

LPF: Here they are for all to enjoy or delete. I hope you enjoy as much reading them as I have writing them!

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MACHINIST TALES #1

08-05

LPF: This one goes back decades to when the Linofish was just starting out.

The head machinist was pretty old and nearing retirement. He also was president of the Moose Lodge. Anyway, it was decided that the budding apprentice should get some serious hands-on experience and the project planned was to completely remove the mould disc, slide, all of the ejector mechanism, disassemble, completely, wash in solvent, re oil and reinstall. We had about 10 machines at the time.

There was no Sunday paper, so most of the ad work and non-news features had all been put to bed Saturday. The place was empty. So the Linofish arrived bright an early Sunday morning (on overtime) and we went thru the procedure which takes quite a bit of time.

As we were working on the third machine (third Sunday) , me sloshing ejector blades and links around in Varsol, the machinist came over and said he had some business to take care of at the Moose Lodge (he had a key), which was just up the street. *"You jus' keep goin' he said. I'll be back and check in an hour or so."*

Well, the business at the Moose consisted of enthusiastically lowering the level in the Old Overholtz bottle at their bar, as the old guy tended to become *"Powerful thirsty."*

He never returned that day. Here I was left bordering on panic with a bucketfull of parts to put back together, mould disk and slide on the floor and the night shift arriving at 5 pm. Somehow I muddled thru and with a few prayers to Ottmar, got the Lino together and running. You learn fast when you are young.

"Good job" he said next day. *"I got tied up. Yer gotta sink or swim sometimes, heh, heh!"* After that, every Sunday afternoon until all the machines were done, "business" had to be

attended to at the Moose around 1pm. I never said anything to anyone, I really liked the old guy, and I think the super knew what was going on.

He had the most wretched set of tools I have ever seen. So I took \$200 out of the bank and went across the street to Sears and bought a slew of new ones and a couple of Kennedy tool box units to keep 'em in. That was a lot of money in those days, but it bought a LOT of tools! I still got 'em. Job was tough enough without having to put up with junk tools.

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MACHINIST TALES #2

LPF: Since the first yarn was so well received, here is an escapade from the very beginning. A run in with the "Old guy."

Seems he didn't get the word that I was hired as an apprentice. He thought I was the new utility helper, the previous one finally getting a comp apprenticeship. So about the third day of my tenure, I was tending the Monotype material maker, hanging pigs, removing material, and something started to go wrong, I just don't recall anymore, some minor thing, I could see what was happening.

So I threw the pump out and shut off the motor. What ever it was, I corrected it quickly and started the machine up again. Just at that time, around the corner comes the old machinist. *"I heard the caster stop! What happened?"* I proudly related my accomplishment and he blew his top.

"You ain't supposed to TOUCH the machines 'ceptin' plungers and bands! You keep yer hands off! Yer just a utility boy! You got no RIGHT to do things to the machines. You come git me when sumthin' happens!" A little vein jiggled on his forehead.

I just turned on my heel and went up to the foreman and explained that there was a misunderstanding, I was hired as an apprentice and if that meant being a utility helper for a year which would have been an extra year of "time" and lower pay, I didn't want the job.

The foreman says "Let's go upstairs" to see the general manager who happened to be talking to the publisher by the stairway at the time. I was on good terms with him as I worked in dispatch for five years and he straightened things out fast.

He says "Why shore, Slim here's th' machine (sic) apprentice. Day-um it, Jules, cain't anybody git nothin' straight 'round this day-um place! There's a day-um note downstairs but there's so day-um much junk nailed up you cain't hardly see th' board! DAY-UM!" (He was a Texan.)

Man, the old machinist was protective, I don't know if it was a union thing or an ego thing. He apologized. I rewired the death trap of a test panel he had built and we were buddies again.

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MACHINIST TALES #3

LPF: Yet another.

We used to repig the Lino metal every morning and had an ancient gas fired furnace and a four over four water cooled flip mould on the second floor. Well, one day I arrived for work and there was great consternation and confusion around the furnace, which was right in the composing room. Seems that during the repigging session, something happened to the control valve in the pot and the metal flow couldn't be shut off.

It was said that everyone was frantically looking around for any kind of container to catch it in, but it ran all over the floor and some seeped thru a crack which resulted in a shiny typemetal stalactite hovering over the press downstairs. We pried and broke up what we could and then they called a welder in with a torch to melt off the metal from all around the furnace and moulds.

