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Editor note: This is the first of many Kelsey Owner Stories. more to come...

Odd way to get a printing press..

- win it on a tv quiz show in 1957!

I have been hearing "my first press" stories for years, but here's one I'd never heard before....

email from Ray Boas, Bookseller (& publisher of [the Walpole Clarion](#)) - 3/2/2018

Dear Alan,

So much fun. I have an anniversary coming up tomorrow. Of course, I have all my printing samples and paperwork including my "account book." Page 1 - "In Business March 2, 1957." My first job - 25 business cards for my grandmother - 50 cents. I think it was probably the "Print It Yourself" Kelsey ads I saw in my Dad's Popular Mechanics magazine that intrigued me with printing presses, and making money. At some point he told me about his press - Coalbin Press (in the basement of course) and he printed things for his Dad, an MD in NYC.

Well, more of a story than you wanted probably. **I was a contestant on a TV show in 1957** (guessing you were not born yet) hosted by Bert Parks called Giant Step. A kids quiz show with prizes at each step. At some point I was asked what I wanted for prizes, and answering one question (my subject was Antique Automobiles - my Dad's hobby) I got a 3x5 Kelsey. I remember my Dad carrying the box up 5th Avenue to the subway to go back to my grandparents in the Bronx to get the car. I wanted to print a newspaper, but soon found too hard to do on a 3x5, but the same threads have run through my life, and I now own and publish the local monthly newspaper, mailing it to everyone in town (small town - 3,700 residents, I mail 2,000 copies) - <https://thewalpoleclarion.com>

I made money through high school, my Dad found me a big C&P, and in college I bought my first 5x8 and printed stationery for the co-eds - people still wrote letters in those days. I have bought and sold presses thinking I would be printing again, and then not. I do plan on keeping my Kelsey 5x8 if only to do envelopes. I have done some tickets for the theater group I am in charge of. It is amazing how prevalent small presses were in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. When I was in High School there were still printing presses in shop class, and printing was taught to anyone interested. If I had a printing job, but was out of stock, the shop teacher let me borrow what I needed until my order from Kelsey arrived.

I brought into the house at lunch time two of Elizabeth Harris' titles that I own, PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS, and the exhibition catalog THE BOY AND HIS PRESS - started rereading that at

lunchtime. I also found of interest the link you gave me -- I need to explore Briar Press more, signed up 9 years ago when I got another press, but then fell away from reading it.

I have enclosed images of my Watson press. Remember it is "as found" and that was about 7 years ago in an antique center in Millerton, NY. It came with type, leading, etc and a neat wooden ruler advertising printing equipment. The platen back does not go down by itself easily, it just may need some lubrication or a magic hand such as yours. Free free to use or share the images, and if you wish more or better ones, just let me know. If you post, I always do enjoy getting credit -- even the State of Vermont credits my images they use (not of presses, of course).

I am excited about the Sigwalt Ink Disk. It will then make the press useable and saved. Would you like me to send you any money for supplies etc?

John Barrett got back to me last evening, and said, " Ink disc for the Sigwalt, don't have and can't hold out much for finding one. The 3 x 5 Kelsey maybe, but you'd want to bring your unit by for comparison. I believe Alan's comments refer to an individual who, back a number of years ago, was less than honest about dealing with letterpress people." You may wish to tell him that you now have success with castings etc.. I need to reply to John, so happy to share the good news.

I just don't know what it is that keeps me hooked with presses. I always get a thrill starting with a blank piece of paper and creating something -- I just have to go do it again. Thank you for building my fire up again, and I will immerse myself later more with Elizabeth's writings.

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