

# From the Editor

Here's a bit of history:

In the "beginning", a man named Arlie Belcher became Editor in Chief of the first issue of *The Leather Craftsman*, which was published from Nov/Dec 1956 through May/June 1962, and he continued on in that role when the magazine transitioned to its new title, *The Craftsman*, in Jul/Aug 1962 through his retirement issue of May/June 1972. Earl Warren succeeded Arlie with the Jul/Aug 1972 issue, saw the publication through a second name change with the Oct/Nov 1972 edition of *Make It with Leather*, and unfortunately, filed for bankruptcy after Issue 2/1985. (Yes, to confuse matters a bit, the publication schedule altered its months and temporarily moved to a numbered system.)

When the publication resurfaced later in 1985 with the Nov/Dec issue, its title had resumed the familiar: *The Leather Craftsman*. This time, a woman, Camilla Stephens, was at the helm as Consulting Editor, a role she held until Nancy Sawyer became Editor in Chief with the Nov/Dec 1986 issue. Once again, the magazine fell on hard times and went bankrupt after the publication of the Mar/Apr 1990 issue.

My parents, William and Dorothea Reis, were in attendance at a guild show in the Chicago area in 1990 when, to the chagrin of everyone in attendance, the latest bankruptcy was announced. Having recently sold their own business, Bill turned to Dot and asked, "Would you like to publish a leather magazine?" To which she replied, "Only if I get to handle the 'books'". They got to work (I never knew my parents to *not* be working, it seemed – unless at church) and soon mailed the first (Jan/Feb 1991) issue of *The Leather Crafters Journal*, the "s" on *Crafters* delineating the plural. If you check the mastheads, it lists my father as the Editor/Publisher, but this was very much a joint effort of both Dot and Bill's.

The next name change came along in order to include more content and makers in its pages – the Mar/Apr 1994 edition saw "& Saddlers" added to the title. Bill remained its Editor through Nov/Dec 2009, at which time Dot became the Editor from Jan/Feb 2010 through her retirement with the Nov/Dec 2012 issue. (Bill passed away in May of 2010.) My husband, Ralph Solome, Jr., and I purchased the rights from Dot. Since the Jan/Feb 2013 issue, we have remained the Editor/Publisher duo of the publication, *Leather Crafters & Saddlers Journal*. (The "The" was dropped starting with the Jan/Feb 2014 issue.)

Beginning with this issue, the Jan/Feb 2024, the magazine will exhibit yet another new moniker, *Leather Crafter's Journal*. It's a move towards a more concise name and logo; it's also more consistent with what has been our legal name and website for years now, and evidences a similar transition made sixty years ago, when Arlie Belcher oversaw a title shift to "*The Craftsman*"; he saw opportunities like including silver engraving (conchos for saddles) and woodworking (building a stitching horse for heavy leather work) that still resonated with leather crafters.

This issue offers a bit of a look back, some continuations, and always a look forward to something new. In addition, while so many of our advertisers continue to support us (Pecard is celebrating 120 years in business!), we welcome at least three new advertisers to our ranks. And, 2024 will see robust editions of our four trade shows in Prescott, Sheridan, Waco, and Arnhem (Netherlands).

In conclusion, for over thirty years, you have referred to this magazine colloquially (dare I say, endearingly?) as the "*Journal*", as have we. More than ever before, we recognize that this platform should be a sanctuary that sustains the broad spectrum of multi-talented leather artists and makers – yes, crafters upholding the truest sense of the word 'craftsmanship' – and give them agency to be seen and have their voices heard. The all-important, new apostrophe in *Crafter's* says it all: This is *your* magazine.

*Special thanks to Dave Skinner for the new logo!*

*Charlie*