



Hand-set letterpress: key to creativity

By Cathleen Collins Lee
special writer

THEY BOUGHT IT in the late '60s for \$150. And they had no idea what they were getting into. It was an old, hand-set letterpress. Ann and Ken Mikolowski, part of a thriving community of artists and writers centered in Detroit's Casa Corridor, bought the press to bring contemporary poetry to the public. But they didn't begin to realize how time-consuming and difficult a hand-set press can be.

"We thought we had all the time in the world and that we could do anything. This was the '60s," said Ann, with a laugh.

A little older and wiser, the Mikolowskis now know they can't do absolutely anything, but they certainly can operate a printing press. For the past 20 years, under the name The Alternative Press, they have used the press to publish intriguing, humorous and thoughtful combinations of poetry and visual images in very accessible formats.

A sampling of their postcards, bumper stickers, bookmarks and broadsides is on display now through Sunday, Nov. 25, in the Exhibit Gallery alongside the library at Madonna College, Schoolcraft and Levan, Livonia.

IMMERSED IN an active arts community, the Mikolowskis were dismayed that contemporary poetry often lacked an outlet and an audience.

When they bought the press, they became, in effect, publishers, free to print the art and poetry that they valued so much. They combined their talents. Ken is a poet and Ann is an artist, to print poems and hand them out for free on street corners.

"We figured if we took a single poem rather than a gathering, and if we made it functional and attractive, maybe we could reach people," Ken said.

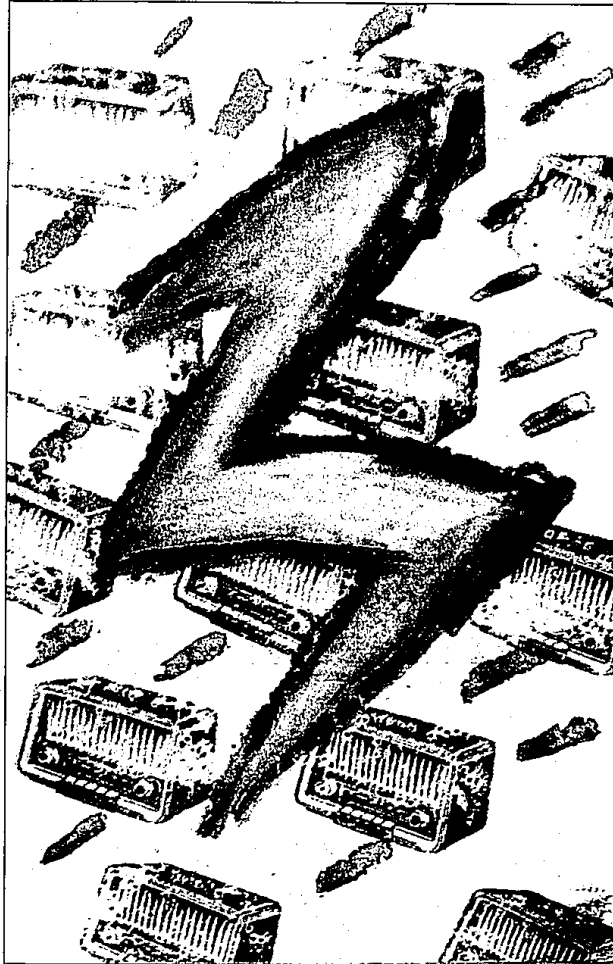
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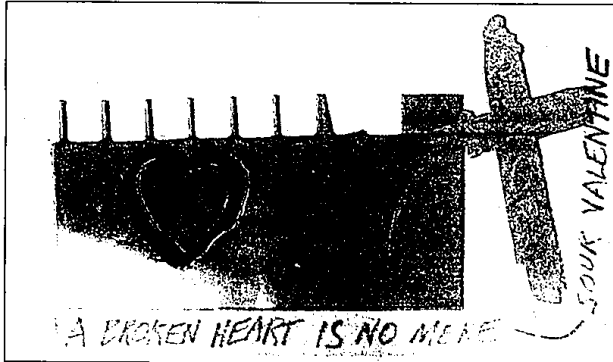
VIRTUE AND ANNIHILATION

Jim Gustafson

Bradley Jones' oil painting, which depicts violence through a car with bullet holes and through a pool of blood and a gun on the pavement, was used on the cover of this poetry book. He's a former Casa Corridor artist.



photos by JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer



Above: This is one of a series of original postcard designs, mixing paint, collage and objects, by Detroit artist Paul Schwarz. He often mixes words with images. Right: New Yorker Sally Young, formerly of Detroit, produced this oil-crayon postcard, also part of a series of original postcard designs.

Appreciate blessings

Dear Readers: This Thursday is Thanksgiving Day, a time to give thanks for our blessings. Things aren't perfect in the world now with concerns over the Persian Gulf, crime, drugs and a slow slide into recession, among others.

But the world never has been perfect and it never will be, and we need to remember that for every negative, there are always many more positives.

Life itself is a blessing, one that can and should be appreciated every day. As you awake each day, be thankful for each breath of life — and for warmth, clothing, food and freedom.

Tell yourself it will be a good day, and then make it the best you can. Thank God for small things like toothpaste, hair dryers, comfy chairs and the morning paper. Have gratitude for hot running water, electric lights, expressways and your car.

Despite the wars, be grateful for the myriad of not-so-small things like a job, insurance, computers, sports and entertainment and stores loaded with every kind of merchandise. Be glad for your family, friends and places to go with your problems like the medical profession, support groups, your church, synagogue or charitable organizations.

For younger people who have grown up with every possible advantage, it may be difficult to really appreciate how much they have and how little so much of the rest of the world has. As Thomas Paine said: "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; 'tis dearness only which gives everything its value."



organizing

Dorothy Lehmkuhl

DURING THE upcoming holiday season, set aside a little time to share something of yourself with others less fortunate. Contribute to one of the many organizations that provide holiday dinners to the needy.

When you are part of a large family group, it's easy to forget how lonely others may be. Perhaps you could invite an extra person or two to join your own gathering, even if they aren't your favorite people.

If you're afraid you'll be lonely on Thanksgiving Day, and are able, get off your duff and do something for someone else. Find someone else who would appreciate your company.

Invite several different people to your place and ask each one to bring a dish, visit shut-ins, help serve in one of the bread lines, take a single person out to eat or call someone long distance who you know will be alone.

Since it's better to give than to receive, don't wait for others to "do unto you." By thinking of others, you'll automatically remove the focus from yourself and feel less lonely. Try it! You'll be thankful you did.

Dorothy Lehmkuhl is a Birmingham-based time management consultant.

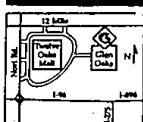
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