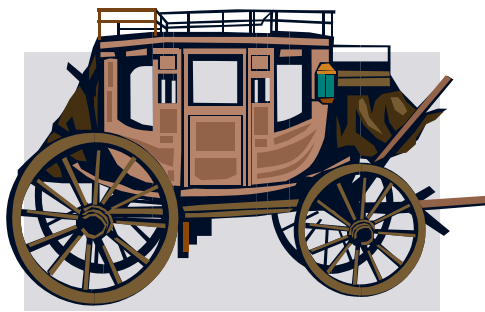


RECOLLECTIONS



JACK D. RITTENHOUSE

Boy Scout
Magician
Hobo
Oil Industry Publicist
Publisher (Stage Coach Press)
UNM Press Editor
Historian of New Mexico
Rare Book Dealer

By
**JACK DEVERIE
RITTENHOUSE**
(1912 –1991)
Albuquerque, New Mexico

From his unpublished materials and
Annual Christmas newsletters
1975 through 1987

Composited, Illustrated, and Edited By Harry Briley

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Master Structure

Each chapter is a stand-alone document with a separate table of contents. These mostly chronological memoirs in three sections start by recollections that set the stage for the topical chapters, which follow.

Chapters:

1. Life in the Mid-West Twenties
 2. Boy Scouts
 3. College Years
 4. Magician

5. Settling Down on Highway 66
 6. Wander Year
 7. A Year in the California State Guard
 8. Advertising
 9. Books and I
 10. Stagecoach Press

- 11. Albuquerque Roots**
 - 12. UNM Press**
 - 13. Historian and Commissions**
 - 14. London 1977**
 - 15. Antiquarian Bookman**
 - 16. The West is Wider than You Think**
 - 17. Spain 1989**

18. Closing Shop

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CHAPTER 12 – UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

On 1/1/1968, I started with the book publishing office [of University of New Mexico,] not the printing plant, known as "The Plant" to distinguish it from "The Press".

[For six months, I worked with UNM Press] Monday through Wednesday. Until late April, I continued to work Thursday and Friday at the Museum [of New Mexico Press in Santa Fe]. On July 1, I worked for UNM Press full-time five days a week.

I stayed at UNM Press from 1968 to 1978. This was the longest I worked at one place until reaching their mandatory retirement age. [I worked for nearly 11 years there] until I retired in June.

UNM Press under Shugg

The new UNM Press director, Roger Shugg, made some revolutionary changes. His general program was to replace some home-trained staff with old-line professionals. In the course of these changes, others became dissatisfied with the new regime, and within two years, none of the prior [local] staff remained.

My first task was to handle incoming manuscripts on books dealing with the American West and to handle the advertising. We [first] had no sales manager and had one person typing all invoices.

My experience enabled me to fill in at times on various jobs, at least well enough to keep the wheels turning. During the 1968 summer, I handled the production manager's job after the previous production man left.

When the invoice typist was absent, I typed invoices. I had no secretary but typed my own letters. I did the annual catalog section for Bowker, produced mailing pieces, ran an exhibit program, and dealt with authors on some incoming manuscripts. Most other staff members worked on the same basis.

We used students for part-time work, one of them was our only receptionist, another filed. Eventually we had an advertising manager and then a fulltime receptionist-secretary typist and we added one person in the billing department.

Shugg brought in Bruce Gentry, an extremely well qualified book designer and production manager. Bruce was ready to retire from Wolff and Company, the big eastern firm, and welcomed a chance to come to New Mexico, where he had once worked at the original Rydal Press in its golden period. Bruce lived in Santa Fe. He and I shared the driving [to Albuquerque] for the first several months in 1968.

Another new member was John Scoon, who was experienced in New York publishing circles. The four of us: Shugg, Scoon, Gentry, and Rittenhouse together comprised almost a century and a quarter of combined experience. We all knew that within four to ten years younger people would replace each of us.

We made it work. We tripled the number of books the Press produced each year. Within the first year, we increased sales by fifty per cent and for the next four years usually increased it around 25% each year.

