

Paul Galloway: A beloved legend

EDITOR'S NOTE: From 1963 to 1969, Paul V. Galloway Jr. was editor of *Sooner Magazine*, then the official publication of the OU Alumni Association. Those were turbulent times, and Paul's very readable magazine reflected the campus as it was, warts and all. After several years of contributing to the alumni director's apoplexy, Paul had his choice of jobs with *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated*, but the newsroom was his perfect fit, first at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, then the *Chicago Tribune*. He was a gifted writer, a delightful madcap, a storyteller without equal. When a totally unexpected heart attack felled Paul on February 2, he left as we would all like to go—in mid-stride. Tributes poured in from colleagues; everyone had a Paul Galloway story to tell. One of the best came from noted *Sun-Times* film critic Roger Ebert, here reprinted with permission.

“Sheep, Galloway, sheep!”

BY ROGER EBERT

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e will never hear his Sheep Story again. Nor will we enjoy his presence in a room, which was an invitation to good cheer. Paul Galloway, the most incomparable raconteur I ever met in a newsroom, is dead. Everyone who knew him will know what a silence that creates.

I loved the guy. I introduced him to his wife, Maggie. I couldn't see enough of them. It will be impossible to share with you the joy of his company, but I am going to try. Let others write the formal obituaries. All I know is, Paul died at about 3:30 p.m. Monday, at their “winter home” in Tulsa, Okla. There's a Winter Home Story. With Paul, there was a story about everything. He was somewhere in his 70s. When you get to be our age, “somewhere” is close enough.

Picture a tall, slender, handsome man, with Senatorial hair and an expression that showed him ready and able to ponder the peculiarities of life. Give him a Southern accent. Give him a speaking style both droll and incredulous: His favorite note was puzzlement about the things people do.

He was well educated, and that was reflected by the richness of his writing. But he was not a florid writer. He worked by seeming to tell a story straight, and then sneaking in well-chosen words to set it subtly askew. He reminded me of Mark Twain. I know this much about his childhood: He told me, “I was named after my father. Our only difference was, his name was preceded by *Bishop*, and mine was followed by *Junior*.”

I met him in the early 1970s at the *Sun-Times*, where he was a reporter and feature writer, effortlessly stylish, impeccably dressed, enormously popular. In those days, we drank. The most famous story is about the Friday night when Paul went out the back door to Riccardo's, had a few, and started to brood about some vague atrocity committed by Jim Hoge, our editor.

His indignation grew. A statement had to be made. He stalked back to the *Sun-Times*, entered via the freight elevator, emerged on the fourth floor, picked up an office chair, and hurled it at the win-

dow of Hoge's office.

“Something I had not foreseen,” Paul would remember, “was that the window was made of Plexiglas. The chair bounced back and almost hit me.”

The news room stood transfixed. Paul walked over to City Desk, and said firmly, “Log it.” The desk assistant said, “Forget it, Paul.” Paul said, “I said *log it*, damn it.” The chair hurling incident was duly logged.

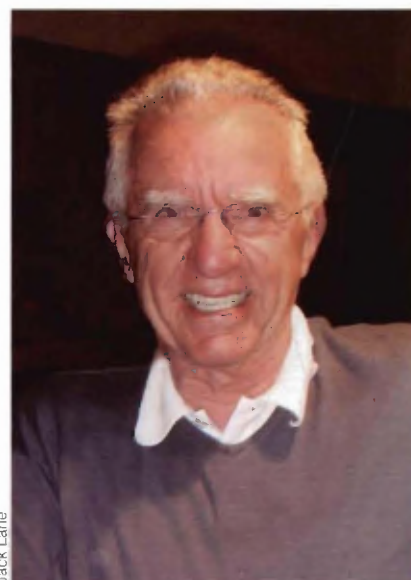
Paul was telling this story once again last spring. He and Jack Lane, the photographer and his great pal, had come over to visit me. I asked him to tell Chaz the Chair Story:

On Monday morning, I was hunched over my desk, trying to keep a low profile. My phone rang. It was Hoge. He asked me to come into his office. I got up and walked slowly across the city room. A silence fell. All eyes were on me. I felt like a man on his way to Death Row.

Hoge had the City Desk log open in front of him. All he said was, “So, Paul, I understand you have a problem with our interior decoration.”

I said, “No, sir! I find it excellent! Nothing whatsoever wrong with it! Envious, in fact!”

Hoge took another look at the log, closed it, and said, “I'm relieved. Now get back to work.”



Jack Lane

Paul V. Galloway Jr.



When the movie "Tootsie" was a hit, Reporter Galloway duplicated the costume and stationed a photographer to record the reaction on the streets of Chicago.

At writing, Galloway was a master. He was the go-to guy for the deadline story when Mayor Richard J. Daley died. He wrote lean, but his word choices were dramatic: "The report that the mayor was stricken was flashed by radio and phone wires to City Hall, and the word spread like a flame through the marble corridors."

He wrote lots of famous pieces. Two of them: He sailed on a Tall Ship on its way back across the Atlantic after the 1976 Bicentennial. There were storms at sea. "I stayed in my little bunk with my feet pressed against the wall, and prayed to God to do me the favor of taking me right there and then." In another series, after the success of the movie "Tootsie," he recruited professionals to costume him and do his wig and makeup like Tootsie. Then he walked down Michigan Ave., followed by a photographer. "I didn't mind if I wasn't mistaken for a woman," he said, "but I was disappointed I wasn't even mistaken for Tootsie."

Galloway and our columnist Bob Greene collaborated on "Bagtime," a Sun-Times serial about Mike Holiday, a bagboy

at the Treasure Island supermarket in Old Town. Holiday lived with his cat Helen upstairs next to Second City. He complained that his ex-wife was involved in a bisexual ménage with members of the White Sox and Bears. Mike had adventures with women he met in the checkout line, including one named Homewrecker. The serial was published as a book, optioned for a Fox sitcom, and produced as a play by Robert Falls at the Wisdom Bridge theater.

Although Paul could keep a room in laughter for an hour, I never heard him tell a joke. What he did was tell stories about himself and other people. He was his own favorite character, usually incredulous. The stories only improved when Paul stopped drinking about the same time I did. That made him funnier. He explained: "I didn't quit. I finished."

He married Maggie Prochotska, a merry-faced beauty who was the only person I've ever met who could speak Hungarian and Japanese. They made each other happy for nearly 30 years, although he complained when she interrupted one of his stories: "Damn, Maggie, you've heard these stories so many times by now, you ought to know when they're not over."

In the aftermath of the Murdoch purchase of the Sun-Times, Paul went across the street to the Tribune, where he continued as a star and brought laughter to yet another City Room. They probably got to hear the Sheep Story several times. It didn't depend on a punch line,

but on Paul's storytelling. He could stretch it to 20 minutes, but this is the short version:

One night in the Army I was standing watch at 2 a.m. My major came sneaking up on me in the dark and bellowed, "SHEEP!"

I jumped to attention. "Yes, sir!"

He said, "Don't 'yes, sir' me, Galloway! Sheep! Sheep!"

I said, "Sheep, sir? I haven't seen any sheep out here."

He screams, "SHEEP! SHEEP!"

He had obviously gone mad. I tried to humor him. "Would you like me to get you a sheep, sir? I'll do it right after I get off my watch."

He takes off his gloves. "No, you complete moron. I don't want you to get me a sheep." He slaps me with the gloves like Patton.

"Yes, sir. What do you want, sir?"

Now he's so close he's spraying in my face.

"What I would like, Galloway, is the god damned password!" 🍷

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