

**IN MY OPINION****Do you know how to spell "zephyr?"**

**Those were the first words out of Todd Moore's mouth when I met him at a Democratic ice cream social in 1989, when he and Norm Winick began publication of *The Zephyr*. Fortunately, I was able to spell it. In those days Todd didn't have much patience with people, especially me. I was too "establishment" for him, too much in the mainstream of life. He prided himself in being an outsider and thought he and the downtrodden had a monopoly on social concerns and good deeds. He figured that anyone with financial security is somehow tainted and ineffectual, contributing little to society. This jaundiced view of the world kept him from fully using his tremendous intellect and talent, however, his gutsy reporting for *The Zephyr* probably won't ever be surpassed. He graduated from Knox College in 1977 and I believe shortly thereafter ran for mayor of Galesburg. One of the planks of his platform was the legalization of marijuana. He didn't win.**

Todd spearheaded the founding of the first agency in Knox County to deal with domestic violence, now called Safe Harbor.

Congratulations to our publisher and editor Norm Winick, who has introduced and maintained an exceptional news and commentary outlet for this area and on the web. His production of *The Zephyr* every week, along with running Sav-a-Buk and the Knox County Democrats, is miraculous. But he has also given me an opportunity to hone my writing skills for most of those 17 years. My first front-page story was in June 1990, about Republican patronage hiring at Henry Hill Correctional Center. I managed to get a list of the 331 employees — 304 with addresses identified. After checking the voting records of all 304 employees, I found that 110 were not registered or never voted in a primary (having to declare a party preference), and of the remaining 194, over 93% declared themselves Republicans in either the 1988 or 1990 primary or both. I interviewed Buster Kellogg, the Republican Central Committee chairman of Warren County, and garnered a quote about the hiring process that reverberated to other newspapers,

"We had two objectives during the initial hiring process for the prison. To put as many former Wilson (meat packing) employees to work as possible and ... to put Republicans to work. We did a darned good job."

I later interviewed Mary Lee Leahy, the Springfield attorney who argued the case of *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, before the United States Supreme Court. Their decision made patronage hiring for most Illinois state jobs illegal.

*The Zephyr* published occasional articles of mine until I began to write the column "In My Opinion" in April of 1999. Until the last couple of years, I've produced weekly columns. Contrary to the comments of *Zephyr* contributor Mike Krole, opinions in columns aren't worth much if there are no facts or sources to support them. The key factor is credibility. No one is going to care what my opinion is if he or she doesn't feel it's well substantiated. The input I receive through e-mails, phone calls and personal contact assure me there are many readers who read my columns and value my opinion. But that kind of support and confidence has to be earned, based on years of performance and reputation in the community.

My writing career really began in 1970, when I was hired by Forward Rockford, Inc. a citizen action group that entered into a contract with the City-County Planning Commission of Rockford and Winnebago County to conduct a housing study and survey to determine the obstacles to free choice of housing for those people rejected or evicted from public or private housing

due to reasons other than income. The contract also stated, "Suggest means to overcome these obstacles." I directed the survey and wrote a 70-page report in the required 120 days. It received a lot of press coverage because the report concluded that racial issues in housing were paramount.

For ten years before my *Zephyr* column, I was a reporter and photographer for the *Quad-City Times* and *Rock Island Argus*. For the *Times* I covered all local news, including murder trials, teacher strikes, political speeches, armed robberies, fires, school finance, and the environment. Before getting a computer, I daily dictated my stories over the phone.

As a freelance writer, I've had articles published in many venues, but had the most fun writing a humorous column, "As Life Gets Funnier," for the magazine, *Senior Life and*

*Leisure*, published by Cheri Siebken. In 1995 I self-published a collection of 21 columns, illustrated by the talented Chris Dokolasa, Galesburg High School art teacher. The book was well received and I printed and sold 1000 copies. Some day I will revise and publish the book again, and do it right this time. It will help that a college friend, who was an editor for Doubleday publishers in New York City, will be advising me the next time around.

Again, thanks to Norm for the opportunity to write on current issues and thanks to my readers for communication, support and encouragement.

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