

Whippoorwill E-Comment

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Blaine Lewis

HOBBY printers are as rare as hen's teeth in Kentucky. Actually, ancient birds had teeth, having evolved from a reptilian dinosaur stock back during the Mesozoic. Most paleontologists agree that all the dinosaurs didn't become extinct in the catastrophic meteor collision at the end of the Cretaceous Period. They are still around, and we call them birds.

In 1969, soon after I had become interested in printing, I encountered a very rare Kentucky bird, Blaine Lewis. I had purchased a Kelsey 5x8 tabletop hand press and was beginning to learn the basic skills needed for printing. Through a Kelsey mailing, I learned of the existence of the NAPA and had become a member. Perusing the membership list, I discovered Ed Tevis and Irwin Brandt of nearby Richmond, who led me to Blaine Lewis, an active hobby printer in Louisville. I wrote him and was invited to visit. Blaine was an oncological surgeon, and dealt with daily life and death situations with his patients. He received a number of phone calls from a hospital during my short visit and gave nurses terse, specific instructions about necessary emergency procedures and pharmaceuticals. I had never been in a print shop as complete and well organized as his basement shop. He was a very cheerful, happy, though pleasantly laconic man. His printing was first class -- nothing amateurish about any of the many samples he gave me. His Christmas cards were

remarkably lavish, printed on laid opulent paper, possessing an understated elegance. We became good and comfortable friends, and he later came to my house to meet a group of my students who were interested in printing.

He was the subject of a sheet I did for the APA *Treasure Gems* cooperative yearbook honoring him and his example. I debated whether I should send him an advance copy or allow him to be surprised when he received his bound copy. I elected to send him a copy, and he wrote a very kind return letter of appreciation, even saying he wanted to hire me as his publicist. I am so glad I sent him a copy because a week later, he died, unexpectedly, at age 82.

My message? Don't procrastinate. Tell your friends you love and appreciate them while you can.



Whippoorwill E-Comment is the electronic journal of J. Hill Hamon, a superannuated avian paleontologist & ornithologist who observes birds and occasionally writes and prints in central Kentucky, a typographic desert. I hope to meet other bird watchers, in Scottsdale, and in particular Gale Mueller who has an impressive life list of birds. He is one of the finest wood engravers in the nation. His Christmas cards are fine engravings which I matt and frame and display in my home. I need to review the Arizona birds in preparation for my visit to Scottsdale in May -- especially the hummingbirds. We only have one hummingbird east of the Mississippi, the ruby-throated hummingbird. There are dozens of species in Arizona.

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