To add insult to injury, Public Service Gas

came in to check out the burner and the serviceman took one look and hung a big red "CONDEMNED" tag on it, shut off the gas supply and walked out shaking his head and mumbling to himself. They got a plumber and he had to repipe the whole thing and install some kind of a valve before PS declared it fit for duty. Worst part was, that night they cast pigs in the old iron single moulds downstairs in the stereo department and I had to carry them up!

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MACHINIST TALES #4

LPF: Another tale from the days of wooden men and iron machines.

Anyway, the company bought a rebuilt Monotype material maker from Hartzell Machine works and it was delivered to the back platform of the old building. There was no place ready yet at the new plant being built. (Typical planning.) So it was decided to bring it inside the mail room and cover it up until its new home was ready.

The mail room which had the overhead door to the platform was itself located in front of the newsprint storage room and the tables and other mail room equipment would be moved out the way when newsprint was delivered. They had an ancient Clark fork truck to unload it. It was gasoline powered and I don't believe it had any piston rings left judging from the huge quantities of blue smoke that emanated from it. It would even seep upstairs into the composing room at times if the wind blew wrong. So they got one of the kids from dispatch who supposedly knew how to drive the thing to come down and fetch the Monotype. He went into the roll room and fired the Clark up and came speeding out into the mail room.

Unfortunately, he hadn't lowered the forks all the way down. Part of the fork frame was telescoped upward. Suddenly there were tremendous crashing sounds, sparks flew and glass rained down as he took out about six fluorescent fixtures hanging from the ceiling. He

somehow missed getting hurt and luckily wore glasses which probably kept him from getting glass in his eyes but what a mess!

Well, the noise brought everybody down, including the publisher and the business manager. As usual, the publisher immediately ripped into the manager. (He loved doing it because it was his brother-in-law.)

"Hells Bells, Jules!!" he sez. "What on Gods green earth's th' matter with you lettin' a boy try to bring that caster in! Lucky he didn' get 'holt of it an' drop the day-um thing off the platform! You know what that machine cost me? Day-um people 'round here ain't got a grain of sense 't all!!"

The machinist and I picked up the fixtures and we triaged them and made three usable ones out of the injured. The manager sent out to an electrical supply house and got some new ones to make up the for the rest. They were just hung from chains and were plugged into outlet boxes, so restoring everything was easy. Like shop lights. They called the night janitor in who also unloaded the newsprint trucks to bring the Mono in. (Should have done that in the first place.) That Clark was so old it had a gearshift and clutch pedal, like a car, not your one pedal foot control.

At least we didn't have to sweep up, though.

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MACHINIST TALES #5

LPF: Another "Machinists Tale" (No. 5)

When the old head machinist who was my first boss retired, the company promoted one of the operators to day machinist because he was night M.O. and had been to Intertype school many years before. He was good, and taught me a lot. But he was kind of weak in the electrical end of things.

One day as I was comfortably in the arms of Morpheus (I worked the night shift) the phone

rang and wifey dutifully awakened me. *"Its Maurio,"* she said. *"He has a problem."* *"Mglxpg"* I mumbled, reaching for the phone.

"Gregorio" a harassed sounding voice said. *"The motor went on number four, and I have a problem with the spare. There are three wires coming out of the motor and only two from the switch!"* he lamented. It seems not all the machines were completely wired for three-phase motors, which the spare was. I told him to hook up two and put a wire nut on the extra motor lead. And to give it a push to start it. He didn't ask for explanations.

That night, I simply ran the extra wire from the new panel that was installed on all the machines when we moved. Panel to switch to motor and all was fixed. We then added the necessary wiring to the other machines as required so any type motor could be used on any machine.

In another incident, we got an ancient Miller saw (I still have it) for the ad row and it needed rewiring and a switch. So I mounted a toggle in a box near the table and ran a piece of metal hose down to the motor for the wiring. It was getting near quitting time, and just on a whim, I got some scraps of different colored wires and stuck them in so they hung out of the switch box and at the motor end. There were about eight different colored pieces at each end. I left a note. *"Maurio, please finish hooking up the Miller if you get a chance."*

The next evening, all was as it was before, but the note now also said *"Had many problems, could not get to Miller."* He did not elaborate. He had a saying he would quote with a laugh, *"Wires three, let them be!"*

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And yet another thing I have to be thankful for are the great memories from working with those wonderful people over the years! "Those men are the salt of the earth." I heard the publisher once say:

LIMERICKS & OTHER STUFF

by The Linofish



A machinist who came from Timor
Changed magazines often before.
But the lock wasn't tight
To the left, but was right.
And he dumped mats all over the floor.

A Linotype man from L.A.
Was having a difficult day.
With fingers abused
ETAOIN was used
And SHRDLU brought into play.

