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Handsetting type is an art form well worth the extra effort.

Visit Larkspur Press

Stringing words together usually involves typing on a computer keyboard. But Gray Zeitz does it literally, carefully placing each letter of type down, spelling out each word, and readying it for the old-time printing methods he uses at Larkspur Press.

Located in Monterey, Kentucky, 15 miles north of Frankfort, Larkspur Press specializes in works by Kentucky authors, and Gray takes his time with each. "It's fun. I enjoy setting type by hand," he says. He must; he's run Larkspur for 27 years.

Gray welcomes visitors to his small operation, and many of his beautifully printed and illustrated books are for sale there. Three Chandler and Price presses date from 1915 to 1920. One, a Washington hand press, made its printing debut in the late 1800s.

Regular editions, which are nicely done but affordable, sell for \$10 to \$30 each. Hand-bound special editions sell for \$60 to \$130 each. Gray usually prints no more than three books a year, along with some small custom printing jobs. "I published four books last year," he says with a smile. "It was a busy year."

Among the most popular books Gray has recently printed and sold at Larkspur is *The Farm*, a book of poetry by Wendell Berry. Another favorite is *Still Life With Watermelon* by

Bobbie Ann Mason. Other authors include Kentucky natives Thomas Merton and Gray himself.

Visitors find it nearly impossible not to pick up the books. The paper feels thick and rich, and the printing lies crisp and black against the page. The 100-year-old hand presses allow Gray to use typefaces—some quite beautiful—not found on all computers. "My favorites change," he says. "Right now I'm enjoying using Garamond. I also favor Emerson and Joanna." The rich names complement the finished product.

And how did Gray become interested in this Benjamin Franklin style of printing? While attending the University of Kentucky, he wandered into the King Library Press, where a hand press caught his eye. "One step into that print shop," says Gray, "and I was hooked."

Still hooked after all these years, Gray continues to raise printing to an art form—one that all book lovers can enjoy.

Larkspur Press: Monterey, Kentucky; (502) 484-5390. **Hours:** by appointment only. **Directions:** From Frankfort, take U.S. 127 north for 18 miles. A mile before arriving in Monterey, turn right on Sawdridge Creek West Road. Larkspur is the first driveway on the left. ♦