

A Generation Remembers A. B. Endress

By Donald M. Tate, Spencerian Penman

Tucked away very neatly in a small black journal kept by A. B. Endress, penman and student at the Zanerian College in Columbus, Ohio, tutored by C. P. Zaner and many other Master Penmen, were notes written beginning September 21, 1908. The Opening page reads, "Penmanship Lessons, Lectures by C.P. Zaner, and other items of Instruction and Information Gathered at the Zanerian College, Columbus, Ohio during my course of study and practice." Between the pages is a tiny photo about one inch high. It is of Mr. Zaner, and looks very much like a school photo taken of instructors who served thousands of students that endeavored to become like their heroes. No, the heroes were not athletes, actors nor politicians. Their heroes were the Master Penmen. Carried in a coat pocket, this small journal was carried into the classrooms of some of America's greatest penmen. These penmen captured the imaginations of young American boys and girls throughout this young country.

With the pages of a new century recently being turned, the horseless carriage accepted as the mode of transportation, the announcement of a world war was yet to come, industry was beginning to thrive on the American scene. Scarcely could these children envision that which was to become their future.

Rather than return to the farm, as did their fathers and forefathers, these young, ambitious students desired to seek their fame and fortune with white-collar jobs, expecting to make a good income. Some could even expect to reach as high as ten dollars a week, while others claimed to have made twenty-five dollars a week, just to be able to write legibly and perform clerical tasks demanded in the workplace. They were the forerunners of those who would someday use typewriters, take shorthand, and yes, even someday use word processors and computers to meet the rigors of a growing and industrious America. Truly it was a country on the move with her young citizens going not only westward, but upward as well.

The Classrooms of Yesteryear

Daily the young students would sit at cramped wooden desks, excited to develop a skill that would, if properly practiced and mastered, allow them to have a job representing security, show a level of professionalism and earn a fair salary. College or university education was beyond the means of many. Learning to use their hands no longer meant using a hammer, hoe, hauling hay, or tediously working with a sewing machine in a darkened factory. It meant sitting at a desk, precisely applying the skills introduced by stem, yet kindly gentlemen who would bring out the best in them. They learned to write ... really write!

Charles Paxton Zaner. To have him as your instructor was to have "one of the three or four men who are leaving their imprint on this generation, and raising the standard of good writing through correct teaching and the ability to execute high grade work. Hundreds of young men and women have come under his instruction, and the Zanerian Art College is the Mecca of the present day penman," wrote L. E. Stacy. The author of more than a dozen books on penmanship and engrossing, Mr. Zaner would be A. B. Endress' instructor.

Imagine the thrill of sitting at the feet of one of the great Masters! Endress' notes read, in part, "Mr. Zaner taught us to think more practice less." The students of 1890 practiced very little, hut thot [sic] much and improved more than all others. Mind over body is absolutely the most important thing. It is the mind that improves. Our concept or percept[ion] is poor at best with us all. The better the mental picture, better is the form produced. Concentration that is above all, important. Practice with a tenacious, logical vigor of mind. You will make a better teacher and he more logical in other things. Finish each line and each page systematically. If you make an error in the midst of your work, do not become careless with the balance, hut do your best to make it the last on the page. Only one thing at a time is a good motto. Keep your mind on your work. Conversation and practice cannot go on together without both suffering."

Such was the dedication of the penman of yesteryear. How unfortunate are those who shall never have the dedicated teacher sit nearby with a watchful eye and providing exacting words of instruction, carefully defining how exact one is to hold their pen or pencil. Nor will they be shown how they are to allow their

entire arm control the strokes or the placement of their paper on their desk. Only if they someday grow to maturity and take a class in "calligraphy", or perhaps read a book written by a 'calligrapher', may they expect to learn what our grandparents and their parents knew so well.

Will our grandchildren and their grandchildren one day hold a letter written by you and proudly say to their loved ones, "Look how beautifully our grandparents were able to write! Don't you wish we could write like that now?" Indeed, it would be most unfortunate if they thought that it is too bad they couldn't have learned to write in their schools. Too often as a former school teacher, I have held reports and test papers and wished I were able to read what the student was trying to say. Not only could they not articulate their thoughts using acceptable grammar, but also their ability to pen these thoughts left much to one's imagination.

With the arrival of computers in today's world (I use them every day), we are again left to wonder what will happen to the penmen of today. Just one hundred years ago, as the century was ready to turn to the 1900's, writing, called Ornamental penmanship was beautiful. We need only look to the magazines at the news stand, or bookstores and find articles about the Victorian Era and antique collecting and realize how many people are wanting and struggling to get back to their American roots, a more genteel time in our past.

Let us remember the words of our young penman, now long gone, and revive those words and thoughts so carefully articulated by C. P. Zaner and the other Master Penmen that inspired these young people. We too can fulfill their dreams and surround ourselves with excellence. We must extend ourselves to the heights our forefathers dreamed of, and wield the pan of excellence to move forward, unshakable in will, and strengthen our commitment to be better penmen. Let us not only be kitchen table calligraphers, but let us seek to attain higher ideals and avoid satisfaction with being mediocre. Let us learn to do what is necessary to succeed! Today we think of our comfort and have been given much; to the student of yesterday, sitting in a cramped position was acceptable.

The last hundred years have given us much in comfort, and our tools have been improved many times. We cannot forget that it was the penmen of a hundred years ago that enlightened us. Let us build upon that past and seek excellence through the efforts of these great teachers and founders. Let us also go forward with a greater determination to learn that which they studied, practiced, and learned until blood and eyes reddened with no sleep until the last curve was perfected. This was the dedication of our forefathers. Should we not seek that same perfection in our penmanship? And should we be favored, and they could look upon us in our day let them smile with appreciation, for we, in deed and practice, have remembered them for who they were, knowing of their successes and afflictions. Though their voices are silenced and physical presence gone, we have been blessed to be able to share their appreciation for beauty and grace because of the written word.