

Charles E. (*Charlie*) Knight

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Mimeograph skills.

At about 5 years of age Charlie started drawing on just about everything and at the same time liked to talk and play as if he were a preacher. He eventually started "Sunday School" and by age 7 to 10 was interested in the "newsletter" at the congregational church his family attended. With the encouraged support of his Uncle Harold he offered to help. The minister agreed and his Uncle brought him to see a man named "Cap" who apparently had been a captain as some time. He was editing the newsletter, and took a liking to Charlie. What followed were many hours of instruction in using the tools needed to create the stencils for [mimeograph](#) work. Charlie used these skills later in a newsletter he and Teddy French put out in High School, his own pamphlets and gospel tracts, the production of various paper documents for the resort, "[Jug End in the Berkshires](#)" and became the basis for his communications efforts in the print media. [A.B.Dick](#) was a popular machine but the [Gestetner](#) has a superior printing.

The mimeograph was sort of like a silk screen. A layer of material was removed to leave only a thin screen through which ink could flow. This "stencil" was affixed to the "drum" or cylinder of the machine and the ink was released through this drum and where the openings were in the coating the ink would flow through. Charlie obtained mainly the higher quality [Gestetner](#) type [mimeograph](#) products.

Some "stencils" had a sort of gelatin film that was scrapped off or were put in a typewriter and the keys when hit caused a metal "hammer" to come up and strike against a roller that was not hard, but not all that soft either, and it provided a background for the "hammer" to hit against. A piece of paper was placed behind this "roller" and then the "roller (actually the platen) was rotated so the paper came up on the front side. Then a "ribbon" of plastic or cloth impregnated with ink or carbon would pass between where the "hammer" with a metal "type face" on the end of it would strike and the paper followed by the platen (roller). This would cause the image of the font to be transferred from the carbon ribbon to the paper. Hence typing. If you wanted a clearer stencil you took out the ribbon so the "hammer" hit the typeface piece directly onto the stencil, removing the coating at that spot and without the softness that would be there if the "ribbon" were left in place. Various "inscribing" tools could be used to scrape away a thin line to a larger area of this covering and hence drawing the image you wanted to see on the stencil. When the stencil was put on the mimeograph "drum" the ink would flow through the areas removed from the coating over the screen and the image would be transferred to the paper. I was not a terribly clear copy like we have with a photocopy now, but it was much better than other economical means of reproducing things outside of professional printing. The last machine he had was a [risograph](#).

Charlie used these skills to layout the production of and to produce many paged fliers, booklets, folders (which many people call brochures) and all sorts of materials for the church, and other groups and even at "[Jug End](#)". Charlie used an electronic stencil maker at (the now defunct) "[Jug End](#)" and eventually obtained a few himself that he used even up to 1996 with the New Boston Congregational Church. This same method was used to make postal cards. In this case a paper with the pasted up items you wanted to reproduce, drawings, typewritten material, etc. were laid out and glued in place as they were to be printed and placed under a plastic film on one side of a drum in the "stencil cutter". On the other side was placed the blank "stencil" with the covering on it (in this case a sort of greyish film" and an "eye" would focus light onto the drum as it rotated and the light reflected back onto a sensor would have that image of white space or shades of dark transmitted electronically to the "stylus" which then "burned" the image onto the film with electric charges. The resultant "stencil" was placed on the "drum" of the printing machine and copies made by hand crank or electronically as usual.