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Caseen Gaines of Hackensack writes a book about Pee-Wee Herman

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THE RECORD

WHO: Caseen Gaines, author of the new "Inside Pee-wee's Playhouse: The Untold, Unauthorized and Unpredictable Story of a Pop Phenomenon."

AGE: 25.

HOMETOWN: Hackensack.

YOU MAY REMEMBER ... : Gaines, an English teacher at Hackensack High School, is co-founder and co-



artistic director of the Hackensack Theatre Company.

THE BOOK SAYS: Paul Reubens (born Paul Rubinfeld) was a student at the Groundling Theatre in Los Angeles when he developed the character Pee-wee Herman. He teamed with TV producer Dawna Kaufmann to create a live stage production, "The Pee-wee Herman Show," and asked fellow Groundlings, including Phil Hartman, Lynne Marie Stewart and John Paragon, to join him. (Those three later reprised their roles on TV's "Pee-wee's Playhouse.") But when HBO videotaped a performance, Reubens and his agents brokered a deal that provided only nominal fees and no future compensation for the cast. Even co-creator Kaufmann was cut out. "I think they felt like they were all in it together, but the reality is, Paul kind of called in a favor from a lot of them, and they didn't feel like they were properly compensated," Gaines says.

After the film "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" came out in 1985, CBS wooed Reubens, and "Pee-wee's Playhouse" (1986-1991), a Saturday-morning phenomenon, was born.

WHOM HE INTERVIEWED: Kaufmann, a number of cast and crew members, and Groundlings founder Gary Austin.

WHY NOT REUBENS? "They said that he would like to write a book, and that ... he would like to reserve his own memories for that. At a point in time, it seemed as if he might participate ... but [then] he went to [do] Broadway."

REUBENS' REACTION: "I do know that he's read it. ... But we didn't really get any feedback in terms of 'he liked it,' 'he didn't like it.' And I feel like if he didn't we would know."

THE "INCIDENT": In 1991, Reubens was arrested for indecent exposure inside an adult movie theater in Florida. Some media outlets hypothesized that, sick of being pigeonholed as a children's entertainer, he deliberately sabotaged his career. Gaines' take: "I certainly don't believe that Paul Reubens ever wanted to do something that would disable him from being Pee-wee Herman. However, at the same time ... he no longer wanted to be a children's icon."

"PLAYHOUSE" MEMORIES: When Gaines was very young, he and his mom lived for a time with his maternal grandfather, Robert Carroll, who videotaped "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" and other kid-friendly things. "So my earliest memories in life, in all truth, are watching Pee-wee Herman with my grandfather."

POIGNANT POSTSCRIPT: The day of this interview, Gaines learned that his granddad had just died unexpectedly. "The last conversation I had with my grandfather, just last week, was him thanking me so much for including [the above] story in the book."

ON THE 2010 BROADWAY REVIVAL: "When Paul walked out as Pee-wee ... I still was like a 4-year-old again, screaming and clapping. There's just something magical about the connections we make as children."

FOR MORE: caseengaines.com.

— Virginia Rohan

- See more at: <http://www.northjersey.com/arts-and-entertainment/caseengaines-of-hackensack-writes-a-book-about-pee-wee-herman-1.854113#sthash.1tss6oAu.dpuf>