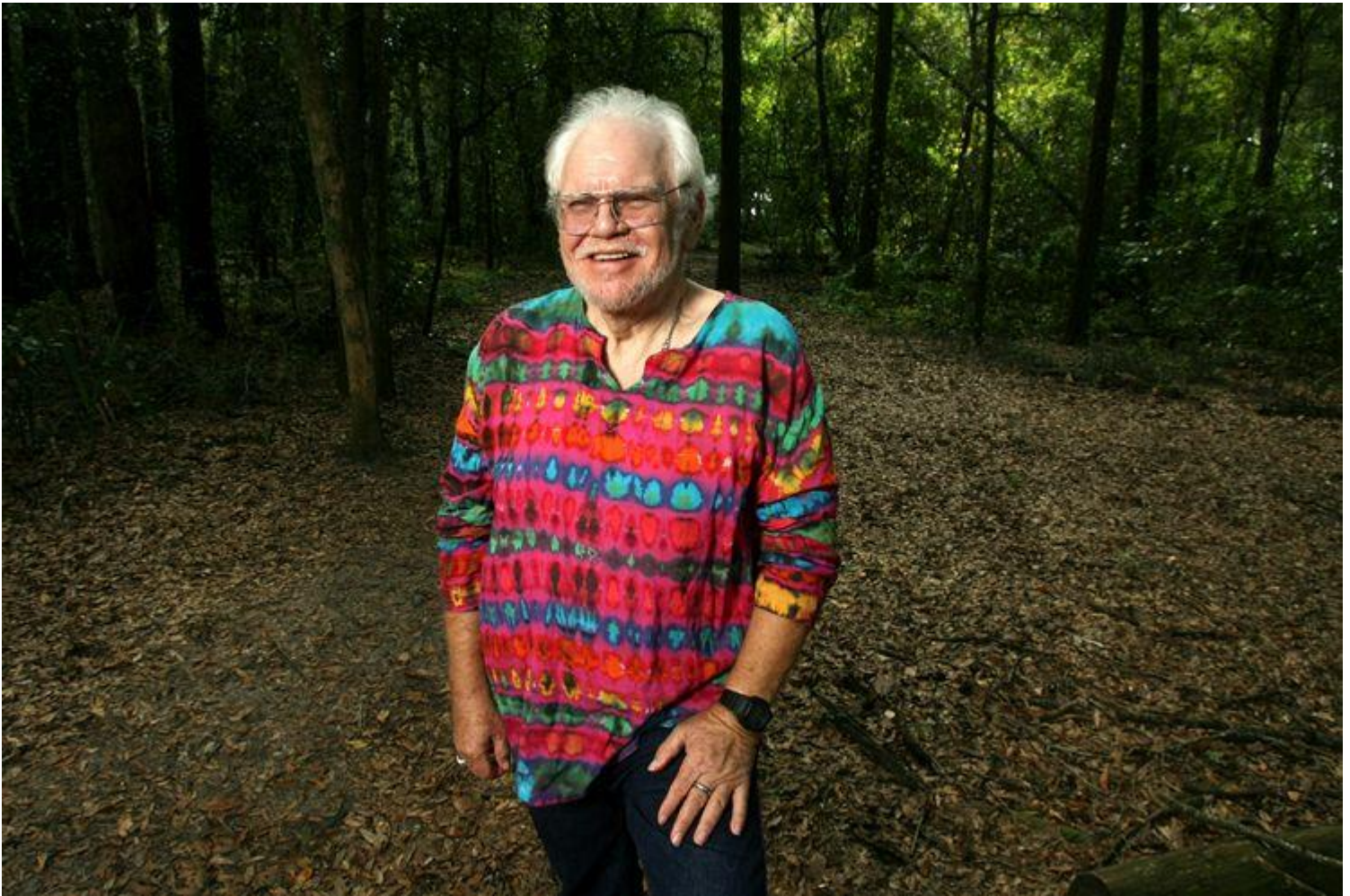


Jan Glidewell, Times' colorful North Suncoast columnist, dies of cancer

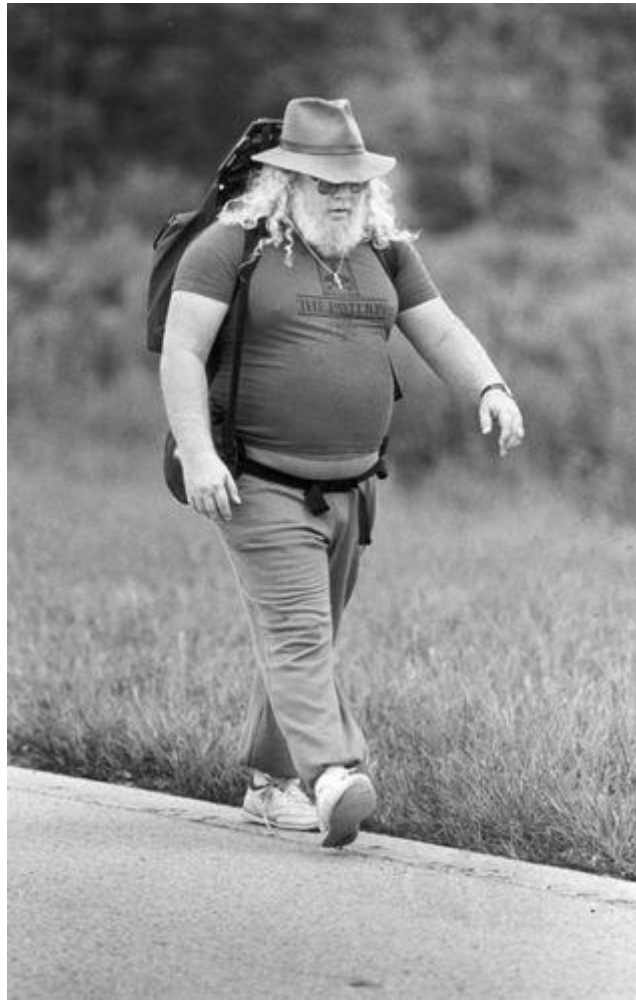
By Molly Moorhead and Andrew Meacham, Times Staff Writers

