

ASPECT MAGAZINE: THE SMALL PRESS AND THE SOMERVILLE, MA. SCENE.

By Doug Holder

Somerville is a city of many dimensions. It is an eclectic urban soup of professionals, newly arrived immigrants, artists, students, dreamers, drifters, all living in close and hopefully comfortable proximity. What may not be immediately apparent is that it is and has been a city of small presses and little magazines. Offhand I could think of the Boston Literary Review, Dark Horse, Small Moon, Yellow Moon Press, Davis 2 Porter, Ibbetson Street, Abyss and a host of others. Of all these presses, some would argue that ASPECT MAGAZINE and ZEPHYR PRESS founded by Somerville's late Ed Hogan are the most notable.

June Gross, who was Hogan's wife and former editor of Somerville's Dark Horse Magazine told me over tea in her home outside of Union Square, Somerville that there was not much of a literary "scene" in Boston in the 70's, when Aspect was around. There was some activity in Harvard Square, and a fair number of transient small magazines that appeared and vanished into the ether. Reflecting on the Cambridge and Somerville literary milieu, Gross recalled: "People from Cambridge always said, ' Oh, I always get lost in Somerville.' People from Cambridge never came to Somerville. It was a blank space. Somerville was a blank space."

If what Gross said was true then Hogan certainly filled the void with his prolific output of magazines and books over the years. Hogan, who died at the age of 47 in 1997 in a canoe accident, ran Aspect from 1969 to 1980, and in this time published many writers who are well-known today. Looking at a back issue from 1977 the roster of poets was quite impressive. Respected bards such as: Robin Becker, Bill Costley, Anna Warrock, Joyce Peseroff, Fred Marchant, all graced the pages of this single issue.

Ed Hogan grew up in Ball Square Somerville. He wrote in the ASPECT ANTHOLOGY ISSUE that he saw his first "little magazine" at age 12. Hogan was from a working class background and had an average public school education. Later he entered the History program at Northeastern University. While there he was inspired by a Bible scholar to pursue writing. Soon after ASPECT was founded in March of 1969. The early issues were simply typed and mimeographed sheets with articles on everything from Edmund Burke to Rock-n-Roll. Aspect was creature of its time, and the writers often dealt with issue like Vietnam, Watergate and the Cold War.

In 1971 Aspect took a turn to the literary. Aspect's first directory listing for writers was in Trace magazine. Later they were listed in Len Fulton's Int. Directory of Small Presses. As a result Hogan was flooded with poetry submissions. And true to Somerville's scrappy outsider image, Aspect did not pander to the mandarins and the academics. Hogan wrote: "We went about editing without undue notice to academic standards or established

reputations . Our contributor's notes showed fewer writer's involved in writing programs or English Department Careers. I like to think we were more open than most to varied sensibilities. As we gained confidence and sophistication we maintained a central concern for accessibility, directness, lack of pretension, and a belief that these values are not antipathetic to literary excellence."

Over the years Aspect produced a Double Fiction Issue that was supplemented by extensive reviews, and a bibliography of small press published fiction. The Third Boston Poets issue included an interview with Phil Zuckerman of Apple-Wood Books, one of Boston's most successful literary small presses.

As any small press publisher knows, it is necessary to have a cadre of loyal, often volunteer staffers to put out a magazine. Aspect had it. Whether on Robinson St., School St., or Ibbetson St, in Somerville, a collective of artists, and writers put out this innovative magazine. One of the staffers Susan Lloyd McGarry wrote: " .editing a magazine collectively, as we do at Aspect, can be wearisome and trying to the temper. But the magazine gains immeasurably from the strength and energy of individuals who have an investment in all (of its) facets.without the others, that pleasure would not exist."

Around 1980 due to the amount of work that it required to run a small magazine and other personal problems, Hogan ended the enterprise. In its place Hogan, along with Miriam Sagan, Ronna Johnson and Leora Zeitlin, established a

small press imprint ZEPHYR PRESS. Zephyr published primarily poetry chaps, literary fiction, and some non-fiction titles. Some of the releases were: AN EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO RUSSIA, and FROM THREE WORLDS: NEW UKRAINIAN WRITING. Hogan's crowning achievement was the COMPLETE POEMS OF ANNA AKHMTAOVA, (a famous Russian poetess of the 20th century), as translated by Judith Hemschmeyer. This collection was critically acclaimed by the New York Times Book Review, as one of the best books of 1990.

Len Fulton, publisher of the International Dict. of Small Presses wrote: " It is the Ed Hogans of the world that make it a better place, and it's the Ed Hogans of the small presses who have kept the movement honest and pointed in the right direction." And indeed Hogan was a dedicated man. Hogan embodied the feisty spirit of Somerville. He was an independent publisher from the wrong side of the tracks, who weathered many a storm and made his press work. His stepdaughter Viesia, recalled him hunched over a desk with an exacto knife for days on end, making sure things were just perfect. I think that's the way Hogan might have wanted to be remembered.

The learning objectives include developing pedagogical methods to afford students opportunities to sustain intellectual development, in scholarly inquiry and production, and apply method and theory to practice by working with primary documents. The Project also seeks to empower students in an institutional setting that promotes

critical reflection on rapidly changing forms of digital communication and algorithmic organization: for these technologies not only organize information but increasingly shape how we use language and make meaning.