Chimes* is typical of the success story of AAPA printing. Fossil Gordon Rouze wrote of his first year in AAPA: ". . . and what a year. The first three months I was about as active as a dead dog. My first paper appeared in the May bundle. Since May, I have printed and edited, with the exception of part of the November issue, seven issues of The *Chimes*. The first four issues were printed on a 3×5 Kelsey and the last three on an 8×12 Gordon."

Also typical of many amateurs were his difficulties in moving that 8×12 to his home, which resulted in a welding job. His first thumbnail is undated, his second dated June 1941, and the larger *Chimes*, September, of the same year—rapid progress. By 1942, he had graduated to the 5½×8½ section of our bound volumes. The *Chimes* is also typical of AAPA pa-

pers of early years in that it reflected the views of the publisher on AAPA topics and journals, besides a variety of short contributions from other members.

No reminiscing of old AAPA days could be complete without mention of the *American Banner*, printed by Fossil Bob Kunde. Starting with a thumbnail in January, 1938, and the numerous little heartbreaks suffered by a novice printer isolated from his kind, the Michigan farm boy soon graduated into his 4½×6 and 6×9 sizes. His ingenuous enthusiasm, his loyal devotion to the AAPA, swept his friends—even his family—before him into activity. Bob had many correspondents who eagerly awaited his letters with their round, neat handwriting. In his letters and his *Banners*, Bob boosted the cause of Amateur Journalism in a way that we need today.

He was, for instance, responsible for persuading me to publish, introducing me to my coeditor, Erich Werner, and thus deserves to be God-father of the *American Dawn*.

The *Banner*, on vivid newsprint, was devoted almost entirely to AAPA personalities and policies. In January, 1947, Bob wrote: "This twenty fourth number of our paper marks the beginning of our eighth year of amateur printing. For eight years, we have been putting down on paper many of our random thoughts on our own ajay world, then preparing the typographic layout which meant the setting into words from many thousands of small pieces of metal type and then finally the thrill of distributing our hand press printed efforts to three hundred fellow ajayers like ourselves."

Advocating 100% AAPAism with the quiet subtlety of a brass band, the *American Dawn* was coedited by Fossil Helen Vivarttas Wesson of Weehawken, N.J., and Erich Werner of Michigan. The 11 issues date from Fall, 1938 to Summer, 1941. George Henry Kay printed most of the issues, fondling the brainchild to encourage it.

The first issue was on newsprint, the second mimeographed by Helen. After that it went slick with, indeed, a hand-gilded cover for the December 1940 issue. Kay's own papers were noted for their irregularity of size since he used odd off-cut lots of paper, but after the first three issues, the *American Dawn* remained at a consistent 4½×6.

Each coeditor filled half with what he or she pleased, with the cover page and chief editorship alternating between them. This resulted in a variety of reading matter, and the *Dawn* became an example for other isolated ajays of co-editorial triumph over geographical obstacles.

My share of the *American Dawn* is replete with short fiction, linoleum block illustrations and exclamation points. It wasn't sophisticated—but it was fun.

Fossil Joe Curran is a difficult man to track down through the yellowed pages of our early American heritage. *Topix* No. 11, October 1940, mentioned "the visit of Joseph Curran, Ohio ajayer and publisher of WE DIG." Vol. 1 No. 2 of *We Dig* is a Swiftset electioneering bulletin plugging "Curran for Director." *WD* No. 3 is printed with a cheerful turquoise ink (the printing is Irwin O. Brandt's), and concerns itself with association politics. Our thumbnail volume includes the *Free-Lance Editor*, July 1946, on a postcard—also AAPA politics. It is apparent our collection of his work is incomplete.

The political-minded Curran was also a printer, for there is an item about a 3×5 Kelsey press for sale from the editor, in a Curran-printed paper of 1942.

Not an antique by our deadline, but unique, was the *Bluejacket*, October 1943, "published when time from Naval duties and finances permit and sent to members of the American Amateur Press Association by Joseph Curran, S1c . . . and Charles L. Riddle, Y2c . . ." Curran and Riddle had been corresponding for about a year when Joe was transferred to the same Naval base as his AAPA friend, and walked in to surprise him. Fossil Curran may be interested to know that Riddle is still publishing (for the fantasy press), still in the Navy, with a family.

Fossil Editor Wesson skinned through our 1941 deadline with just hours to spare. His first two-color (red and black on white—very original) *Griddle* No. 8, dated December, 1941, was also his first for AAPA. He was promptly absorbed by *Siamese Standpipe* and the Army.

The United States Customs Office sets certain criteria of time to determine "antiques." The period set for this article was 1936-1941. So the following publications, though associated with AAPA, do not qualify as antiques:

(Continued on Page 224)



FROM the first officially-recognized AAPA Convention, New York, (A meeting in Chicago in 1938 is recognized by some historians as the first convention; see P. 207.) Left to right, front: Norman Levine, Tom North, Helen A. Vivarttas (Wesson), Francis Caliva. Center: Bruce Richard Schliehauf, Edgar A. Martin. Rear: William H. Groveman, Mack, Walter Voll, guest.

Familiar Names In Publishing Ranks

Below:
Alvin Fick (1959), Ann and Ruth Kapusta (1955)



Alvin Fick and Dick Branch (1945) William Haywood



Edward Wall (1945)



Norman Clark (1946)



Rolfe Castleman (1951)



Al Ross (1943)



Elmer Gabaree (1944)



Tom Swindall (1945)



Dean Rea (1950)

Working at 1955 Convention



Front: Fred Eichin and John Hurdis. Rear: Frank Egner, George Kay and Milton Grady



Leland Hawes (1944)



Helen and Sheldon Wesson (1961)



Helen and Robert Kunde (1939)



Joseph Curran (1956)



Thomas Whitbread (1959)



Willametta and Martin K... (1958)



James Lemon (1958) Marge Adams



Russell Raxton (1959)



Emerson Duerr (1958)



Jack Coolidge (1959)



Ray Albert (1950)



Bayard Oxtoby (1943)

American Antiques

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Stripling, by Fossil Jack Coolidge: His first issue for AAPA contained the famous "African Newsletter" by Gloria Coolidge, working with Dr. Albert Schweitzer, as well as the art work which set the 6×9 *Stripling* apart from most amateur journals.

