



Stefan Lonce, “Vanitizer Extrordinaire,” is writing a book on vanity plates and creating a line of cards to complement them.

## Vanity thy name is ... *Entrepreneur uses artistic license to create calendar, greeting cards*

BY KATHY KAHN  
*kathykahn@westfairinc.com*

**H**ere’s LKGATUKD. No, it’s not a typo. It’s an attention grabber that author and promoter of vanity license plates Stefan Lonce might see on the back of a Humphrey Bogart fan’s car.



Lonce, of Croton-on-Hudson, has his own vanity plate, LCNS2ROM (license to roam), and like many others who have customized their metallic mates with aftermarket goodies, vanity license plates are part of the “make your own” landscape in New York.

“Out of the 50 states, we are 35th when it comes to having vanity plates – that’s less than three percent of the state’s population,” said Lonce, “and it’s such an opportunity to express yourself. People are becoming savvier about personalizing their plates. Another perk is it’s a way to promote your business, and in this economy, a relatively inexpensive way to get your name out there.”

Lonce is cataloging stories and photos of vanity plate drivers wherever he meets them, “and some of their stories are amazing and even touching, especially if the message isn’t exactly clear—there’s a tale to tell behind it.” One couple had license plates, “DONOR” and “DONEY.” Husband needed the kidney – wife supplied it.

New York’s most famous – and perhaps earliest – photographed vanity plate belonged to Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose FDR-1 plate adorns his custom-designed car on display at the FDR Library in Hyde Park. To complement the famous car FDR had custom built, Lonce created a 2012 calendar of Franklin and Eleanor traveling in various places, and each month, that FDR-1 tag is hidden somewhere in the photo.

“That calendar was great fun to put together, and needless to say, I was ecstatic when the FDR gift shop had it for sale,” said Lonce. It was his second calendar attempt and much more successful than his 2011 tribute to Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

It was really a tribute to Nancy Reagan for promoting vanity plates – her 111 NDR plates were well-known in California, where then Gov. Ronald Reagan first signed them into law. The result? \$38 million yearly in plate fees has gone to fund California’s environmental programs.

When Lonce is not collecting stories and photos for his book on vanity plates, he’s creating greeting cards with the same theme.

Vanity plates are a relatively inexpensive way to express yourself, said Lonce, just as long as you make sure they are not promoting a religious or hate message.

Lonce says New York could take a cue from California and use the extra costs of vanity plates to offset the expenses of the state’s department of Transportation. “Since someone had a hate-message plate that was caught in another state, all have been very careful in screening requests. If the money were to go to DOT projects, perhaps we’d all benefit and make it worth the state’s while to look into this lucrative way to raise funds for state needs – particularly our roadway infrastructure.”

Vanity plates may not help to build the TZBRG2, but Lonce’s enthusiasm for his book project and for getting GR8CARDZ out to the marketplace is infectious. If you spot LCNS2ROM on the highway, you’ll know who it is.