

PRELUDE: GUNNAR A. KALDEWEY AND THE CHAPIN LIBRARY

One of the happiest institutional relationships Gunnar Kaldewey has maintained in America has been with the Chapin Library of Williams College. Begun as a retirement project in 1915 to benefit future students of his alma mater from which he graduated in 1869, the Library reflects much more than the founder's interests. It demonstrates Alfred C. Chapin's erudition in collecting books and manuscripts that would document the people, ideas, and events of western civilization. Aware of the scope and precious contents of this Library that was almost in Kaldewey's backyard (Poestenkill is twenty-seven miles due west of Williamstown), Eleanor Garvey, the head of the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts at Harvard's Houghton Library, advised him to pay a visit and discover close at hand a collection of books and manuscripts that were part of his repertoire learned as a European rare book dealer and as a habitu  of both public and collectors' libraries. So even before we were introduced to his books, Kaldewey was introduced to our books. That our medieval manuscripts, incunabula, and illustrated books of six centuries impressed him was made clear the next time Kaldewey had European visitors in town at Poestenkill, and he called ahead to bring them over so 'that we can look at some real books.' Several times we have been honored to entertain Kaldewey and Bun-Ching Lam and their closest German friends, Wulf and Akka von Lucius and their dearest American friend Juliette Moran. Learned, gracious, and wide-ranging in their experiences, each hour spent with them, which usually turned into an afternoon, became a mutual learning process in the presence of great books. Gunnar Kaldewey has always seemed exhilarated at the end of such sessions when it was necessary to take his guests back to Poestenkill. For the past twenty years that same pattern has been repeated several times each summer as the stream of visitors to Poestenkill and the Kaldewey Press were redirected for a day to the Chapin Library. And each visit here brought with it an invitation to visit in Poestenkill, many of which were accepted as overnight stays, meaning more of the dynamic of Kaldewey, Lam, and the aura of the Tower of Poestenkill could be absorbed and understood, enhanced by dinner and salad and sweetened with wine from a cellar as distinguished as the books of its proprietor. Only someone, as this writer, who has slept several summer nights in the Moon Watching Pavilion will understand fully why the deluxe issue of Lafcadio Hearn, 'Insect-Musicians' (2001, EK 35) could not be resisted for acquisition to at once compliment and enhance the Chapin Library's literary, natural history, and artist book collections. The Library hopes that its acquisition and sorting and storage of much Kaldewey ephemera, including selective printouts from the Internet, will compliment the dozens of artist books in both series issued by Gunnar A. Kaldewey that are kept here as a part of an international center for artist books we are working to develop.

A QUARTER-CENTURY OF GROWING AND LEARNING

Gunnar A. Kaldewey was born August 24, 1946, on the island of Fehmarn, 71 square miles of flat land with a village, farms, woods, and beaches, that lies in that convoluted water-passage between