



*Plenty of Nothin'. Woodcut by Leonard Hutchinson*

# TERRY STILLMAN AND STILLMAN BOOKS

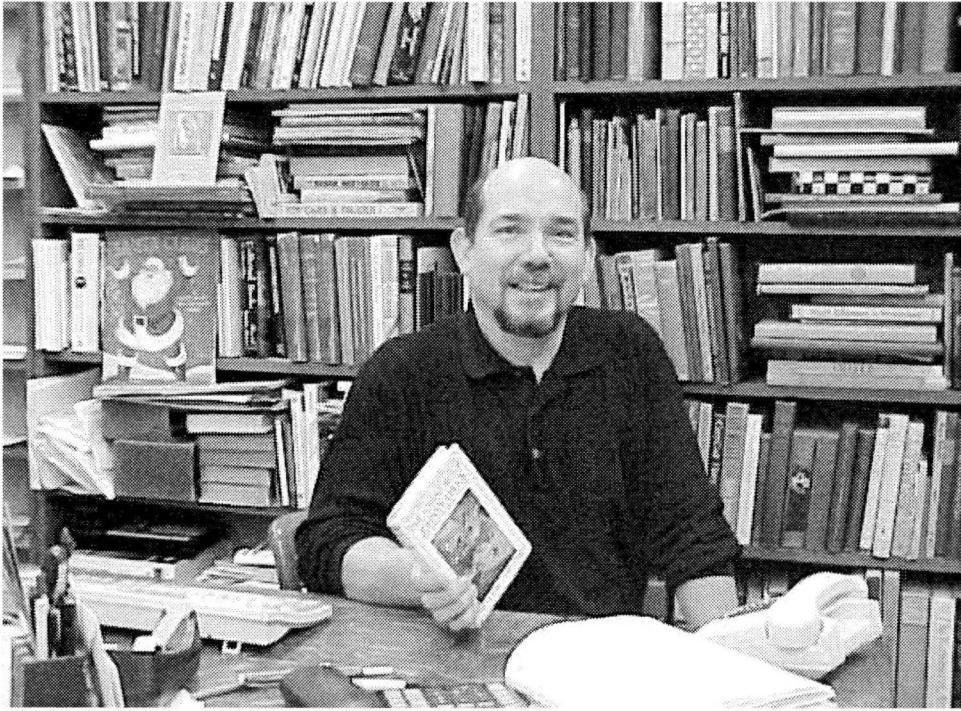
*by Terry Stillman*



IN DECEMBER, 2001, I celebrated my 20th anniversary of owning and operating a retail bookstore in Vancouver, British Columbia. Maintaining any type of business for twenty years is a major accomplishment. Buying and selling used books for twenty consecutive years is somewhat of a miracle. My hat is off to all of those booksellers who have already reached this milestone, and good luck to those booksellers who are aspiring to follow. Before, and during, my book-selling career, I was an advertising copywriter, salesman, technical writer and sometime contributor to magazines. I've always derived the most joy from buying and selling books. The feeling must be the same for all those other people with twenty years in the business. You don't stay in the book business unless you love books and enjoy placing wonderful books into the hands of other booklovers.

To reach this level of bookselling, a number of things must be in your favour. Firstly, the love of books as mentioned—and I don't mean just to read, I mean to touch and admire as well. And one must acquire the ability to recognize a good book, and even an exceptional book when it comes along. Secondly, a successful bookseller must be able to interact well with collectors and fellow booksellers. As they say in most businesses, "networking is key." It helps if you specialize in one or two subject areas...you'll get a lot of referrals that way. Thirdly, if you're a single person, it's good to have some form of independent income, however small, or a goodly amount of money going in. If you're in a relationship, it's very important to have the support of your partner, part emotional and part financial if necessary. The book business has lean times and everyone is likely to experience a few. Fourthly, and fifthly, you'll need a good (understanding, and not too greedy) landlord, and a good (understanding and flexible) bank manager. I've been fortunate enough to benefit from all of these factors. Thanks to everyone who has helped me along the way!

I bought an existing bookstore at Kingsway and Joyce in Vancouver, in December, 1981. It was all used stock, about sixty percent paperback, the remainder hardcover. I set about changing the mix to more hardcover stock,



and in October, 1985, when I moved west on Kingsway to a lovely space just west of Knight St., my stock was about fifty percent hardcover. By the summer of 1999, I had increased the hardcover portion of my stock to about seventy-five percent and I had eliminated many subjects from my store. I then decided to get out of the general bookstore business and concentrate mostly on my two specialties: children's and illustrated books, and aviation. Under the umbrella of "children's and illustrated," I included about a hundred years of children's books, but also art books and some illustrated literature. I retained some holdings in sea/naval, military, espionage, fishing and golf. This is the mix that you will find in my bookstore today. Most of my stock consists of out-of-print titles and I sell mostly to collectors, both locally in my store, and worldwide over the Internet. If you're a collector in any of these categories, please come to visit. If you're searching for an ideal gift for a collector of one of the above categories, or for a special gift for a child (or a nostalgic adult), please contact me and I'll do my best to help you choose something suitable.

The presence of the Internet has not, and will not, spell the elimination of the traditional used and antiquarian bookstores. Many of my colleagues have experienced steady growth in sales since the advent of the Internet. The Internet has changed the book business in a few ways, but mostly it is, in itself, a tool which can be used to the benefit of bookstores. I believe that people who love books, people who are looking for good books, still prefer to visit bookstores and purchase their books from booksellers to whom they've become accustomed. I believe that the book-buyer wants the book-seller to not only survive, but thrive, in his or her current environment. I believe that with the right amount of diligence and desire and luck, there will be many more Canadian booksellers who will reach that twenty-year plateau and beyond, without having to resort to running a one-room Internet operation. My hope is that Canadian book-buyers will prove me right.

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*The Last Trip. Woodcut by Rodolphe Duguay, 1936*