Sales were below \$100,000 when Shugg came in mid-1967. By the end of his sixth and last year, the volume was up to \$387,000 and a flywheel effect carried it in the next year up to almost, \$500,000. Under Gentry, we raised production to where we averaged either a new book or a reprint of backlist every week, or about five times the old rate.

"Interview with a Bookman," by David Farmer. Unpublished transcript, 1989.

Jack: We had no Assistant Director at one time at the Press, but I guess if you had an Assistant Director at UNM Press, I would have been it. I stayed the course there. The rule of thumb was anything to do with the West, give the manuscript first to Rittenhouse. "Let him look at it". If it is anything else, it goes to Shugg or another editor, a woman who was interested in the rest of the world.

Charlotte: That was when we first became aware of the deterioration of public [university] education. The Ph.D.s' theses coming in for possible publication and the spelling, grammar, and even the facts ... horrifying.

I made business trips, such as:

- a week at a book conference in Denver in 4/1968
- I had to address a highway engineer's conference in Las Cruces in 1968.

As usual to make new tracks [exploring the Southwest], I took back roads when possible.

I did *The Santa Fe Trail; A Historical Bibliography*, using material collected since 1953, with heavy work done during 1970. UNM Press published this on 6/2/1971, in an edition of 1500 copies.

Director Roger Shugg objected to employees' participation in civic affairs or attending meetings. There was one aspect of publishing in which I could "moonlight", writing. Any staff member was encouraged to write for publication.

My double-title was reversed in 1971 to Sales Manager and Editor of Southwestern Books. I found work very difficult under Shugg. He put on pressure to work all possible days in December 1971 and my usual winter trip to Texas [to see my son] was called off.

By 1972, I became deeply unhappy with Shugg. Late in 1972, when a faculty committee sought a new director, I applied but they told me that I was too old. The committee wanted someone who could head the Press for [at least] ten years. I was 60 and would be compelled to retire in five years. Roger Shugg retired on 6/30/1973 because of age, which made my life there much brighter.



Figure 1 - With Carl Mora at UNM Press - 1/1973

UNM Press under Treadwell

The [new] director was Hugh W. Treadwell, in his early fifties and formerly with Alfred Knopf as a college division editor. I got a 10% raise and named as Business Manager. Book business was good and UNM Press showed steady gains throughout 1973.

I continued in 1974 as Business Manager, Sales Manager, and Editor of books on the American West. I made some trips for UNM:

- I went to Denver in April to conduct a book exhibit at the *Organization of American Historians* (OAH).
- In June, I lectured at a one-session seminar on editing at Utah State University in Logan, during a conference on Western American Literature, meeting authors David Lavender [*Land of Giants: The Drive to Pacific Northwest 1750-1950*, 1958] and Wallace Stegner [*The Sound of Mountain Water*, 1980]
- To San Francisco and Santa Rosa in October for a conference of the *Western Literature Association*; meeting Frederick Manfred and W. Hutchinson.

In 1974 and 1975, I wrote a series of articles in *Book Talk*, a bi-monthly multi-lithed publication of the *New Mexico Book League*, in which I described the history of various early printer-publisher presses in New Mexico and Arizona.

In March 1975, Charlotte and I visited the Great Sand Dunes [National Park in Colorado] when I represented UNM Press at a booth at the weeklong Denver Book Fair. That spring, I visited the towns of Farmington, Portales, Las Vegas, Silver City, and Las Cruces, all in New Mexico, to manage one-day exhibits of newly adopted state textbooks published by UNM Press. I made a trip to Portales to deliver some of the Wallace books bought by UNM.

I did most of the work on a book called *New Mexico Historic Documents*, on which his friend Richard Ellis did the introductions. Because of UNM Press policy, the book came out over Ellis' name. I took this in stride as part of the rules of the game and did not regret any lost glory, getting sufficient inner satisfaction, as in an identical case in 1974 with the UNM Press book *Western Writing*.

In early October, I went to Tulsa to run a booth for UNM Press. While there, I met the son of my brother Howard, Glenn Rittenhouse and Glenn's wife, Juanita.

