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## Don Stave -- In Memorium

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and readiness — and then the producer points to the musicians, silently, “Begin.” Each strives for the performance of a lifetime. Then the piece ends and silence falls again. A button is pressed, and recording ceases. Then there is a collective whoosh of breath, “Phew!” Then it’s time to listen, to see if lightning was caught in mid-strike, or another merely correct but perfunctory performance.

Has “How writing happens” really been overthrown by the word processor? “Word Processor.” Kind of sounds like “Food Processor,” doesn’t it? I don’t reckon **Sam Clemens’** writing would come out so very different today. I’ll bet he might even still like to write in his pajamas (and who doesn’t?)...

No, the Traveling Medicine Show is still the Traveling Medicine Show. We’re still being sold dubious treatments for even more dubious ailments. And our true poverties are neglected. We’re starving for nutrition at a feast of junk food. We’re longing for some fresh examples of ingenuity amidst a parade of derivative throwaway junk. We’re aching for a sincere, kind word whilst drowning in an ocean of glad-handing, utterly cynical, tradeshow-floor marketing.

Oh, and don’t forget to take a free pen! Take several! They’re free! Have a breath mint! Don’t forget to drop your business card in the fish bowl! May I swipe your card? (No! A Thousand Times, No!!) You can get a bonus of 500 points by registering today! There’s never been a better time!

So we’ll leave today’s latest things, for now. If I can remember that long, next time perhaps it’ll be time to take a look at that most enduring of seemingly ephemeral digital artifacts, the “Social Identity.” 🐼

it is snowing, (it’s in the 60s in Charleston). I was telling him that I spent time in my salad days (do they still use that term?) cleaning up skeletons next to Winchester Cathedral. **Richard** was telling me that the head of the dig back then, **Martin Biddle**, has just received the **freedom of the city award** from Winchester’s city council. And **Richard** even sent me the link! Isn’t it a small world?

[http://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/5036447.Rare\\_honour\\_for\\_Winchester\\_archaeologist\\_Martin\\_Biddle/](http://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/5036447.Rare_honour_for_Winchester_archaeologist_Martin_Biddle/)

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## Don Stave – In Memorium

by **Richard Abel** (Aged Independent Learner) <reabel@q.com>

**D**on Stave was the fourth member of the band of Argonauts who joined the **Abel Company**. He remained one of the leading members of the “inside” staff which participated in the formulation of the Approval Plan and the related Standing Order system. He was highly instrumental in implementing those systems and in tweaking them over the years to make them increasingly responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of academic and research libraries across the developed world. The widespread employment of these systems to get appropriate books (knowledge parcels) into libraries as cheaply and quickly as possible owes much to the thought and work of **Don**.

**Don** graduated from the **University of North Carolina** with a degree in library science following his years in the service during WW II and his marriage to **Louise (Lou)** in 1946. **Lou** too trained and practiced as a librarian in the **Multnomah County Library** after their three children were well along.

**Don** had landed the job of acquisitions librarian in the library of the **Atomic Energy Agency** in Richland, Washington. It was there that the firm first made contact with **Don** as a knowledgeable bookman committed to the building of first-rate libraries. **Don** was prepared to entertain a wide variety of practices which would improve the book-dealer/library relationship. We soon learned that **Don** was contemplating seeking a job elsewhere.

In the meantime it had become clear to the then three of us (**Tom Martin**, **Fred Gullette**, and **Abel**) that the firm needed some professional librarianship guidance in-house as the demands on the firm became more extensive and the number of libraries served continued to grow. The timing of these two decisions could not have come together at a better time. So the firm made an offer to **Don**, who, in turn, accepted it.

Not long after **Don** came aboard, the firm arranged with the **Washington State University Library** the primitive pioneer of the Approval Plan. **Don** became the point-man to review all the new incoming books each day and then select those which fit the teaching and research interests as defined by the university catalog. This trial went on for roughly half a year. The university library and faculty were so pleased with what **Don** had accomplished with respect to the rapid availability and the cost savings realized by the library that they wished to continue.

As a consequence, the firm understood that it needed first to put the plan on a sounder basis of subject definition and routinize buying and review of the universe of North American publishing to fully reflect the varied collecting interests of what was hoped to be an expanding universe of libraries employing the Plan. **Don’s** role in these exercises

was manifestly of prime importance. One of the most difficult problems which had to be mastered was that of fitting standing orders for books-in-series into the Plan. So doing involved not only the blurred definition of the term and the consequent malleability in its use by various librarians but the repeated failure of publishers to provide such a designation to some volumes contained in series of their making. Whatever the slipperiness and vagaries involved in trying to bring some rational order to subject definitions and relationships and publishing practices, **Don** was a stout participant in formulating a reasonably sensible system for dealing with such matters.

The firm now had a coherent program which the managers of the regional offices could take out and explain to libraries together with the requisite supporting thesauri and instruction manuals. The Plan was fairly widely adopted — always on a trial basis. As the number of participating libraries grew, the inevitable problems became manifest, requiring tweaking the system. **Don** was in the forefront of this ongoing effort to make a system as flawless as possible, being always dependent on the slipperiness of the language.

From these early days **Don** remained the in-house master of the Approval Plan and the Standing Order systems. This dominant position remained his through the translation of these systems to the computer and through the successive augmentations in two directions. First, the several revisions of the thesauri and the enlargement of the Plan to include all the languages of the major knowledge-producing countries of the world. Second, to lead the subsidiary book profiling centers in New Jersey and London through the difficult process of mastering the the major outlines and fine points of successfully describing books to fit the disparate collecting objectives of many of the world’s major academic and research libraries.

**Tom Stave**, **Don’s** son and a librarian at the **University of Oregon**, recalled that **Don** believed his continuing involvement in the evolution of the Approval Plan was a greater contribution to his profession of librarianship than would have been his role as a practicing librarian in a conventional research library. It would be a matter of great misunderstanding to deprecate this belief.

The principles and practices developed for getting books into such libraries as quickly and cheaply as possible has remained a continuing professional practice. All the libraries involved in such systems and their librarians owe profound respect and deep regard for **Don**, one of their colleagues who was the shepherd of those systems from their founding to the days of his final service in the **Blackwell** organization. 🐼

