

Dear Editor:

I have worked with Tom Kerr for almost 30 years, comprising the span of five publications: *Mountain Xpress* (a member paper of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies), *VERVE Magazine for Women*, *Bold Life Arts & Culture*, *Asheville Made*, and *Carolina Home + Garden*.

At various periods, I have held the title of Arts & Entertainment Editor, Editor, or Managing Editor. (Today I still manage editorial for *Asheville Made* and *Carolina Home + Garden*.) As a lifestyle journalist in charge of coordinating an enormous amount of regional cultural content, I have called first on Tom more times than I could possibly count. Tom has a long, thorough knowledge of Western North Carolina, especially in the areas of visual art and music, but he is also a well-traveled professional who can be trusted to research and thoughtfully write on any topic. His copy is clean, tight, balanced, savvy, compassionate, thoughtful, and always arrives at or before deadline. What's more, I have never had a photographer or story subject complain that Tom was unreachable or difficult, or that he misrepresented them in his articles.

Freelance writers are the oxygen of any publication, and during a time when many print periodicals struggle to sustain life in print, an editor comes to rely more heavily on those freelancers who are known quantities — and also known for their quality. I've seen many, many freelance writers come and go, but Tom is one of precious few who not only can be counted on to understand and execute any assignment, but whose energy in tackling intriguing topics does not wane. He would be a true asset to any publication, print or online, and I could not recommend him more highly.

Sincerely,

Melanie McGee Bianchi

Editor, *Asheville Made*

Managing Editor, *Carolina Home + Garden*

Author, *Ballad of Cherrystoke + Other Stories* (Blackwater Press, 2022)

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