

# Liberty retiree finds fun in calligraphy

BY ERNEST HERNDON  
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LIBERTY — Some people might call Frank Boyd a calligrapher. He prefers a different description.

"I call myself a lettering artist," said the retired draftsman, 75.

Boyd's work has been on display this month at the McComb Library and is for sale at the new Guy's Pharmacy in Summit and the St. Andrew's Activity Center gallery in downtown McComb. He also has plenty at Studio B, the small building beside his house where he does his work and his wife Carolyn makes jewelry.

Calligraphy is an ancient art that means beautiful writing. It can be found in such diverse places as Chinese tapestries and medieval Bibles.

Boyd discovered it 40-odd years ago while working as a draftsman.

He was born in Huntsville, Ala., and raised in Monroe, La. He spent a semester at Louisiana State University, including a class in architecture, before returning to Monroe to study commercial art at Northeastern Louisiana University, now the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

On his first job as a draftsman in Monroe, his architect boss taught him the basics of hand-lettered illustration. Later, in Baton Rouge, Boyd signed up for a class offered by the Baton Rouge Calligraphy Guild.

His teacher was inflexible, insisting on black ink and Gothic style. Boyd didn't stick with that approach, preferring color and flexibility. In a word, fun.

Meanwhile he was working as a draftsman on such jobs as designing industrial pipe layouts.

"I worked at about every plant in Baton Rouge," he said.

Being a draftsman helped him get a handle on calligraphy.

"As an old draftsman you lettered till your hand fell off," he said.



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Boyd makes his mark on a piece of paper in his studio.

Before the invention of the printing press, calligraphy played a major role in the transmission of information. Boyd describes medieval Irish monks toiling from dawn to dusk in uncomfortable circumstances with handmade paper, quills and ink made of animal fat.

"We made some in Baton Rouge. Slink? We poured it out," Boyd said.

"Back then the big thing was redoing the Bible."

Now calligraphy is used in wedding invitations, signs and the like.

A calligrapher, or lettering artist, keeps his elbow off the table when writing. Various pens and inks are available now,

including felt tip pens, which Boyd likes because there's less danger of spilled ink.

"You want that pen barely skimming the surface, and if you nick that paper, the ink spills," he said. "After you get the basic strokes down, you should develop your own style."

He can identify some calligraphers simply by their style.

Boyd does his lettering on different types of cloth and paper. It's important to use a surface where the ink won't run.

He and his wife retired to her native Amite County — she was a Whittington — eight years ago. They live on South Greensburg Road. He's a regular at the Liberty Drug Store coffee shop,

though he said members are gradually dying out.

He's open to teaching his art, but has found few who are interested in learning such an ancient and painstaking skill in an era of computerized graphics and fonts.

Boyd rejected the idea of trying to make a living through calligraphy — "too much hassle," especially now.

"I'm not that good. At this age I'm kind of shaky," he said. "Plus, when you do wedding invitations you have to work with the mother of the bride."

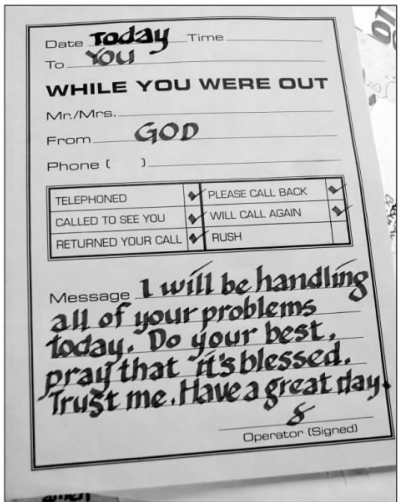
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, call Boyd at (601) 657-2453 or email [cboyd74@yahoo.com](mailto:cboyd74@yahoo.com).

*'As an old draftsman, you lettered till your hand fell off.'*

Frank Boyd  
Retired draftsman



Above left, a framed piece of hand-lettering stands amid the clutter in Boyd's studio outside Liberty. Above right, Boyd employs a touch of humor in this hand-lettered memo to himself.



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