

**From:** Ed Bohannon [mailto:edbohannon@hargray.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 07, 2013 7:51 AM

**To:** Kevin Riddle

**Subject:** Re: Bob Tharp - "Old China Hands" collection at the Oviatt Library at Cal State Northridge.

Hi Kevin,

It has been so long since someone asked me about Bob and Eva's book that I was happy you wrote. That book was a labor of love for the two of them, and unfortunately Bob passed away before it was printed. He and I had worked about three years on it and it was tough. After he passed, Eva contacted me and asked what could be done. I told her to send everything to me and I would typeset it and start placing the photos and art. Well I didn't know what I was getting into. First she sent me some funny-type of hard disk that would not fit any PC I had ever seen. Seems Bob had purchased an old electric word processing typewriter made by AT&T and used a proprietary type of software that nobody had ever seen before. I had tons of information on these disks and even though I worked for a large printing company (Jostens) none of their in-house typesetters could open the disks. I searched the internet and found a company in Chicago that would run out the raw type for me at \$20.00 a page. We had no idea how many pages were there. It was mind boggling.

I was stressed to the MAX. I worked it for months and eventually found a girl in our type shop who figured out how to get something going with it. I told her to do her best and when she finished, we had almost 2,000 pages of type, of which about 75% was workable. At that point Eva got about 12 former IFELers and other friends to take about 300 pages each and try to make it work. About six months later we had a huge pile of pages with no order or photos. I then started paginating all the work and placing the photos. I am a sort of stickler for protocol on page layout thus you won't find hyphenated words going from one page to another...all chapters had to start on a right hand page and all right hand pages had to be an odd number. I would guess it took me about six months to put everything together and then I sent it to Eva.

All hell broke loose when she got it. She wanted her input on almost every page and started making changes that were impossible. She was in Monterey and I was in Charlotte and that made things even more difficult. And then also she started finding more photos, drawings and maps to insert. Each time I had to reposition the pages to add type and move each succeeding page down by one or two making sure I followed the even/odd layout.

Whew, I can't believe I am writing all this. If I didn't love those two people so much, I would have quite long ago. All in all, I had about five years of my life in that book and Bob wasn't even there to proof or guide me.

Then guess what? We ended up with over 2,000 pages and our bindery equipment couldn't bind a book with much more than 800 pages. It was MASSIVE!!! I told Eva we needed to go to about three volumes and suggested we make them into a boxed set with a heavy cardboard sleeve for them to fit in. They would have weighed about 25 pounds and the cost would have equaled over \$100 a set.

She told me she did not have the money as Bob had only left \$50,000 to do the whole job. So back to the drawing board. First, I told her that all my five years of work would be at no cost to her. That was a relief. Then I suggested she get her "team" of 12 to cull the book down to about 800 pages. She said that would be fine so we started cutting down the book. About 50 chapters and 400 photos were cut out. He had about 10 chapters just on Chinese humor and riddles. He was a genuine story-teller.

Even after everything was done, she was still making corrections. We had to turn all the type over to educated Chinese like Charlie Chu to check Chinese characters and spelling. Then she wanted historians and geographers to look at it. You can imagine that I was going crazy...but I just couldn't find the strength to tell Eva "No!"

I'm not going to write too much more, but the initial printing run was to be 5,000 books and the cost was about \$60,000. She said she could not afford it and we cut the number of books down to 2,800 copies and \$58,000.

That came to a little over \$21 a book and that was before we chose the beautiful RED leatherette book cover, Gold stamping, full color end sheets, full color laminated dust jackets, shrink wrapping and custom corrugated boxes. Then, gulp, I had to add profit for the printing company. Since I didn't charge my fee that brought the cost per book down to \$37.00 each, so Eva decided to sell them at \$36.95 and doing everything possible to make sure each and every one was sold.

\* After about 3 years, we still had about 900 books left and on her death bed, she told me to send the rest to Wheaton College in Illinois. Today I don't know if any are left or where they are.

I took all the printing plates, typesetting, disks, photos, maps, charts, etc. and wrapped them up real good just in case a movie was made of it. There was talk of that from one of our members in Los Angeles...but it never happened. Then in August 2005, I was ruined by Hurricane Katrina and now Bob and Eva's precious book lies on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.

As to what ended up at Cal State, I have no knowledge of this, but I do know that several universities corresponded with Eva about a donation of personal items. That may be where they got some of his stuff. But I do know that I personally had everything dealing with the book.

Wow, that is a long story and as Paul Harvey said, "Now you know the rest of the story." If you think the IFEL group would like to hear this story, please pass it on.

All my best to you,

Ed

\* Steve Banks received this reply to his query to Wheaton College, regarding the cache of TCUWC copies warehoused there.

Thank you for your inquiry. I've been calling various offices on campus asking about *They Called Us White Chinese*, but I haven't found anyone who's heard about this stack of copies. If the unsold copies were sent here, they were probably sold or distributed several years ago. I'm sorry we couldn't help more in your search.

Cordially,  
Special Collections  
Wheaton College