

City-wide freelance reporter Lee Perlman dead at the age of 64

OBITUARY

Editor's Note: Lee Perlman, who worked as a freelance reporter for The Post for the past 15 years, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at his home in Northeast Portland on August 8, 2013. He was 64.

At the time of his death he was also contributing stories and photos to the Hollywood Star, Southeast Examiner, Mid-County Memo, and Portland Observer. Yes, somehow he managed to keep them all straight.

Three weeks before he died he had submitted several stories for the August 2013 edition of The Post, and copy-edited the paper two weeks before his death. Other than the usual stress of balancing deadlines for several newspapers, I had no inkling that he was suffering from any kind of depression.

A self-deprecating letter of resignation he sent out to all the newspapers the week he died may offer some insight.

"I can no longer stand to see the mistakes, pedestrian writing and shallow reporting on important topics in your publications, and know that I am responsible for it," wrote Perlman.

"...Too often I have treated people, including friends, shabbily in the holy cause of submitting a story and meeting a deadline."

Yet, like the character of George Bailey in Frank Capra's classic film, "It's A Wonderful Life," Lee Perlman never seemed to appreciate his own unique contributions and popularity.

He was a fine political reporter and copy editor, humble and generous to a fault. Not only was he always on time, he was often an hour early.

Hundreds of people knew Lee or had contact with him, and for many years he had readers in the tens of thousands. He seemed to know lots of people in nearly every neighborhood in the city.

I was lucky enough to count myself

among those who cared about him and will miss him very much, both personally and professionally.

RIP, Lee.—Don Snedecor

Lee Perlman was born in Brooklyn, New York, on January 27, 1949. His parents, Samuel and Lucille Perlman, were both involved in the Civil Rights movement and other social justice causes of the time.

He graduated from Erasmus Hall High School and attended Boston University, where he majored in journalism. After graduating in 1970, Lee returned to New York City where he worked for a left-wing newspaper called the *National Guardian*.

In 1972, Lee left New York; after driving slowly across the country, he landed in Portland, Oregon, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Lee loved Portland and, as a journalist, was very concerned with many issues that directly affected its citizens.

Whether attending a street fair or bringing to light stories of the homeless, the hungry and the marginally employed, Lee retained that sense of social justice that defined the environment he was raised in.

While he wrestled with the complexity of urban renewal, mayoral recalls and budget cuts, Lee delighted in bringing his readers stories of hope and beauty, such as his series on community gardens and the fine work of the Sisters of the Road.

Lee had a terrific memory and delighted in quoting verbatim from books he had read throughout his life. He could also sing the lyrics from any song he had ever heard, even the obscure vaudeville tunes that his father enjoyed.

Until sidelined by an injury, Lee ran many half-marathons. In typical Lee fashion, he ran them while wearing

jeans and work boots.

Although he stayed in regular touch with his family in New York, he only returned to New York at Christmas time.

He would unpack his bag, pulling out silk-screened scarves, pottery and small sculptures made by Portland artists. He would also bring a number of his articles and columns that he thought

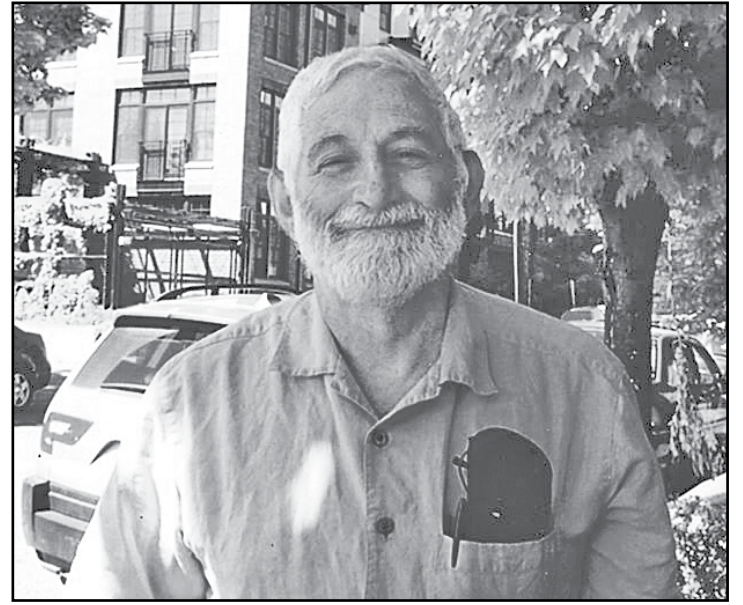
would be of interest to the family. Lee would delight his elderly mother by reading to her for hours at a time.

Lee is survived by his mother, Lucille; brother, Bill; sister-in-law, Patricia; nieces Deirdre and Michelle; nephew, Philippe; many loving cousins; and his dear friend Anne McLaughlin.

Lee had always requested that in the event of his death, his friends and loved ones reread the last lines in his favorite novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: "I ask that no one grieves on account of me, and that I not be buried in consecrated ground. And that no sexton be asked to toll the bell, and no mourners walk at my funeral."

Those who knew and loved Lee should not be surprised by his wishes. He was a quiet, private and thoughtful man who will be dearly missed.

The community is invited to attend a remembrance/memorial event for Lee Perlman on Sunday, Sept. 15 at 4pm, Lorenzen Conference Center at Legacy



Lee Perlman (photo courtesy of Bill and Patricia Perlman)

Emanuel Hospital. This was the site of many a meeting in Lee's neighborhood (Eliot).

Legacy Emanuel is on N Vancouver Ave. between Russell St. and the east end of the Fremont Bridge. The Lorenzen Center is off Graham St. between the hospital and the Medical Office Building. There is parking in the lot on N. Graham St. / Gantenbein Ave just across from the MOB.

This will be a very simple remembrance event -- others are encouraged to have more celebrations of Lee Perlman all across this town he was such a part of. Please go to www.facebook.com/LeePerlmanMemorial for updates or to post remembrances and reflections.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to The Sisters of the Road, 133 NW 6th Ave., Portland, Oregon.

Bill and Patricia Perlman provided information for this obituary. Christine Charneski corresponded with us about the memorial gathering and Facebook page.

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