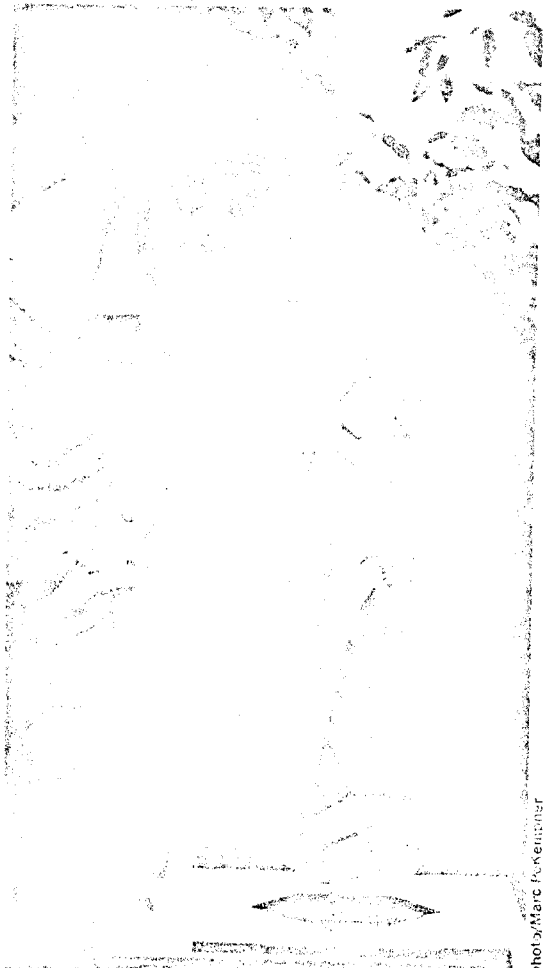


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HOT TYPE



Bill Nigut, Rick Soll

'Chicagoland' Goes to an Early Grave

Apparently, the maxim that the good die young applies to magazines as well as to men and women. *Chicagoland Monthly*, which was a controlled-circulation, high-rise handout before emerging last April as a full-featured newsstand competitor, has been given an indefinite deep-six by its publisher, James Pearson.

When he made the decision, Pearson was able to claim lack of money: although *Chicagoland* was reportedly losing only four grand per month, which is hardly a cropper for a still-new venture, the current economic scene has hurt his major enterprise, the publishing of real estate guides. Now Pearson can claim a lack of editors as well: Bill Nigut and Rick Soll, the guys in charge, have resigned, blaming the magazine's muddled business practices and an extraordinary lack of communication with their publisher.

The immediate impetus was the mysterious fate of *Chicagoland's* December issue. When Nigut called the magazine's printer to check on the production schedule, so the staff would know when to expect the final proofs, he was told there was *no* production

schedule: Pearson had called long before to tell the printer to put the issue on hold. "We knew nothing about it till then," said Nigut, "and here it was three days before we expected the magazine to be out on the street." Soll added, "But that was indicative of our relationship with the publisher."

According to Nigut, money has always been a problem at *Chicagoland*: "We've never had access to the financial information. We've never had a budget; it's always been hand to mouth." And the magazine's pecuniary instability hasn't been much of a secret among writers, photographers, and illustrators, either. According to Soll, the free-lance community sports several contributors who have unexpectedly found themselves among the growing list of *Chicagoland's* creditors.

"Writers would complain that they hadn't been paid, we'd call Pearson, receive assurances it would be taken care of—and then hear the same complaint from the same writer a month later," said Nigut. "We finally felt bad about soliciting writers when we knew they weren't going to be paid on time, if at all," explained Soll. "We had many conversations about it, but Pearson couldn't understand the importance of meeting that payroll. We finally had to make a decision to save our own credibility." It's in that spirit, in fact, that Soll and Nigut are continuing to work out of *Chicagoland's* offices. "We're trying to track down, in the absence of records, who hasn't been paid so we can fight for their money," said Soll. "We couldn't walk out on that responsibility."

At present, there's no future in sight for *Chicagoland*; one company expressed a strong interest in buying it up and letting Nigut and Soll continue to develop their promising product, but the board of directors turned it down, and no other substantial offers have been tendered. Pearson was unavailable for comment, but Soll and Nigut agree that the whole adventure has more rings of naivete than malice.

"Jim Pearson is a very sweet and caring guy," said Nigut, "but he's in way over his head with this sort of publication. When I came to him, he wanted me to keep the magazine the way it had been, but I didn't want to do that. He probably shouldn't have hired me. The sad thing is, we feel we've done everything to put out a good editorial product—everything points to its acceptance in the marketplace—but what we needed was a better business environment." Apparently, even the accounting offices of the Board of Education could qualify for *that* distinction.