

Dec. 10

hing.  
n, email Pamela  
@yahoo.com.  
rdre McCrohan

Harter.  
floor-area excep-  
tions of two bed-  
of the home at 2  
e Carlisle as Cliff

proposed amend-  
e Municipal Code,  
to Title 19, Zon-  
y dwelling units, to  
pliance with recent  
v.

n review, excep-  
variance, second  
license applications  
me at 270 Beach  
and replaced with  
-story home, which  
r the limit. Exterior  
a hillavator. Owner:  
s.

d exception to total  
on of an addition to  
75 San Rafael Ave.  
l Debbie Holland.

ance and revocable  
construction of an  
retaining wall at  
tion of which will  
le lot. Owner: Mai  
able Trust.

olition, variance,  
and revocable li-  
existing carport  
y garage at 40  
os and Stepha-

jack stauffacher 1920-2017

# Tiburon man was celebrated typographer and master printer

By **DEIRDRE McCROHAN**

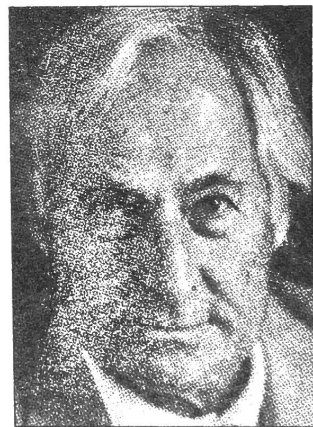
*dmcrohan@thearknewspaper.com*

Jack Werner Stauffacher, a celebrated typeface designer and master printer whose work is in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, died Nov. 16 at his Tiburon home after a period of declining health. He was 96.

In 2004, Mr. Stauffacher was presented with the American Institute of Graphic Arts' Medal for "exceptional achievement in the field of design."

SFMOMA gave him a solo show, "Jack Stauffacher: Selections from the Permanent Collection of Architecture and Design," in 2002 and featured his work in its 2004-2005 group show "Belles Lettres: The Art of Typography."

The museum purchased Mr. Stauffacher's "Wooden Letters from 300 Broadway" and also owns nearly 100 of his works, including experimental compositions using wood and metal type.



**Stauffacher**

See **STAUFFACHER, PAGE 9**

## Stauffacher, *from page 7*

Mr. Stauffacher also designed the lettering for the museum's tote bag.

The Book Club of California's publication of "A Typographic Journey: The History of the Greenwood Press and Bibliography, 1934-2000" was a high honor.

The Bancroft Library purchased Mr. Stauffacher's archive and his 1966 Vandercook cylinder handpress in 2011. The press was restored and is being used by the Bancroft Library Press.

He was the subject of the Getty Research Institute's 2002 J. Ben Lieberman Memorial Lecture, which lauded him as "a pre-eminent figure in the fields of fine book design and letterpress printing."