A newspaper man from LaCrosse
Saw his paper ran at a loss.
He hollered "Oh No!
My Hoe is too slow!"
And traded it in for a Goss.

An Intertype gal from LeMans
Sets type with both of her hands.
And sometimes her toes
And the tip of her nose.
Whatever production demands.

A nasty old pressman I knew
Got to hell without much ado.
Satan said "You have sinned,"
As he devilishly grinned
"What a press I've here waiting for you!"

A German man quite laconic
Would print things only teutonic.
Like instructions for strudles
Sauerbraten with noodles
And notes for the Bonn Philharmonic.

A short-legged man from Seville
Built his shop on the side of a hill.
After printing away
For a year and a day
He discovered one leg shorter still.

A printer who lives in Sudan
Runs his press just as fast as he can.
To make matters worse
He once ran in reverse
And finished before he began.

A pressman who's now in perdition
Came to work in a drunken condition.
He fell in the press
Which made quite a mess.
It was surely his final edition.

A fellow who worked in Pocasset
Printed a job for the Knesset.
It didn't delight
For it read left to right
Which was backwards, but he didn't guess it.

"My press" said a printer in Ghent
"Was pedaled so fast that it bent.
This meddlesome treadle
Unsettled my mettle,
So for one from John Hern I have sent."

At the Linotype he was quite new.
Did not know quite what to do.
A careless tight line
Brought a scream, then a whine
As typemetal spattered his shoe.

There once was a man from Luzerne
Who did printing carelessly learn.
With a slip of the wrist
By his press he was kissed
And he no longer can "Work and turn."

A printer who worked in Lahore
Had legs all tired and sore.
"If I had but a Kimble
I could be quite nimble
For I would treadle no more."

A printer in Hades from Islet
Soon by the devil was met.
Who with eyes all agleam
Said "Take this machine,
You've an acre of agate to set."

An engraver, an unhappy wretch
Had a problem he just couldn't catch.
He said "I don't know
Why this bath works so slow,
But this looks like a seven year etch."

"Be a six year apprentice" they said.
"With a permanent job just ahead."
But his joy soon diminished
As soon as he finished.
"Going cold type, hot metal is dead!"

A printer who worked in Bangkok
Had a turtle he kept in his shop.
Not the kind you might know
That walks pretty slow
But with wheels and cast iron top.

An Intertype man from Alsace
When involved in a typesetting race,
Yelled "I'll win in a breeze!"
As smoke rose from the keys
And he set a blistering pace.

He set type in total confusion.
His skills were just an illusion.
And one time he bent
Where the elevator went
And suffered a massive contusion.

A Linotype man, problematic
Drove the machinist quite frantic.
He'd send a tight line
But most of the time
He was saved by the vise automatic.

Miss Mary the old fashioned printer,
Why printing was all she was inter.
With arms all akimbo
This robotic bimbo
Would quake from her front to her hinter!

One day while treading her press,
A gear caught her old-fashioned dress.
As it got torn away
She was heard to say
"I got caught, but I wasn't impressed!"

There once was a pressman from Bligh,
Who worked while wearing a tie.
As the cylinder turned
He suddenly learned
The effect of type meeting the eye.

A printer who worked in Des Moines
Forgot to tighten a quoin.
As the press went around
The type fell to the ground
Which he found extremely annoying.

A Printer who came from Orleans
Disdained Italic it seems.
"I really hate
That it won't stand up straight.
I'm annoyed by the way that it leans."

A printer of art in Oshgosh
Said his four-color job was a wash.
The ink went to hell
And they couldn't tell
Picasso from Hieronymus Bosch

To save rent a printer from Brewer
Set up his shop in a sewer.
He paid little rent
But the jobs that he scent
Made his customers phewer and fewer

Of course he is getting slow.
It's all that asbestos, you know.
And deadly pot fumes
In hot little rooms
It's a wonder there aint no Mo!

A printer of old worked with lead.
"It's bad for you!" it was said.
He would cry with a jeer
"I'll live many a year!"
But at age 99 he was dead.

A man quite new to the List
In three days had everyone pissed.
So they set their machines
To dump all his themes
And found that he never was missed!

His press weighed only a ton.
To move it himself would be fun.
But it fell a few feet
From the truck to the street
Then was sold to Sanford and Son.

There was a young lady from Rye
Who boiled some press parts in lye.
But she had a mishap
Some spilled in her lap
Which ate away part of her thigh.

A printer from old Mandalay
Told of a most painful day.
He started to pedal
One foot under the treadle.
Now some toes will bend either way.

