

# Whippoorwill E-Comment



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## A Visit to the Four Peaks Press

I flew to Phoenix to attend the 2005 AAPA convention at nearby Scottsdale and stayed with Craig Alldredge, a long-time former student and best friend and correspondent. Craig is a former career Air Force officer, who now works with the Phoenix Park System. He had traveled all over the world in the Air Force and had, at one time, been stationed at Luke Air Force Base, in Glendale, a suburb of Phoenix. He fell in love with the area and some years later, when he retired, moved into a house he had purchased, and has lived there for nearly 20 years. We visited him a decade ago on a western trip that eventually took us to the Houston, AAPA convention, and I was struck by the beauty of the desert and the city. I was delighted when Mike O'Connor and Greg McKelvey announced that this year's convention was going to be held in Scottsdale.

Mike had written me an e-mail invitation to visit his home and press in Fountain Hills, and on Wednesday afternoon, May 11, Craig drove me out through stunning scenic vistas to visit him. Yes, there is a fountain at Fountain Hills, which could be seen for miles as it sprayed high in the air. I was very impressed with the cleanliness of the area – the uncluttered and clean lines of nearly everything I saw. There were no ugly gas stations or other commercial clutter on the main streets. Such businesses were carefully located in shopping areas that were neatly hidden behind walls and beautifully landscaped desert plants. After the chaotic appearance of everything in Kentucky, these western cities were impressively beautiful.

Mike had chosen a desert gravel for his lawn, and had told me that he raked it once a year whether it needed it or not. His house was a new and spotless adobe style structure. We sat in his living room which commanded a

rugged desert view through rear sliding glass doors. Mike showed us a copy of the infamous *Bull Moose Scarlet Cockerell* by Ralph Babcock. I had seen pages duplicated elsewhere, but had not seen an entire copy. It was a mind-blowing experience – printed on paper towels and toilet paper and other generic papers. We agreed that it took a special genius to create something that was intentionally so ugly and bad!

“Now, let's step back in time 500 years,” Mike announced, and led us through his garage and into a storage room in a corner housing his press. It was a very well organized, one-man shop that I knew to be among the most active in hobby printing America.



Mike's official 8x12 Golding press sits behind him. He prints all kinds of excellent papers here, and his latest project was a book written by Al Fick. AAPA members have trouble printing 4-page flimsies, while Mike produces beautiful books in his miniscule print shop. He is an inspiration to us all. It was a treat to visit the home of the Four Peaks Press – named after mountains we saw a few days later on the way to Greg McKelvey's home in Pine, Arizona, for the post-convention picnic.

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