

This is a Test. Had it been a Real Alert, etcetera etcetera. I am trying to find out if I have a viable, working duplicator or if I've still got a problem. I have field-stripped the antediluvian Model 120 Gestetner and given it a spit-bath in something they call Dupli-Klene at the Gestetner emporium up in Anaheim. I've also utilized various other exotic solvents on hand about the place in attempts to exorcise the last of that incredibly foul goop called Tempo paste ink that I less than wittingly used a few years ago.

This particular stencil is being cut without either the wax cushion sheet or the plastic undersheet. It's a plain blue #6 with film and I put it in the typer just as it came from the box. I want to see if it gives detectably better or worse results than next page, with which I plan to use the undersheet and wax cushion. Please consider it as an honor to risk your emmetropia in the cause of pure science, no?

By way of a preliminary run, I found an old batch of stencils I'd cut but never printed, vintage of 1974. The stencil went onto the machine and produced a few fairly good sheets, after which it began to manifest the same problem I had when I retired from the gestetnering craft, namely random areas began to get weak, while other areas stayed rather lavishly inked. The Holstein syndrome, I term this, recalling the gentle black and white cows of my Wisconsin dairy farm boyhood.

Just at this point, the topping film is beginning to bunch seriously in going through the platen of the old IBMAll of which causes me feelings of nostalgia and weltschmerz. I can still look back to issues of Grue from 20-odd years ago and marvel at the decent quality of their reproduction. I tend to blame the deterioration upon a number of factors. For one thing, I don't think Gestetner makes ink quite the way they used to. I do have and am using a tube of clear-quill Gestink in the traditional-hallowed royal blue hue, though it may take a few more stencils before it overcomes the residues of (excuse the expression?) Tempo black and commences looking blue.

The supply of paper on hand is rather limited. If this comes out on pink paper, please accept my apologies. Long since, I have come to loathe, detest, despise and abominate pink paper. Never mind why, though I think I've discussed it with a few of the more taciturn of you on occasion.

The best of the early Grues were stenciled with a nice old Smith-Corona pica office model manual owned by the furnace company I worked for in those days. They were printed on the furnace company's #120 Gestetner, using royal blue gestink and white, 20# Ta-Non-Ka mimeo bond paper. I think I slipsheeted on most of them, if not all, but the Ta-Non-Ka was remarkably resistant to bleed-through; a problem that continues to plague me severely in the post-1963 era. Because of the bleed-through, I'll prob'ly have to print on just one side of the paper. About the time we wetbacked it out of Fond du Lac in February, 1963, I cracked \$80 for the current #120 Gestetner and, while I've had a few decent runs from it, I get the strong impression that the furnace company's #120 performed much better. They were still using it for their price sheets and catalogs, the last I heard, by the way. They use royal blue, too, which is why I started out in that color, not wishing to make waves at the place of employment.

Goshwowboyohboy and Holy Moley too, while you is up. I couldn't believe it! Yes, I've seen better duplicating — many times — but not out of the local establishment in recent years. In fact, I was so encouraged and gratified that I opted not to try the undersheet and cushion. This's strictly barefoot, same as page 1 and perhaps that has been a factor contributing to the problem all these years.

And, if we can assume we've gotten the 'arrumpph-kaffkaff technic'l dif'culties set aside for the nonce, let's dispense with the printroom shoptalk.

If I make it into the '80s and beyond, I think I'll look back upon the '70s as a decade heavily flavored with limbo. We made the great bugout from Wisconsin to Sullen California in early '66 and had gotten our roots down fairly well by the end of 1970 when the two partners who run the company from which I cadge paychecks decided to go their separate ways. That involved moving from Glendora, in the San Gabriel Valley, down here to the south coast of Orange county. We moved into the present house in the spring of '72 and closed the excrow in August of the same year. Some day, I may write a book called The Summer of 72, limning that endless interlude of agony, kampf and strife, but I don't think the world is ready for it yet; for damsure, I'm not.