On November 15 (my 63rd birthday), Charlotte and I went to El Paso. Pearce Grove did a book on New Mexico newspapers and the book published by UNM Press won an award from the *Border Regional Library Association*. Grove's wife was there to accept the award certificate with me making the acceptance remarks at a dinner.

In early December, I took a quick trip to New York City on UNM Press business but added a day on my own to scour bookshops.

I was 65 in 11/1977. I would have worked longer, but mandatory retirement at UNM was age sixty-five. Custom allowed one to finish the fiscal year, so I could stay on until 6/30/1978. Congress considered an act to extend the age to 70 and make it illegal to discharge anyone for age alone below 70, but while both House and Senate passed versions, there was a slight difference. The bill went to a joint committee to be hashed over. By Christmas adjournment, the bill was still hung up.

For the past couple of years I became discouraged with the lack of direction at UNM Press. The editorial program, what there was of a planned program, drifted heavily toward books on Latin America and there was less enthusiasm for books on the American West. Therefore, regardless of Congress, I would retire anyway and work with rare books from home. I wrote a letter of intent to retire in that upcoming June.

I wrapped up 1977 with

- a book fair in Los Angeles in October
- some trips to Portales and to Las Cruces, taking books to the universities there.

After my retirement, I became a resource for the UNM Library and a royalty-based author with the UNM Press. Hugh Treadwell was forced to resign in 1979.

On 5/8/1987 at age 75, UNM Press reprinted my 1971 book, *Maverick Tales*, in paperback form.

Commendations

When I retired, UNM Press staff without my knowledge asked many people to write a testimonial letter to me. A [red-cover hardback] book of these letters was given to me.

[[Scan and extract sample text from Commendation Letters from Retirement Book]]

UNM Lecturer

During my years at UNM, I taught two courses.

The first occurred in fall 1968, my first year at UNM Press. We had our offices in the Journalism building. The mystery novelist, Tony Hillerman headed the journalism department, and the only course in advertising taught at UNM was in his department.

During early summer 1968, the teacher of advertising abruptly accepted a job elsewhere. Students were expected, but Tony had no instructor. He knew of my previous advertising agency experience, so he asked me to teach this course for one term. I taught the course fairly well, although there was no feedback. As I had no B.A. degree, I was not a "professor" but was listed only as a lecturer.

The class ran an hour four days a week from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. I received no compensation. It was assumed that my pay at the Press covered the first half hour on "company time," and that the second half hour [during lunch] was as a volunteer. However, time spent at home preparing classroom materials, grading papers, etc., was wholly on me. I enjoyed the experience. I received no thanks but did not expect any.

I taught a course on the *History and Appreciation of the Book*, but was much more than that title implied. Dean Harvey of the UNM Library sent me a memo asking for suggestions on what such a course might cover. My reply was long, detailed, and enthusiastic, so much so that he named me to conduct the course.

I taught this course in several fall terms of 1974-1977, inclusive. During the fall 1974 term, I taught this every Tuesday evening for three hours, again as "lecturer." It was successful with 22 students completing the course. Each student got three hours credit.

I was paid \$750 and earned every cent. I spent half that sum purchasing materials, preparing slides, etc. I spent much time preparing slides and exhibits for seventeen lectures and conducting two examinations. For each hour in the classroom, I spent two hours in outside preparation, so it was not a money making experience.

Students in New Mexico generally were outside the orbit of graphic arts and book publishing, compared to students in great cities of the eastern or western coasts. The world of books often came to me as a revelation, and that it was late in my life that I found my true opportunities. Perhaps, I could open some early doors for my students.

The course covered the origins of printing and papermaking, from Babylonian clay tablets, Egyptian papyrus, and Gutenberg's first work as a printer. It discussed the styles of type and their aesthetics and uses, and the format of the book, up to modern methods of printing and binding. We talked about the first printing in the New World and in New Mexico. We talked about printers' inks and modern papermaking. We had sessions on how to copyright a book, how to operate a store selling new books, and a store selling rare books. We discussed fine lithography from the stone or by photo-offset.

We had one session on book collecting. At times, I had a guest lecturer such as a binder, book salesman, or lithographer; and sometimes I gave those lectures myself.