MOLLY MOORHEADANDREW MEACHAM Tampa Bay Times

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Jan Glidewell, shown in 2011, would correct people who said he looked like Santa Claus, he preferred Jerry Garcia.



Times columnist, Jan Glidewell, walked along US 19 from Crystal River to New Port Richey in September of 1987. The trek was his way of getting out to meet people.



Jan Glidewell spent a week in 1986 paddling a canoe alone from Lancoochee in northeast Pasco County to Donnellan in Marion County.



As the sun sets on the first day Glidewell enters Silver Lake, his first camp,
after 10 ½ hours of paddling. (Times 1986)

DADE CITY — Jan Glidewell rolled into the *St. Petersburg Times* newsroom, a high school dropout with an unapologetic swagger. He was hired against the advice of the paper's executive editor and retired 30 years later a local icon.

He reported on serial killers and hookers, dirty politicians and kidnapped children. When he became a columnist, readers on the North Suncoast found an unlikely breakfast table companion, a nudist hippie airing liberal political commentary and tales of his five marriages.

"He was probably the most interesting reporter that we ever had in Pasco County," said Richard Morgan, who hired Mr. Glidewell in 1973.

Mr. Glidewell, who retired from the Times in 2003 but still wrote occasional columns, learned earlier this year that he had lung cancer that had spread to his brain.

Having faced the disease before, he often said he was living on borrowed time. He died Monday at HPH Hospice in Dade City. He was 69.

Mr. Glidewell regarded himself a cynic, but his journalism often revealed his tenderness for people. In 1983, he sat on a pole for four days straight to raise money for the West Pasco Sertoma Speech and Hearing Center, and repeated the feat in two other years. In 1987, he walked the length of U.S. 19

from Crystal River to New Port Richey to, in his words, "see the western side of these counties from something other than the windshield of a car" and meet some interesting characters.

He wrote about a Pasco County Commission chairman who went to prison for corruption, an examination so complete and authoritative that other reporters referred to it as "the scrolls."

When 14-year-old Elana Goldstein was gunned down at her bus stop in Quail Hollow in 1981, Mr. Glidewell recalled how much he dreaded driving to the hospital to interview her parents. But Elana's mother greeted him with gratitude and grace and made him vow to keep the case in the public eye as long as it went unsolved.

Mr. Glidewell kept his promise, writing about Elana and other unsolved child murders every year until 2002.

Inside the Times newsroom, Mr. Glidewell's reputation was somewhat less esteemed.

"Clean up your act, Glidewell!!!" a colleague once wrote in a memo — and later, a published column — after filing a story from his office, which was cluttered with stacks of dusty papers, greasy food sacks and old phone books.

Lucy Morgan, the Times' former Tallahassee bureau chief who worked with Mr. Glidewell covering Pasco and Hernando counties, said "he was frequently the life of the party and often said things, outrageous things, that caused him to have to apologize for weeks afterward."

Paul Tash, chairman and CEO of the Tampa Bay Times, said, "Jan was key to making this relatively impersonal institution of the newspaper feel like your next-door neighbor and someone you wanted to invite into your home. He was a character, and I think that made the Times seem a little more lively and vibrant."

James J. Glidewell was born in 1944 in Miami. He attended Southwest Miami High School. Mr. Glidewell served five years in the Marine Corps as a parachute-qualified radiotelegraph operator, including 10 months in Vietnam in the mid 1960s and the 1965 U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic. He left as a sergeant.

Before coming to the Times, he worked the city beat for the Kankakee, Ill., Daily Journal and was a sports editor for the New Bern, N.C., Sun-Journal.

People often told Mr. Glidewell he looked like Santa Claus. But he would correct them — he preferred Jerry Garcia. He wrote several columns about his appearance, and on a whim once shaved his mountain-man beard and cut his hair. A clean-shaven Mr. Glidewell then attended a Halloween party as a "young Republican," only to be turned away at first by peers who didn't recognize him.

He was chronically early, a habit he said he picked up as boy hitchhiking for rides. He never knew if he'd need 30 minutes or three hours to get where he was going, so he allowed plenty of time.

His reading habit was insatiable, his recall uncanny. Until his illness, he had memorized all 20 stanzas of The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and in 2009, near his 65th birthday, fulfilled his fantasy to "wear white flannel trousers and walk upon the beach" as the protagonist does.

Last year, Mr. Glidewell's son died after a long bout with colon cancer. They had rarely been close over the years but rekindled their relationship near the end. Just a few months later, Mr. Glidewell learned of his own cancer.

No funeral is planned. Mr. Glidewell left money and specific instructions in his will for a party to be held after his death.

. Biography

James J. "Jan" Glidewell

Born: Feb. 19, 1944

Died: Sept. 16, 2013

Survivors: wife Betty Kennedy; stepdaughter Kathleen Kennedy; stepson Casey Kennedy; sister Constance Porter; one granddaughter; one great-grandson.