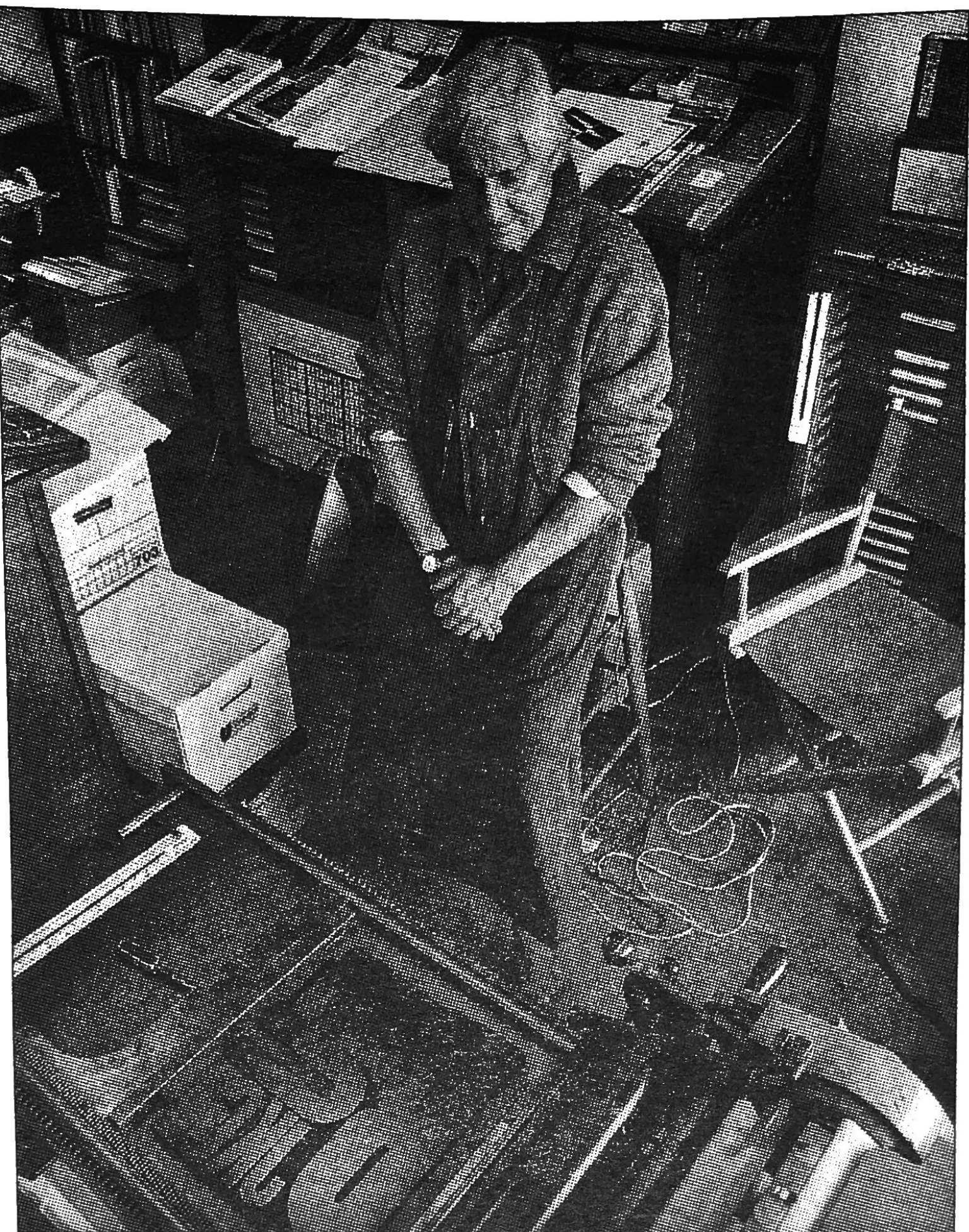
The Pacific Center for the Book Arts in San Francisco featured his last book, "Oxen. Plough. Bicycle. Photographs & Fragments from a Tuscan Diary, 1956-1958," as a highlight of its 2014 member show. It was a personal portfolio of nine gelatin silver prints and a broadside printed on a letterpress printer.

"He had a fine sense of design and a subtle approach to printing that was somewhat understated and, as a consequence, quite elegant," said Peter Hanff, deputy director of the Bancroft Library. Hanff was first exposed to Mr. Stauffacher's work early in his career when he was given a copy of the Hunt Botanical Library catalogue, which Mr. Stauffacher designed, as a model to follow in designing a book on the history of science.

Self-described "typophile" Erik Spiekermann of Belvedere and Berlin — a typeface and graphic designer and author — first met Stauffacher in 1992 when the two were tenants at 300 Broadway in San Francisco, Spiekermann as head of Meta-Design, the international design-consulting firm he originally founded in Berlin in the late 1970s. He said he would remember Mr. Stauffacher for his love of type and books.

"That's one thing about Jack, the way he saw beauty in those ordinary little letter forms we take for granted, like air and water," Spiekermann said. "He took those little letters and turned them into beautiful pieces of sculpture, of art."

Despite his travels and study, Spiekermann said, Mr. Stauffacher always insisted on calling himself a printer.



DENNIS LETBETTER

**Late typographer and master printer Jack Stauffacher contemplates his wooden letters on his Vandercook cylinder handpress in 1999. The press now resides in the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley.**

not a designer.

"It wasn't false modesty, but behind that modesty was a man of letters, an intellectual who had read a lot, written a lot and used letters to communicate as writers do, but also as individual pieces of art," Spiekermann said.

Mr. Stauffacher worked alone but had visitors all the time, friends and colleagues and students who wanted to meet him, according to Spiekermann, who said Mr. Stauffacher was always generous with his time.

Born Dec. 19, 1920, in San Francisco to Frank A. and Elsa R. Stauffacher, Mr. Stauffacher grew up in San Mateo, where his father owned a plumbing company.

As a 13-year-old, he ordered a simple \$15 printing press.

from Popular Mechanics magazine and taught himself how to use it. Printing became a passion. At 16, he opened his Greenwood Press in a small printing studio his father built for him behind their home on Greenwood Avenue.

When he was 20, his Greenwood Press printed its first book, 250 copies of Washington Irving's "Three Choice Sketches by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent."

