



Glo, Baby, Glo: Frank Cicero, B.A. '66

BY PAULA NOVASH

You could say that Frank Cicero, B.A. '66, was dealt a winning hand. Cicero, along with his brother Bobby, owns and operates Highlandtown-based Globe Poster, a company founded over a card game in 1929. Original owners Norman Goldstein and Mike Shapiro used the luck of the draw to locate their business.

"To decide on a city, they folded a map of the East Coast in half, and Baltimore wound up on the crease," Cicero explains.

That's lucky for local collectors and fans of the classic Day-Glo concert posters Globe has produced for artists spanning years of performances—from Bill Haley and His Comets, James Brown, the Beach Boys and Bob Dylan to the Rolling Stones, Snoop Dogg and Run DMC.

"Tina Turner used to call in her own order in the '60s," says Cicero, who majored in psychology at UB and worked as a social worker before joining Globe.

Fifty years ago, Globe pioneered a method to customize concert posters with boxes of neon color, replacing the then-standard method of preprinted, one-color backgrounds. The boxes made print much easier to read, and Globe became identified with the technique.

"People could be driving by and still spot the basics for each artist—who, where and the date," Cicero notes. Plus, those who saw a Globe poster knew the event was legitimate, he continues: "Con artists would try to sell fake tickets [to nonexistent events]. But if [customers] saw one of our posters, they knew the artist was really scheduled to perform."

The Ciceros inherited Globe from their father, Joseph Sr., who began working there in 1935 and bought the business 20 years later. Joseph Sr., who passed away last fall, was "the heart and soul of the company," Cicero says. Globe still owns two of the circa-1908 presses operated by the elder Cicero.

With his wife, Debbie, and daughters Sarah, Julie and Mary Beth, Cicero has watched the progression from hand-set, block-printed type to computer-created graphics. Today, he says, the company is reprinting some of its copyrighted retro posters, originals of which are in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. Some Motown classics have fetched more than \$20,000 at auctions.

"We're using original plates and methods but needed to modernize, too—we use a thinner cardboard so we can roll them into a mailer," he adds.