Each student was required to complete a project in lieu of a term paper. Some did small, complete books; some drew illustrations (for Art credit) or prepared a lecture for children (for Education credit). Some wrote a paper or compiled a bibliography on some printer's work. The results in the first year were an amazing outpouring of creativity.

I repeated the course three more years, each with thirty to forty students. Each year I added more exhibits and improved the content. I had to re-study the texts and I learned more than my students did. I taught my course for the fourth and last time in fall 1977, as I could not teach after I retired from staff, nor did I want to be tied down to a fixed schedule. Take-home pay [after withholding] for teaching was only \$655, or about \$3 an hour net for the [many prep] hours involved.

Pamela Smith, former director at the Press of the Palace, said in 2014:

I would like to have been one of Jack's students. Indeed, I enjoyed every chance to pick his brain and to study his work.

One of his last gifts to the Press of the Palace was a shooting stick that came from one of New Mexico early newspapers. A shooting stick was a kind of forked metal piece used to drive wedged quoins together before they had [geared] quoin keys.

In 11/1981, I once lectured to a class of graduate history students about rare books.

Charlotte in 10/1999 (transcribed):

Jack always wanted to give a seminar ever since his self-published "Wagon Book" on the subject of how to find data and information on a selected topic.

Chinks in the Ivory Tower

While at UNM, I had quite a revelation about the academic world. I was naive, assuming that all of the teachers were as devoted as priests, as devoted to learning as was Louis Pasteur in his laboratory, and lived in a rather pure, unselfish world. I learned quite quickly that there is as much "office politics" played on campus as in any corporation.

There were indeed many fine individuals as in medicine or in the ministry. However, many hacks did unimaginative daily work and sought only to hold the job. In short, the people at the universities were not much different from the middle and upper echelons elsewhere. The best explanation of this is in the book *The Academic Marketplace* [Theodore Caplow, Reece McGee, 2001].

Part of the cause is in the policies and practices where the employer is government related; in a city, county, state, or federal job. There are few rewards for good performance and few penalties for poor performance.

Few people were fired as the tendency was to shift them to some other department. Of course, there were cases where serious inability or major mistakes resulted in firings, but even then, the employee was let off gently weeks or even months [in advance, saying] that their employment would not be renewed in the next fiscal year. These policies led to a general letdown in incentives after the initial surge of enthusiasm and effort.

Yet, I got a raise in pay. In the 1970s, before the drop in state income in the oil-producing states, there was usually a small salary increase each year. It may have been only three to five per cent, sometimes it was around eight per cent, but all salaries kept rising some each year.

UNM Library

The UNM Library named me as an honorary bibliographical consultant for the two fiscal years 1973-74 and 1974-75, a post with no financial compensation.

Late in 1974, I was appointed to a committee of New Mexico librarians and humanists planning a program of public meetings on basic problems of the state, to be funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project went only through its planning stage. For this, I wrote a short profile statement on the major problems and characteristics of New Mexico, which was well received.

Also in 1974, I sold my collection of books and pamphlets on printing to the UNM Library for \$1,500.

In 1979, after retirement, I handled a large book hunt project for their Special Collections [described in detail below].

On 9/9/1980, the Friends of UNM Libraries bought from us their "millionth book," which was kept a secret until the presentation was made on 5/2/1981. It was a copy of Hakluyt's *Voyages*, printed in London in 1599-1600. Obtaining the book was quite a coup, involving the only transatlantic telephone call I ever made. We competed with many other leading booksellers in the US and found it quite prestigious to have our book the winner. The story of this episode appears within the chapter *West is Wider*.

On 9/1982, Dr. Donald Farren, head of the rare books division at the UNM Library, resigned for a better post at the University of Maryland. No immediate successor was named. We hated to see Donald go.

In 1983, I sold to UNM Library a [rare] collection of balloon books for \$5,500.

UNM Library Special Collections - 1979

Proposed Project

One of my most interesting bookselling ventures ever engaged was a fast-moving [library buying project]. During the last week of March 1979, Dr. Donald Farren, head of Special Collections at the UNM Library for about nine months, was told that some funds was found for rare and out-of-print books. The books needed to be selected, found, delivered, and invoiced within nine weeks.

