



‘Cooler Near the Lake’ looks back on half a lifetime in print

Long-time *Duluth News Tribune* columnist Jim Heffernan releases a paperback collection of classic columns

(Duluth, Minn.) Writing as both a columnist and as a reporter, sixty-eight year old Jim Heffernan had entertained and informed readers of the *Duluth News Tribune* and the *Duluth Herald* for more than half his life.

But that all came to an end last June, when Heffernan’s position with the *News Tribune* fell victim to the tough economic times faced by all newspapers in this digital age; he was one of dozens of staffers laid off by the newspaper in the past few months.

Both the *News Tribune* and Heffernan himself received a barrage of e-mails lamenting his loss and crying out for more of the wit and (often off-beat) wisdom his work provided over the years, and it was clear to columnist that his writing still had an audience.

So Heffernan hand-picked fifty-two of his and his readers’ favorite pieces—a full year’s worth of weekly columns—and put them together in *Cooler Near the Lake: Fifty-two Favorites from Thirty-Four Years of Deadlines*, published by Duluth’s X-communication (www.x-communication.org).

Fans of Heffernan’s work will be touched by essays on everything from parenthood and pets and tickled by his politically incorrect “Blanche” and “Ethnic Editor” columns. Heffernan also includes columns that recount his encounters with celebrities who visited the Twin Ports during his career and of course the poem that became his most-requested column, “Cooler Near the Lake.”

“Cooler” first ran in 1979 and has been reprinted several times—it is the most requested reprint of any of the over 1,700 columns Heffernan wrote for the paper. The poem laments that local TV weather casters always augment their Duluth forecasts with the disclaimer that the temperature will be “cooler near the lake.” The phrase has long since become a commonly used term by nearly all Duluthians and in the 1980s was co-opted and altered by a local comedy/theatre group who dubbed themselves “Colder by the Lake.”

But after half a lifetime of writing a column each week, simply collecting his favorites wasn’t enough for the “retired” writer, and Heffernan has already found himself back in print. His column now appears monthly in *Duluth-Superior Magazine*.

And for those who need more than a once-a-month fix, Heffernan has started a blog that will feature a new column each week (and may occasionally run an old favorite). You can find Jim’s new work at www.jimheffernan.org.

Cooler Near the Lake retails for just \$14.95 and is available at all area bookstores (and many gift shops) and online at www.x-communication.org.

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Editor/Producer: Please contact Tony Dierckins at 218-310-6541 to set up a one-on-one interview with the author.