There once was a printer named Fred
Who had dirty rags up to his head.
With a pile that high
And the EPA guy
He now uses Kleenex instead.

To one printer, metrics were sweeter
Than picas or points, much neater.
If a body complained
He seemed rather pained
That someone disdained of his meter.

A Kimble is an ancient design.
Inefficient, yet still works just fine.
It weighs a ton,
Oh but what fun!
Just turn it on and hear it whine.

A printer from old Inverness
Has an Octopus feeding his press.
Three sheets at a time
While folding them fine.
And ink costs couldn't be less.

An agile pressman from Reading
A gigantic web press was threading.
But the motors went on
And soon he was gone
Dismayed at the ride he was getting.

There once was a printer named Marge
Of a press, she couldn't take charge.
Her arms were too short,
I'm sad to report
Because her breasts were so large.

A newspaper pressman from Boulder
Liked to lean way out over the folder.
But a slip of the shoe
Made him part of page two,
And kept him from getting much older.

A man with a press from Southport
Was making a part of some sort.
He measured quite nice
Then cut it off twice
And found that is still was too short.

A four-fingered man from DuPree
Shouted "Presswork's the best job for me!"
A hesitant reach
A blood-curdling screech
And now there's not four but just three.

A nasty old printer from Britain
Said "A country I soon will be quittin'"
So he moved on to France
But there still was a chance
Even there his type just wouldn't fit in

A printer who worked in DC
Had trouble composing, you see.
Learned the type case by verse
And stopped getting worse
Which suited him quite to a "t".

There was a purveyor of poems
Who liked to stuff them in tomes.
It was hoped that this might
Bring cries of delight
But possibly only brought groans.

An ancient printer quite smart
Knew all about printing by heart.
Now here is the teaser
Was he a geezer?
Or just another old fart!

A printer who came from Stromboli
Thought modern faces were phoney.
He followed his dreams
But went to extremes
And set all in Ultra Bodoni

NON-LETTERPRESS SUBJECTS

(My all time favorite limerick:)
A fussy gourmet from Bathurst
Rejected the food served him first.
"No sausage with bread,
I'll have seagull instead!"
And he took a tern for the wurst.

(Sent to me:)

An accident really uncanny,
Befell an unfortunate granny.
She sat down in a chair
While her false teeth were there,
And bit herself right in the fanny!

(I replied:)

Such biting of gluteous mass
Should have brought forth language quite crass.
When those choppers snapped shut
On that womanly butt
And caused quite a pain in the ass!

After eating a large plate of beans
Struck a match on the seat of his jeans.
But the resulting blast
From some gas he had passed
Blew his Levis apart at the seams.

A vendor who worked on the street
Hawked oil to all he would meet.
He said that he'd boil
Some cows hooves for oil.
He thought it was all kind of Neat!

My old dentist, Doctor DeKay
When asked about teeth would just say,
"I'll make it quite brief
Just ignore your teeth
And you'll find they will soon go away!"

(And what is a Limerick?)

Somebody told me this one.)

"What is a Limerick" asked brother
"It's a kind of a verse," said his mother
"Where lines one and two
rhyme with five when it's through
And three and four rhyme with each other.



THE MACHINIST

Over the idle Linotype
the Lino machinist stands.
Not a brain within his head
just large and horny hands.

Each morning late to work he comes,
each evening early goes.
Nothing accomplished, nothing done.
his thoughts are of repose.

Layered with cobwebs, covered with dust,
lonely his toolbox stands.
While inside, tools covered with rust,
are untouched by human hands.

A mid-morning snooze, an afternoon nap,
surely better things to do.
Then to tug away on a greasy old wrench
or oil a thing or two.

The mats won't drop, the pump won't pump,
the slugs fall on the floor.
"I'll get it later, take another machine!"
"You've got eleven more!"

So cheer the old machinists,
though their numbers now are few.
And thanks to Ottmars' great design
they did less than most of you!

LINOTYPES LOST

The old machines are silent
Their iron bones are cold.
The scrap man's coming very soon
A few days more, I 'm told.

No more clicking of the mats
As speeding belts flailed 'round
The rumbling of the cams is gone
They give forth not a sound.

There was a time when all were new
And expectations rose
But now all of that is past
Another era closed.

If I could, I'd buy them all
And store them safe away
Someone just might bring them back
To run another day.

But such a thing can't happen
And as they go out thru the door
I'll think of the all things that were
Of which we'll see no more

ADVICE

Do not store quoins on a shelf over your press.
If they fall, you may have "three quoins in the fountain".

If on halftones you find,
there are convergent lines,
That's a moire!

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