Hoot Owl, Forty Winks, the Tabloid, Political Pot, by Fossil Ernest M. Pittaro: Many of our amateur journals are bound by size, of necessity, and I seem to find bits of Ernie, like many others, in volumes of various sizes. The wanderings of Percival Hevins are chronicled by a 5×8 handpress, but in 1951, the *Hoot Owl* announced the acquisition of a 6½×10 Chandler & Price handpress.

Junto, by Kan Smith: This publication "With Apologies to B. Franklin," had been published consistently over the years, with accent on national affairs, may qualify as an antique. However, *Junto's* affiliation with AAPA apparently started with Vol. 2, No. 3, dated August 1944.

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Sleekest publication in AAPA, and known throughout Ajaydom for its consistently excellent format and material, is *Gator Growl*, published enthusiastically by Fossil Lee Hawes. *GG* started life as a mimeographed paper when Lee was 12 years old. In fact, Lee's mimeographed output from April 1942 to December 1947, comprises a respectable bound volume in itself. The child was father to the man, for his mimeographed *GGs* of this earlier period are thoughtfully laid out, with the neatly margined pages broken up with relevant art work and stencilled heads in many types.

The mimeographed *Gator Growls* are not self-conscious, as printed papers naturally tend to be because they must be so closely edited that they sometimes lose spontaneity. Therefore, *GG* of old, with its variety of offerings—news notes, fiction, comments on association affairs, even travel articles from roving GI AAPAns—make absorbing reading for the researcher interested in the AAPA during this span of years.

Gator Growl grew up with its editor. Fossil Russell Paxton prints the later *Gator* for Lee, but they work closely—Paxton in Virginia and Hawes in Florida—to present to AAPA the results of Lee's

OBITUARIES

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was too much troubled with frustration and disappointment and confusion.

Fred entered amateur journalism during my presidency of the National, 1912-13. He was a member of the Chicago Press Writers' Club; his classmate Brauner Ostergaard inducted him into both the Club and the NAPA. I had brief and intermittent correspondence with him, but never met or came really to know him until he joined The Fossils in 1952 and attended the Reunion.

For several years he came East to Fossil Reunions and twice visited to Boston. In the course of his being my guest, he opened his heart to me and told me much of his personal life. It wasn't pleasant story, but it gave me insight into his nature and enabled me to understand many of his eccentricities and his unsatisfied yearnings in life.

His was a warm but exceedingly sensitive nature. He threw himself ardently into activities that he believed would bring him friendship and admiration. Then some incident would hurt his feelings and he would withdraw. I know that I offended him when I suggested that he revise an article he submitted for *THE FOSSIL*.

I believe that within the past year he had washed his slate almost clean of amateur journalism. I hope he did retain one or two lifelong friendships, for I think he had sought in amateur journalism the satisfaction of yearnings he had held throughout his life, and I would be distressed to feel that he had suffered complete frustration. He was proud of his possessions: his house, his books, his furnishings. To me it is pathetic that life and his own nature gave him overmuch continuing experiments with layout, as well as his editorial ability.

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Omitted from this account of the publishing histories of AAPA Fossils are those who have belonged principally to other associations and who have been AAPA members only nominally, without publishing specifically for its members.

There is one unfortunate but unavoidable omission, however: Martin Keffer, whose publishing history goes back to AAPA's earliest origins. Our files of his *Amateur Offerings* and *Martini* are now in the hands of the binder, and so are not available for reference as deadline for this *FOSSIL* approaches.

disappointment in the warm human relations that I know he longed for. It comes as a comforting thought that he left life peacefully in his sleep.

E. H.C.

FRANK N. COLEMAN

On May 11, the Secretary-Treasurer wrote to Frank N. Coleman of Little Silver, N.J., welcoming him to membership in The Fossils, Inc. Somewhat later we sent Frank an invitation to join us at the APC meeting on July 1. So you can imagine the shock it was to have the invitation returned by Mrs. Coleman, with the information that Frank had passed away June 22 after a brief illness.

Coleman, who was known to many amateurs as "Old Sarge" because of his 20 years of army service, had been an amateur since 1918, when he lived in Philadelphia. He belonged to the Lone Scouts, NAPA, AAPA, and published *File Thirteen* and *Silver Sliver*. In the military publishing field, he edited *Dit-Dit-Dah* for the Signal School at Ft. Monmouth, and *Daily Bulletin* at Fort Totten. He was the author of articles in Lone Scout papers during the years 1918-1924.

Born August 10, 1905, he was married July 26, 1941 to the former Selma E. Olsen. They had no children. On retirement from the Army as Master Sergeant, he was employed by the Quartermaster Corps at Ft. Monmouth as Chief of the Central Food Activities Division. His was a service family, with a brother in the Army, a brother-in-law in the Air Corps and another in the Navy, and a nephew and niece in the Navy.

As a youth, Coleman had worked as a printer, and was anxious to return to the old "pungent odor of printer's ink," as he expressed it. He was dickering for a press when last he wrote to us, but all too quickly Fate wrote "30" to *File Thirteen*.

W. F. HAYWOOD

Unpaid Advertisement

WANTED: Selected old copies of the National Amateur. Will pay any reasonable amount to the Fossils' treasury if a member or members will part with these issues:

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