So '73, '74 and '75 just seemed to whisk past and even yet, I'm trying to puzzle out where they went. A torrent of work was surging through the new offices (we'd worked out of an in-between location at Brea for a year or so after leaving Glendora) and I was involved with a fair share of it.

By the summer of '76, I decided that it was no longer practicable to exist without a darkroom on the premises. True, they had a darkroom at work but personal use of it was heavily fraught with vast complexities.

Creating a darkroom was never much of a problem in the Wisconsin days. One merely cut sheets of masonite, nailed them on the outside of the basement windows and voila— instant darkroom, with accent on room. In California, alas, houses tend not to have cellars or basements. The excuse is that, comes an earthquake, there you are, buried in the debris. Very plausible, only how come so many of them have second stories?

Anyway, I managed to allocate 14 square feet in the garage toward the creation of a darkroom. That's 3.5 feet wide by 4 feet deep and about 8 feet high. Two 4x4 sheets of half-inch particle board formed the floor and ceiling, with 6 inches trimmed off one side of each. The corner members are angles made by gluing up two 3-inch strips of particle board, Elmer's glue, particle board and C-clamps while drying made up the entire framework, I covered it with 1/8" masonite held in place with 6-3/4 sheet metal screws; on grounds that it could be disassembled after a fashion should we ever have to face the trauma of moving again (perish the sickening thought).

There's just room for my 34C Beseler enlarger and four of the little Rubbermaid 6x9 drawer-organizer trays readily found in supermarkets and hardware stores. These make fine developing trays for 5x7 prints. If I have to make 8x10s, I've barely room for three of the larger trays required. The fourth small tray is for plain water in which to rinse the wet hand. I've vast contempt for print tongs.

The darkroom has worked out far beyond optimistic dreams. On many an evening, I've knocked out over 100 5x7 prints. During the past year, I've come 'round to the viewpoint that we may be here for yet a further while so might's well unpack and get liveable. Toward that end, I have been dending much of my energy and attention and results are beginning to appear, heze and there.

Minor problem is that it's nearly impossible to see what you're saying when typing without undersheet and cushion. The major errata on page 2 are 'excrow' for escrow and 'dending' for what was intended as bending. Sorry 'bout that.

Since completing the darkroom, I've enriched and augmented the workshop facilities quite usefully and they, in turn, have resulted in other helpful artifacts, such as the snazzy little cabinet/work table for the Gestetner.

Oh gorblimey. One more erratum for p.2: It's a 23C Beseler, not a 34C. I doubt if the 34C Beseler exists. The 23C handles any negative size from 8mm movie up through 2-1/4x3-1/4. I still have the old 5x7 Solar enlarger that my folks got for me in 1948 as a graduation present. Actually, I'd graduated in 1940, but that was a lean year. The 5x7 Solar sits in a corner of the office and gathers dust. It used to be emplaced in the office darkroom in case we had a large neg to print, having been equipped with condensers for 4x5" neg's. But somebody in the organization bought some manner of ratty old big enlarger and put that in the company darkroom in place of the Solar, so now it has no home. I can't bring it back to the shop darkroom because it comes close to being larger than the entire darkroom and I'm disinclined to part with it, for obvious sentimental reasons. I've not burned a 4x5 hunk of film in so many years I really can't remember. Photographic technology has progressed to the point where even a 120-size camera is pressed to excel the output of the little 35mm jobs.

By the time our engraver gets done with photos and the printer renders them for the nation's newsstands, the detectable difference between a photo spawned by a 35mm and one from a larger format camera is neither Damon nor Pythias.

I still own an 8x10 view camera, currently bushed-down with a 4x5 reducer back and grafted into a process camera, for which they still manage to find room at the office. We use it with fair frequency for 4x5 Polaroids. Back around 1948, I paid a studio in Port Washington, Wisconsin a thumping \$17 for the camera, with massive wooden tripod, 8x10 cutfilm holders, lensboard with Packard shutter and various fixings. To replace it today, you'd be looking at \$300 and up-up-away.

