

He's Back: Ray Hartmann's Column Is Coming Back to the *RFT*

By Sarah Fenske

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Seventeen years ago, Ray Hartmann bid adieu to the newspaper he founded, writing in his farewell column that he'd given the *Riverfront Times* 1,000 columns and more than a million words. He had one more to add: Goodbye.

Tomorrow, Ray will be saying hello all over again.

In our issue that hits the streets February 6, we'll be launching the return of the column we've always called "Hartmann." And with that, Ray Hartmann will again be offering his keen insight into the issues that affect St. Louis, using these pages (and this bandwidth) every week to explore the city, the region and the state of the state. We couldn't be more excited.

In many ways, his return was a matter of excellent timing. Ray sold the *RFT* to Phoenix-based New Times in 1998, and while he kept writing his column for four years after that, it was only a matter of time before he was ready to move on for good. He ended up taking his column to *St. Louis Magazine*, which he also owned. But the *RFT* has a new parent company now (we were acquired by Euclid Media in 2015), and Ray recently sold his interest in *St. Louis Magazine*. As it turns out, he missed us and we missed him.

And could there be any better time to again have Ray's words in this paper? He doesn't just know where the bodies are buried — he knows the last scam they pulled before keeling over. With the magnitude of issues St. Louis is

currently confronting, from Better Together's merger scheme to the Slay/Sinquefield plot to privatize the airport, the region is crying out for the sort of analysis that only comes with decades of intimate knowledge and observation, not to mention an unwillingness to swallow the pabulum being pushed by the powers that be.

In Ray's final column, he ran through some of the paper's greatest hits. "We challenged the elitist, Father-knows-best decision-making of Civic Progress," he wrote. "We challenged their siphoning of millions of dollars in tourism funds to something called the VP Fair. ... We were able to print stories, express truths, that the rest of the media — cowering at the feet of civic power — were absolutely unwilling to cover."

That mission still defines the *Riverfront Times*, 41 years after Ray first launched it. How wonderful that we're still here, and that he's still the voice crying out in the wilderness — and that he can do it in these pages, and on this website, once again.

Pick up this week's issue at newsstands across the area, or come visit us online tomorrow. It's not every week we can say we've got a column worth waiting seventeen years for. This one, I'm confident, is it.