He discussed the matter with me. It was not merely spending a certain amount of money willy-nilly. He wanted to fill in as many gaps as possible in certain areas. He wanted certain titles in Wagner-Camp's *Plains and the Rockies*, dealing with the Southwest, but he wanted no government publications. He wanted to secure any titles UNM did not have from the list in my Santa Fe Trail bibliography. He would give preference to any Southwestern item that was in Colton Storm's bibliography of the Graft Collection.

Building the Want List

A year earlier, the curator of the Anderson Room collection at UNM checked the Graft bibliography against the card file of the Anderson Room books, so we had some sort of list to start with. By the end of five days, I went through the Graft bibliography and compiled a list of Southwestern items that Graft owned but which UNM did not have. I did the same with the Wagner-Camp list and with my own Santa Fe Trail list, on which I already made many notes indicating copies held by UNM.

The "want list" itemized 437 titles, with the date of the desired edition and an indication about its location in the [principal Americana] bibliographies by Wagner-Camp, Storm, Howes, and Rittenhouse. While the Special Collections staff double-checked my list against Library holdings, I went through catalogs and guides of several dealers to [probe for] availability and current prices. I checked catalogs of such dealers as John Jenkins, Fred White, T. N. Luther, Argonaut, Ron Randall, Dawson, Mike Ginsberg, Jack Reynolds, Walter Reuben, and others. I checked again the price guides of Bradley, Mandeville, and auction houses.

At the end of this second stage, the staff found several titles elsewhere in the UNM Library that they transferred into Special Collections. No duplicates were to be purchased, but if the Library held a later edition, a first edition could be sought. For a few important authors such as Ruxton, Kendall, Gregg, etc., Farren wanted the Library to hold all editions, as an aid to scholars.

This plan of purchasing was submitted to the head of the UNM Libraries and received initial approval. Farren could not make an immediate buying trip himself, because State restrictions required one month's advance travel requisition and there was not that much leeway. Therefore, I offered to travel myself, to provide the books at the dealers' catalog prices in those cases where they were catalogued, and to take my compensation including travel costs from the small courtesy discount offered to me by the trade.

As soon as the staff at Special Collections quickly checked the original list, I retyped the shortened list and mailed copies to several leading Americana dealers whom I could not reach readily by travel. These included George Tweney, Lincoln House, Sam Weller, Alta California, Book Sail, The Hermitage, and Henry Clausen, asking that they telephone me collect if they had even one book. Only two called and each did not have more than two titles. I called a couple of the others to make sure they had received the lists, but they had searched their stock without success.

Hunt Procedures

I carried copies of the [constantly updated] "want list" with me on my travels. My plan when visiting a bookshop was to hand the list to the owner. While he and his assistants scurried about looking for any of the titles, I scanned the stock myself in search of related titles. In some cases, I made notes of titles and prices of items on dealers' shelves but did not buy the books. Later I telephoned back for several of these books.

I arranged bank financing so I could pay spot cash for all purchases or leave a deposit check on books taken on approval. Some dealers would let me to take some books on approval for a week. Therefore, I made two piles: one set for which I paid spot cash and another pile to be taken on approval, and I left a separate check for each pile.

Not all dealers were willing to give books on approval. I was told that some were temperamental "characters" hard to deal with by anyone. I had no [such] trouble by simply not raising the question of "on approval" with them and by showing ready cash. Everyone opened locked cabinets, file cases, back rooms, etc.

I travelled [by air] with two cases, each of which had another case inside, so came back with four cases: three to be checked and one as a carry-on. I purchased some books for my own stock and had those sent [home] by slow post.

The Hunt Began

We chafed for a week until the leading booksellers returned from a New York book fair then in progress.

