1950

Carl Hertzog, Printer

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THROUGH THE YEARS since 1937, a small and varied collection of finely printed books has been coming quietly out of an El Paso printshop. “Printed at the Pass on the Rio Bravo” or “Carl Hertzog, Printer, El Paso, Texas,” say their colophons. The printer himself will say very little about their excellences and much about their flaws, for he is a true perfectionist. Then, wary of praise, he adds—Texas accent slowly dragging the words—“Don’t tell anybody I’m good. Just say I’m trying.” These notes, therefore, are a record of Carl Hertzog’s trying.

This tall, spare, nervously intent printer could rightly be called bookmaker to the Southwest, if that title did not unduly stress his regional quality at the expense of his broader absorption in the craftsman’s universal problems of design and harmony. Southwestern items are, it is true, the major burden of his output; but it does not take long to discover that these books have been chosen simply because Carl Hertzog liked them enough to spend his skill to clothe them well, not because he wished thereby to garner up small glory in the frogpond of regionalism. His story belongs among the best of all: it is the record of an artist responding unselfconsciously to the material and the environment he loves because they are one with his

* Printer’s Mark by Tom Lea.
KATHERINE SIMONS

mind and spirit, not because he chooses to parade them as a professional Southwesterner. The distinction is basic—and too often unregarded even by some who scorn the thundering herds of the horse opera. From training under Porter Garnett at Carnegie Tech, through years of work as a commercial printer when fine bookmaking was for him a costly avocation, Hertzog has grown steadily in the craft. Now, in varied association with artists Tom Lea, Harold Bugbee, and José Cisneros and with those two of the Peripatetic Press, E. DeGolyer and Elizabeth Ann McMurray, he has become a key figure in Southwestern book production, still apparently unaware that he is nationally as well as regionally recognized.

He works as he always has: a book or two at a time. He plans with infinite care the type, paper, format, binding. Page by page, letter by letter, he scans the type and husbands the press runs with tireless, critical survey for shadings in the ink, minute imperfections in the weight of imprint of the letters. In earlier days he kept a notebook for each book he printed, in which he filed the preliminary sketches, early and later proof sheets, and all related correspondence. For one book, J. Evetts Haley's Charles Schreiner, General Merchandise: the Story of a Country Store, which he printed in 1944 for the Texas State Historical Association, this correspondence with editor, author, patron, publisher, typefounder, bookbinder, and papermakers ran to over two hundred letters. From these files Hertzog draws a wealth of anecdote, much of it informal and salty, as the author's off-the-record comment happens to run.

Like all good book designers, Hertzog has a lively period sense. The design of his current book, The Journey of Fray Marcos de Niza, by Cleve Hallenbeck, which he has printed for the University Press in Dallas, should not go unremarked by the historically minded. Because the type was most accessible in a complete range of sizes with all the accents, Hertzog set a trial page in Baskerville, with a title in other letters reminiscent of
the English secretary hand of the Sixteenth Century. The effect was good—clear and strong and dignified, a satisfaction to the more than casual eye. But to Hertzog the time was out of joint. "Too British," he says, "too much English Eighteenth Century in the Baskerville. John Bull all over the page, firm and solid." And so the change, to a type more costly for Hertzog, was made. The book now stands in Centaur, a Bruce Rogers design based on the Venetian type of the Fifteenth Century, closer to Fray Marcos by two hundred years, by half a continent of space, by the whole of Latin culture. Its very aspect on the page is exploratory and adventurous. Study the oblique cut of serif, the nervous push of ı and y and h, the chiseled stroke of every line—and picture once again those other letters, cut in rock: "Pasó por aquí." Then compare them with the type upon this very page: Baskerville—and "Anglo."

For the Fray Marcos, José Cisneros, an El Paso artist who often works closely with Hertzog, has provided the hand-drawn titles, in simulation of the old Spanish text letter. The special parts of the book are set in the Arrighi italic, a calligraphic design of Coronado's time, selected by Rogers to go with the Centaur. The use of the type is itself climactic, from the fourteen-point Centaur employed for introductory material and editor's analysis to the sixteen-point for Mendoza's instructions to the friar, to the eighteen-point for Fray Marcos' narrative itself—all enlivened by the occasional calligraphic pages. After a study of medieval papermaking, Hertzog had made to order a modern counterpart of the old medieval antique laid, in color nothing so much as the caliche of the Southwestern soil, in texture tough and interesting, with broken laid lines glancing through as the paper is held to light. The binding was a problem. Hertzog wanted a material to suggest the grayish-brown of the friar's habit. For a time he toyed with a two-color binding, the spine in the indigo which the New World friars were said to have used for lack of any other dye. But the combination was wrong.
he finally chose was close to the later Franciscan brown, and he got it by using the reverse side of the shiny "arithmetic book" cloth which wore so well on our old eighth-grade copies of Wentworth and Smith.

