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1960: The Loujon Press adds a new chapter to New Orleans' literary legacy

Sue Strachan SEP 22, 2017 - 3:00 PM



The Times-Picayune is marking the tricentennial of New Orleans with its ongoing 300 for 300 project, running through 2018 and highlighting the moments and people that connect and inspire us. Today, the series continues with the establishment in 1960 of Loujon Press.

THEN: The 1960s were dawning when Jon Edgar Webb, a 58-year-old writer, and Gypsy Lou Webb, an artist, decided to become publishers, founding Loujon Press in the French Quarter. Unlike the fad at the time -- inexpensive magazines made on mimeograph machines -- the duo set out to produce the most unique publications possible. In the process, they became pioneers of high-quality independent publishing. According to "Bohemian New Orleans: The Story of The Outsider and Loujon Press," the first issue of their magazine, *The Outsider*, appeared in 1960 and saw an initial run of 3,000 after a year of production work, having been typeset, collated and bound in the couple's tiny Royal Street apartment. As art writer Nathan Martin wrote in *Pelican Bomb*, "Loujon operated during a particular moment in the history of artistic publishing in America ... and remains a distinctive and compelling entity

at the intersection of fine-press publishing, counterculture literature, and the French Quarter from which it emerged."

NOW: Jon Edgar Webb died in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1971; Gypsy Lou Webb is 101 years old and living in a Slidell community care center. Copies of books published by Loujon Press and issues of *The Outsider* are somewhat hard to find, though a search on eBay shows a number of issues and books are for sale -- but for considerably more than the original cover price which, in the case of issue No. 2, was \$1.

- The second issue of *The Outsider* arrived in 1961. By that point, the Webbs had moved to Ursuline Street, where issue No. 3 was also published. The last and final issue, a double issue, was published in 1968/1969 after the Webbs had moved to Tucson, Arizona.

All these years later, the Webbs' literary legacy lives on, particularly in the case of Bukowski, who first came to New Orleans in 1942, when he worked for the *New Orleans Item* newspaper as an errand boy in the composing room.

Bukowski would continue to return to the city in subsequent years. Even though his poems had been published for several years, the Webbs' Loujon Press is cited with raising his

national profile. About the Outsider, Bukowski wrote, "It was simply the flame bent toward The Outsider. It was the gathering place, the tavern, the cave of the gods and the cave of the devils ... it was the place, it was in ... it was literature jumping and screaming, it was a record of voices and it was a record of time, it was The Outsider, it was Jon and Louise Webb."

By Sue Strachan, staff writer

Sources: The Times-Picayune archives; "Bohemian New Orleans: The Story of the Outsider and Loujon Press," by Jeff Weddle; Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities; Pelican Bomb; staff research

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