

## **In Full Disclosure, Part II**

by Gaines Steer

The Story of *The Pronoia Times* newspaper (circa 2007-8) edited, designed, written, published, promoted, and folded by Gaines Steer. In full disclosure.....Here 'tis:

After a hiatus of only 25.7 years, one R. Gaines Steer, former newspaper feature writer, stringer, and op-ed journalist, decided to re-enter the field of journalism. Never mind that legions of newspapers in the U.S. of A. were going out of business. Following in the footsteps of famed newspaper wizard, Hanky Finklestick (What! you never heard of him?), Gaines decided one sunlit day to create his own newspaper. No ordinary desire to be a mere editor or publisher, this pundit and “legend in his own mind” set out to mastermind an entire newspaper, all by his lonesome. Always wanted to be a cartooner and foreign correspondent and editorial writer, not to mention feature headliner and sales manager and cutting edge renaissance man of the newsprint world: a study in modesty....

Thus: performed a routine cost analysis and discovered that I could commission a modest sized paper (16inX11in) on a pretty white stock for approximately \$300 for about 1,250 copies. If I sold memberships for \$5 each, I could recoup the overhead and convince the newspaper's members to snail-mail 10 copies each for a reduced rate, so-to-speak. (Called my graphic artist, copy editor, and layout guru and made the pitch for their help. Two said: “yes.”) Now all I needed was the perfect name for this unique newspaper enterprise. Oh!

This newspaper dream deserved a great title, I felt. One of a kind. A branding that would define the ambitious project and make me proud. My friend, Steve Erickson, scored the touchdown.

“Have you heard of that guy with the funny name who writes horoscopes for newspapers and has coined a word ‘pronoia?’” he asked.

“What does it mean?” I wondered.

“A new way of looking at your experience, something like that. New age.” Steve spelled the new word and I Googled it. Bingo! Rob Breznsy was not only a flaming character, but a first class wordsmith. I viewed his webpage and witnessed Rob mimicking a homeless person with a funky sign alongside a busy California roadway. He was giving out \$5 bills with a sign saying:” Please take some \$, I need to give-back!”

An outrageous wordsmith, this gray-haired guy, Rob B.! He had published a book by the title, *PRONOIA is the Antidote for Paranoia*, and writes a weekly on-line extravaganza (Freewillastrology.com) extolling the many virtues of “pronoia.” What was more intriguing, is his account of his ubiquitous voyage amid a delectable discovery. (I mimic his parlance.) According to his back-story, Rob B. (a Durham, NC Dookie) and his girlfriend were lounging in a coffee shop on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill, NC trying to decide whether to move to California. Rob visited the restroom and there on the wall was a direct serendipitous synchronicity @ paraphrased: “You will never learn your true destiny until you move to California.” Inspired, Rob and his girlfriend took heed and immediately walked up the Franklin Street and took a bus to California. True story! (In full disclosure: that very bus station has been replaced by a hotel.)

Newspapers, I knew, relied on advertisers. No problem! I would invent some advertisers until I could justify selling ads based on circulation. I was a quick learner. I had, for 20 years, promoted my business, The Last Unicorn: unique architectural antiques and other pretties as well as my recently self-

published memoir: *A Story worth Tellin'*. I immediately invented a few bizarre satirical ads (e.g., “organically cremated road kills = designer coffins...”), betting that the reading public would be both impressed and entertained. The Masthead (list of contributors and credits) was a potential problem, as you can well-imagine. Since I was the sole proprietor as well as the sole news staff, etcetera, I had my first newspaper owner/publisher/editor challenge. Got it! I’d mess around with my name and catch a few nifty names to headline the various features. For example, the paper’s Foreign Correspondent was one Judge Gaston B. Hayes, Sr., Ret. In a later edition the paper’s Obituary Column reported the “deceasement of our iconoclastic Foreign Correspondent....” His last written communication was quoted in the obituary: “Honest, there is little reason to continue to interpret alien realities to real Americans, who don’t care for foreigners- noways.” His lifelong friend, J. Edgar Hoover was also referenced.

Decided early on that as Sports Writer, I’d ignore most competitive sports. I wrote a swell piece about hop scotch and competitive marbles. No one complained. Every issue contained some serious journalism. Serious, yet a bit avant garde. The true story depicting the travels of one Charles McCartney the infamous “goat man” who traveled the South by wagon during the 1940’s and ‘50’s, was a highlight and deserved a regional news media award, in my opinion. To tell the truth, a few of my loyal readers actually submitted pieces for print. Sure, as editor I printed all but two stories submitted. Won’t go into why they were rejected. Imagination is a wonderful ally of great journalism. I did publish a poem by R. Dean DeBour, a friend to many. Rumi too, of course. Plus a few strange accounts credited to “Anonymous”. You do know full well who wrote those....

The best part of this venture into the hallowed ground of non-sustainable newspaperism, was the front page instruction for our **Olde Timey Newspaper Fold-in**, which honored generations of former paper boys like me, circa 1949-54. This little jewel even quoted former paper boy, Charles Osgood. Nice!

The archives of *The Pronoia Times* newspaper, unfortunately, cannot be located via the Library of Congress. However, a few editions can be viewed and downloaded from my Blog: <http://gainessteer.weebly.com>

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