Others of Hertzog's books show the same instinct for harmony. The design of Charles Schreiner, General Merchandise suggested exactly the flavor of an old country store, with the "horse and buggy" type of the chapter titles, the sandy, off-color "dun" paper, the brown ink. For this book and also for Some Southwestern Trails (1948), the drawings by Harold Bugbee caught the rugged, casual spirit of the men and the land. The latter book, printed on Arak Tan paper in Intertype Baskerville, is an eight and one-half by eleven-inch size, the spine on the short side. The story of each one of twelve old trails is told on a two-page spread, one devoted to illustration, the other to a two-column comment, with a simple, dusky-red line map of the trail for marginal decoration at side, bottom, or center page. Here again, paper, type, and illustration blend with subject matter; here the Baskerville may be as Anglo-Saxon as it chooses. For A. W. Neville's The Red River Valley Then and Now (1948), Hertzog ordered from a Rhode Island firm a binding cloth "the color of Red River mud and texture of old homespun." He got exactly that, his order having been filled quite by chance by a Rhode Island ex-G. I., who spent part of World War II in a camp in the Red River area. Tom Lea's Peleliu Landing (1945) is clothed as fittingly in Marine herringbone twill, the combat dungaree cloth.

Two unusual Texas items designed by Hertzog and illustrated by José Cisneros are handsome period pieces. The Journey of Three Englishmen Across Texas in 1568 (for the Peripatetic Press, 1947) is a facsimile reprint, with an interpretative essay by E. DeGolyer, of a little-known narrative from the first edition of Hakluyt's Voyages. The facsimile, which includes the title page of the first edition of Hakluyt, is in offset, Mr. DeGol-
yer's essay in Garamond, closely resembling the pages from Hakluyt. José Cisneros' frontispiece, his map of the journey, and jacket illustration add vividness to the narrative of the three seamen from John Hawkins' third expedition, David Ingram, Richard Browne, and Richard Twide, who made a journey on foot from the Gulf of Mexico to New Brunswick. The paper is imported "English handmade" as is shown in the watermark under the facsimile reading "London, 1589." The cover is a rough gray paper crossed by a few footprints in darker gray ink; and the jacket is especially handsome: a rich terra cotta antique paper with the picture printed over aluminum ink. The deputies

First Great Brand on the Texas Plains

Good brands are inclined to wear well, to persist, to endure. Nevertheless, the exacting of a rough and rigorous environment take a heavy toll on the Western ranges. Hence it is significant of strength of tradition, soundness of management, and quality of cattle that the first great brand on the Plains of Texas is still borne by thousands of heifers.

When Charles Goodnight decided to leave the eaten-out valley of the Arkansas, near Pueblo, in 1875, and quest again

of Christopher Barker, "printer to the Queenes most excellent maiestie" in 1589, gave to the first edition of Hakluyt no more fitting form. El Sal del Rey, by Walace Hawkins, (for the Texas State Historical Association, 1947) is illustrated by Cisneros too, with maps—gold on black for the end papers—adapted from the author's oil-company blueprints to conform to territorial style in cartography. The book is an account of the Spanish and Texan mineral law and the rôle played in its history by the salt lake, El Sal del Rey. Striking elements of the design are the salt-white cover set with a Spanish crown in gold, a handsome title page with coat of arms in five colors, a jacket with the shadowy words and scenes of the old Texas land patent, showing that Texas acquired lands only by force in battle, lingering behind the flashing red of the title. Hertzog's attack here is bold and rich and striking, without any of the garishness which this description might imply.