When the U.S. entered World War II, Mr. Stauffacher was drafted and served as a mapmaker before he contracted pleurisy — an inflammation of the tissue that lines the lungs and chest cavity — and was discharged.

In the postwar years, he was introduced to San Francisco's counterculture by his elder brother, Frank, an experimental filmmaker. He met and befriended Dylan Thomas, Henry Miller, Ansel Adams, Alan Watts, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Kenneth Rexroth, among others, but Mr. Stauffacher never considered himself part of the Beat movement.

He told a San Francisco Chronicle interviewer, "I came out of the earlier period that reflected a different social consciousness."

By the 1940s, San Francisco had become nationally known as a center of fine-printing houses, boasting such printers as Grabhorn Press, Taylor & Taylor and John Henry Nash. For Mr. Stauffacher, that made his hometown the place to be.

On forays to Los Angeles, he met visual artist Man Ray, filmmaker Luis Buñuel and others in the creative community there through his brother. Mr. Stauffacher designed the famous "Art in Cinema" catalogue written by his brother.

In 1947, Mr. Stauffacher moved the Greenwood Press from San Mateo to 509 Sansome St. in San Francisco, at the edge of the city's historic Jackson Square district.

He met his wife, Josephine Grimaldi, when she was visiting a friend's show at SFMOMA, then located in the Veterans Building on Van Ness Avenue. After marrying in 1948, they lived in San Francisco for many years before moving to Mill Valley and then to Tiburon in 1984.

In 1954, Mr. Stauffacher published "Janson: A Definitive Collection," which he later described to photographer Dennis Letbetter, who became a friend and longtime collaborator, as "the summit of my typographic knowledge as a craftsman."

On the basis of that book, according to Letbetter, Mr.

## Stauffacher, *from page 9*

Stauffacher was awarded a Fulbright grant in 1955 to study in Italy for a year. He closed his press and moved with his wife and children to Florence, Italy, where he studied under Italian master printers Giovanni Mardersteig and Alberto Tallone. The grant was for one year, but the Stauffachers used their savings and stayed for three years, his wife said.

After the years in Italy, he served as an assistant professor of typographic design at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, then returned to San Francisco in 1963, where he taught at the San Francisco Art Institute and served as the typographic director at Stanford University Press.

In 1966, he left Stanford to reopen Greenwood Press, this time at 300 Broadway in the city, which he would operate on his own until the end. He produced books and limited editions such as "Albert Camus and the Men of Stone." In 1967, he was commissioned to redesign the "Journal of Typographic Research," later renamed "Visible Language," whose cover became a design icon.

In 1974, he was hired by the University of California at Santa Cruz to start the Cowell Press. Many of his students there went on to careers in graphic design, including Les Ferriss, now the master printer at the Bancroft Library.

He was so central a figure to a Friday afternoon salon of printers, type designers, poets, filmmakers and academics who met at a North Beach cafe for 25 years that, a year ago, when he called to say he couldn't be there as usual, the salon folded for good instead, according to Letbetter.

Letbetter met Mr. Stauffacher in 1988.

"We figured out we could be friends and could work together," he said in an Ark interview. One of their joint projects was "The Vico Collaborations: 1972, 2003, 2006," photographs and broadsides paying homage to Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico at Stanford's Green Library.

Mr. Stauffacher was "a Bay Area living treasure" and "an international titan of design," Letbetter said. "He was an autodidact. He never graduated from any school but he was a mentor and teacher for many people throughout the world.

"He was a humanist in his approach to design," he continued. "If someone wrote something, he wanted to give it to the reader in the clearest possible way. He said his job was to make it easy for readers see the mind of the writer, to get out of the way of the writer and disappear. And yet he was so influential. He told me: 'I see space the way you see photographs. It's like music. It's as much about silence as sound.'"

In addition to his wife of 70 years, Josephine Grimaldi Stauffacher of Tiburon, Mr. Stauffacher is survived by three children, Paula Stauffacher of San Francisco, Francesca Stauffacher of Corte Madera, who is also a graphic designer, and Mario Stauffacher of Tiburon; and a granddaughter, Isabella Bertaud of Corte Madera. His brothers, Frank and fraternal twin Robert, predeceased him.

Services are pending. Donations, to help support Mrs. Stauffacher's care, may be made at [youcaring.com/josephinestauffacher](http://youcaring.com/josephinestauffacher).

---

*Deirdre McCrohan has reported on Tiburon local government and community issues for more than 30 years. Reach her at 415-944-4634.*