- On April 17, I scheduled to talk at Western New Mexico University in Silver City. Charlotte and I left earlier on Saturday and by Sunday were in Scottsdale, where I visited Van Allen Bradley. He had only one item on the list. I went to Guidon Book Shop where Aaron Cohen came down to open the place just for me and I found a few titles. We drove to Tucson where I checked the three best shops and found a few more titles. We [finally] went over to Silver City.
- On April 24, I flew down to Austin and spent the time from Tuesday to Thursday at Jenkins' office and warehouse. I worked late each evening and slept in the living quarters at the shop. I made the circuit of the famous "Eberstadt Vault" at least three times, checking every title on the shelves, and then checked other rooms. I spent a few hours at the shop of Ray Walton.

At the end of the April 24 trip, I came back with many items on the "want list" and some that were peripheral but which I suspected were not at UNM but should be.

I sent in a want ad to *A-B Bookman's Weekly*, listing over a hundred of the more common titles that might be supplied from the general trade. I wrote to many dealers asking if they still had certain items listed in recent catalogs.

There arose another week's delay, for the head librarian wanted this program to have the approval of the History Department chairman. He came to the Library a week later and endorsed the idea.

- The next morning, I was on a plane to Los Angeles. From Thursday until Sunday, I checked the shops of Dawson, Cherokee, Heritage, Zeitlin, Clark, Hunley, Houle, and Bennett and Marshall. I went to Hollywood Bookshop, Caravan, and some others I just happened to pass along the way.
- I went to San Francisco on Monday and Tuesday, visiting Randall House, Howell, Argonaut, Brick Row, Ross Valley and others.
- I flew back to Albuquerque Tuesday night, May 15.

Each night I telephoned home where Charlotte reported on quotes and offers in reply to my ad in *AB*. Only two or three were duplicates of books I already bought.

- In Santa Fe, I checked with Bob Kadlec and Bart Durham.
- At home, I dealt with Lincoln House and T.N. Luther by mail, and with Fred White by long distance telephone. Perhaps ten others were reached by mail in response to their offers resulting from my ad.

This was the chancy part of the project. Whenever I came across an unfamiliar title, I examined its content to see if it fit UNM's needs as a Southwestern book. If it seemed to qualify, the question then was whether UNM had it.

However, I had to buy many items on chance, and probably a third of all books I bought were in this category of chance. I batted remarkably well on this. I was examining not only books in English but also books in Spanish, French, Italian, occasionally in German, and once in Danish. For example, I found the German first edition of Wislizenus' report of his trip through New Mexico in 1846. This was not in the Graft or Streeter collection. I wagered that UNM did not have it and they did not. At other times, I bought an equally unusual item, only to find that UNM had it.

I was buying for my own stock and picked up a large number of good items that I was sure UNM had but for which I could find other customers. However, UNM did not have some of these, so it worked out well [for both of us].

Settling Accounts

My [closing] step was to prepare a 3x5 card on each book, giving a physical description of each, citing bibliographies in which it was listed, mentioning its particular applicability to the UNM collection, and other points. A [photocopy] of this card was on a slip inside each book when delivered to UNM.

Each day I took up a stack of books [to the UNM Library] with a "packing list." On the next day, Farren indicated the books not wanted, usually because further search had shown that the Library already had a copy. These copies were returned to me. In rare cases, they were sent back to the original dealer if they were [taken] "on approval." This routine was repeated each day, until Library authorities advised that funds were exhausted for the fiscal year, and the project ended.

It was an exciting and challenging operation with 164 of the 437 items sought put on UNM shelves. The greater lesson was that even when one has a good want list and the money to buy, rare books and scarce items are simply not readily available. Building a good collection requires much time and vigilance.

It was in no sense a [financial] windfall for me. The slim margin on which the books were handled covered my travel expenses and some compensation for my time. As the total amount I paid out equaled the total amount billed for \$23,000, my "profit" lay entirely in the books I bought that were turned down because UNM already had a copy.

When these books are sold, my own costs and margin would be recovered. It was not unlike the dealer in new cars, who must wait until the traded-in car sells before he realizes his profit. [This project] enhanced my reputation as a major dealer, gave me much pleasure and pleasant travel, and allowed me to handle books in a price range I had not previously enjoyed, and broadened my knowledge of [such] books and dealers.