The following excerpts are from an article Cliff wrote for the PSC 30th Anniversary publication.

When I began my sojourn into lettering arts 51 years ago there were numerous Engrossers in Philadelphia (my home town), and other major cities but nary a Calligrapher could you find. The term "Calligraphy" was unheard of among people who carried on the ancient scribal art.

I was introduced to this artform through my father, a former penmanship teacher, who periodically received a publication called the Educator published by the Zaner Bloser Co. of Columbus, Ohio. For someone with atrocious handwriting this magazine was balm to the eyes. Shortly after being discharged from the Navy in 1946. I spent several months at their school. There I was surrounded by the term Engrossing and saw on their walls and in their studios huge, magnificent examples of the Engrosser's art.

Later, while studying at the University of Pennsylvania, I made the rounds of the Engrosser's Studios. There were about six or seven studios in downtown Philadelphia. Until about 25 years ago most engrossers were men. This may have been due to the fact that many started as penmanship teachers who had to travel from school to school and often town to town.

The big studio in New York City was Ames and Rollinson which at one time employed 36 Engrossers. Their President, a former advertising executive, took me on a tour of their rather plain studios. He mentioned that years ago a mainstay of some studios was doing Papal Blessings for immigrants. The studios also did elaborate testimonials, scrolls, diplomas and resolutions. Many engrossers were of a very high caliber in their application of gold leaf, filigree, Celtic knots and other scroll work.

My first commission was for the National Office Management Association because their engrosser, Mr. Burtner, had become too old to do their work. Later on, as the number of Engrossers shrank I picked up work from EA Wright Engravers (.25 per certificate for name and date) and from the Charles Elliott Engravi11g Co. where I lettered on genuine sheepskins. My last work for an Engrosser in Philadelphia was for Roy Knoedler who maintained a small studio on Independence Square. Mr. Knoedler paid me the magnificent sum of .45! A letter name and date on a certificate. Within a week after we upped the price from .45 to .50

A fascinating Engrosser in New York City was August Lang, the official Engrosser for Tiffany. His work was exquisite, matching in detail the work of Donald Jackson and John Stevens. However, at the ripe old age of 85 with one foot in the grave and one on a banana peel he would not reveal to me his source for shell (or French) gold. He said it was a secret and left it at that.

When I worked in New York City with the Boy Scout Movement I came across an Engrossing Studio by the name of J,V. Haring and Son. The studio was stark. The three male engrossers worked at very plain wooden drawing boards with very plain tables and credenzas. The shipping room was also very plain with open wooden shelves holding supplies of frames, albums and paper stock inks and other supplies. Because of my skill in copperplate they often gave me huge batches of certificates to do in my spare time. The thrill was that most of them were for the IBM corporation. By this time, in the early 1970's, I was getting $1.25 per certificate for name and date in script and could earn as much as $20 to $25 per hour.

At the recent Confluence Conference in St. Louis I had the occasion to speak with Donald Jackson, the Queen's Calligrapher. He mentioned that he got his start as an admirer of the engrosser's art and considered himself an engrosser in his early years. Much of his work still bears the stamp of the Engrosser in his careful attention to detail, balance, illuminated letters and coats of arms.

Even up until 20 years ago you could not find a calligrapher in the telephone directories of most major cities. Then, under the impetus given to Calligraphy by the English and by certain Americans including Lloyd Reynolds, calligraphy suddenly became the art/craft to do. Engrossing by any other name (calligraphy) is still engrossing to me. I love it by whatever name and become engrossed in my work every time I put pen to paper.