Carl Hertzog's actual execution of a page can be so-painstaking as to make one wonder if he would not be an easier and more comfortable man if he could possess at least the "tolerance" for error known to the engineer. To watch him at work is to understand that he has no peace of mind with anything short of perfection. He spent endless pains on the Centaur type for the Fray Marcos volume. The capital V followed by a as set in monotype produces the illusion of misplaced space. He had special letters cast, giving the a, for example, a slight overhang to the left to fit up under the V, and "justified" the rest of the line elsewhere with thin copper spaces. Specially cast thin apostrophes took care of what were to him similarly displeasing spaces in possessives. The sixteen- and eighteen-point Centaur had no accents; and since the mats for this type are made in England, he faced a delay of three to eight months before the accents could be cast here commercially. Again, by sawing off the tops of the a's, e's and o's and inserting tiny accents he solved his problem, page
by page throughout the text. He once destroyed a whole first printing for an edition of *The Unpublished Letters of Adolphe Bandelier* (1942) because the impression was uneven. *The Third Hunger and the Poem Aloud*, by Robert P. Tristram Coffin, (for the Texas State College for Women, 1949) was half printed when a vital typographical error was exposed: “Spencer” for “Spender” in a list of berated poets. For the sake of Coffin’s friend Theodore Spencer and Carl Hertzog’s sense for perfection, no mere “erratum” was noted; the correction was made in the text, although four pages had to be cut out of a section by hand, reprinted, and inserted to eliminate the error. But Hertzog’s sense for rightness in a book goes far beyond such exacting accuracy as this. The very building of a book is instinct with it: note the position of the last paragraph of Tom Lea’s *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea* (1944). It is an afterword, actually, and it lies in the printed text where it belongs—all alone on the final page. The casual reader may think this placing an accident; actually it was achieved intentionally by remaking the previous ten pages and inducing the artist-author to draw another illustration.

A survey of the thirty-odd items which comprise the bulk of Hertzog’s output since 1937 quickly reveals the long association between the printer and his fellow-townsmen, the artist Tom Lea. Outstanding are the early items, *The Notebook of Nancy Lea* (1937), *George Catlin, Westward Bound* (1939), Lea’s own *Randado* (1941), then his two war pieces, *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea* (1944) and *Peleliu Landing* (1945), and finally, after the war, in 1946, the beautiful *Calendar of Twelve Travelers Through the Pass of the North*, which had its beginnings as early as 1938. Hertzog’s recent tribute to Lea in the *Saturday Review of Literature* on the occasion of the publication of Lea’s first novel, *The Brave Bulls*, tells between its lines the secret of this partnership: the complete respect of one hard-working artist for
another, a shared understanding of materials which have sunk deep into both men. *Twelve Travelers* is perhaps the capstone of their work. The book is printed from handset Caslon Old Style, on Georgian laid text, the illustrations photo-offset against a tinted background.

A page of text tells simply and directly the story of the traveler pictured by Lea on the opposite leaf. From Cabeza de Vaca to Big Foot Wallace, twelve men who made history through the Pass on the Rio Bravo loom large on the folio pages. The first edition, sponsored by the El Paso Electric Company, was limited to 365 copies. Two editions in offset facsimile on smaller size pages followed, the second of which, in pamphlet form, was distributed to all high school students in the valley of the Pass of the North from Las Cruces to Sierra Blanca.

The treatment of Lea's two personal narratives from his war experiences, *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea* and *Peleliu Landing*, is as diverse as the accounts themselves. The first is a sensitive record of men aboard the *Hornet* in the Coral Sea, gentleness and nostalgia mingling with the tension of a General Quarters. Again design supports the narrative: the corals and blues of the illustrations are soft against the Chinese paper; the old Scotch Roman type is taut and masculine. All the agony and shock of the Marine landing on Peleliu Island are in Lea's other narrative. The black and white of the sketches he drew "before my hand steadied" are stark and poignant beyond the paintings
he later made from them for *Life* magazine. The nervous energy of the Centaur type reinforces the tension of his story: black on dead white it stands, bound in combat cloth. The ruddy words "Peleliu Landing" on the title page and the big initial *M*, a single bloody splash of an opening letter intensify, rather than relieve, the note of battle shock.

To stress the Hertzog-Lea production is not to deprecate the work of Hertzog with other illustrators and editors and for other publishers. Many titles stand out, for example Ross Calvin's *River of the Sun*, designed for the University of New Mexico Press in 1945, which was one of the monthly selections of the Trade Book Clinic of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Many other books, such as J. E. McCauley's *A Stove-Up Cowboy's Story* for the Texas Folklore Society Range Life Series in 1949, might be placed among those already mentioned here. It is a satisfying output to study, in this area so far off the beaten trail of the United States book trade.

Carl Hertzog's latest tangent is satisfying, too. At present he is beginning his third year of part-time teaching about printing, books, and bookmaking at Texas Western College, El Paso. To those who cry out against his squandering of valuable artist's time on the rank and file of students who may or may not recognize the calibre of his product, Hertzog has a mild and diffident defense: "I've always liked," he says quietly, "to tell people about the things that interest me—to show them what I think is good." To him it is as simple as that. An artist-craftsman with his skill and integrity can afford to dispense with academic complexities. It should be good for students to listen to a man with Carl Hertzog's record for "trying."