If anyone out there is intrigued by such things, I soup my film in Microdol-X at 1:3 dilution by time/temp on the charts packed with the film. Usually I use Tri-X, but have built up a battery of three Canon FTb backs for the assortment of Canon lenses. The bodies are branded for Tri-X, Kodachrome ASA 25 and (currently) Plus-X. For a long while, I kept Panatomic-X in the third body, having a faint distrust for Plus-X, but the third body is erratic if shutter speeds go to 1/8th-second or lower and the gain in ASA speed speed — 125 against 32 — gives the nod to Plus-X over the lovely Panatomic.

Yes, if you've wondered, the slower black/white films give results detectably better than Tri-X. Whether the edge would be apparent after screening and printing is a moot point.

At any rate, for the first time in I-can't-remember-how-long, I can sit here with a stencil in the typer and murder it full of letters and words, pluck it still gasping and go over to slap it onto the Gestetner and have the desired number of copies lying there in a matter of minutes. It is, as I say, a thoroughly unaccustomed capability to have.

When August came dooming inexorably downward and I had to have 68 copies of something to further mummify my mem'ship in this ... uhh ... august body, I was forced to sally forth and enrich a local quickie-print operation. I apologize for the quality.

The office has a copier — some model of Minolta, I think — and I've been pressed into using that occasionally, always at the risk of dire confrontation and besides, every time I really need to use it, the dern thing comes down with an attack of the dreadful feebles.

The only good thing to be said for copiers is that, when they work, you can slip in all manner of minor memorabilia such as clipped comic strips, with minimal fuss and sweat. The bad thing about copiers owned by one's employer is that unauthorized use of same can get you some trenchant dialog with El Bosso. Especially if the copying is not obviously enterprise-oriented.

Page 1 has sat and cooled/dried for a while now and the good news is that there seems to be very little offset, even without slipsheeting ("To overink is human, to slipsheet, divine." — WAW). The bad news is that the printing on the obverse leached thru to the reverse so blatantly that it looks like a poor bet to try to print on (excuse expression, please?) the backside of the sheets.

Accordingly, we'll run a full sheet for each page, with back more or less blank, though you can probably read it with the aid of a mirror (mirrour, if you're Anzac). Yes, we do mourn the unavailability of the goodly Ta-Non-Ka mimeo bond paper. I do not know if they still make the stuff for sale in Wisconsin but, for sure, they don't market it on the south Orange coast. All the schlucks sell out here is that obscene Tempo paste ink.

Speaking of 17-buck cameras with \$300 replacement figures, I even went so far as to cast about for a replacement for the veteran Gestetner 120. First, the 120 is a dead hoss. No more spare parts are available for it. When/if it busts something vital, like sayanora, friendly,

At this point in time, the bottom of the Gestetner line markets new out of the shop at something over \$600, a fair market value for any one of my three current vehicles. The resident huckster at the Anaheim office has been bombarding me with phone calls to give me a chance to buy reconditioned Gestetners as cheaply as \$250 (offering \$25 on the old 120 in trade).

Amateur publishing is getting to be a game with fairly steep table stakes. Olive witch makes me feel rather goodishly about the lease on life I managed to graft onto the old \$80 kerwhunker.

So here I am with pages — four of them, bedad — and sorry if there are no mailing comments thish. Perhaps next go-'round. Thish is words-only, but with a bit of luck, we may have some artwork to brighten thing sof next ish. We have artwork on hand (good grief, some it has been aging in the charred oak desk drawers for a quarter-century) and can even draw it up from scratch, if needs must and the devil drives.

A fanzine without interlineations is like an attack of hives without fingernails.

So anyway, it's a delightful goodness to regain access and capabilities for the multi-speak bit again. I'm amazed how much I missed that catatonic Gestetner. I do not have any plans at this time to get back to the Grues of yore with 50-plus pages per issue but, at least, one can do it in the privacy of one's own home again and that's a goodness and a luxury you couldn't hardly believe ... or could you?

All hail & ka-powie, troops!

PS: Dratt! Forgot to corflu-out that marginal 'speed' on p. 3 until after it was roaring thru the mighty presses.

Sorry 'bout the paper: Instead of Grue & Bleen, woulj'a believe Grink & Keen?

