

“If I leave you it doesn’t mean I love you any less. Keep me in your heart for awhile.”

Warren Zevon

This year marks both the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York City’s Greenwich village and the fifth anniversary of the death of cultural commentator, artist and critic David Bartlett Boyce.

Boyce wrote for this newspaper, Artscope, the Gay and Lesbian Review and other publications. He worked for the Holly Solomon Gallery in the mid-1970s. He curated exhibitions for the New Bedford Art Museum. He was intimate with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. This is not even the tip of the iceberg.

He was witty, gregarious, flirty and charming. And he was a mentor and friend.

In my mind, David (I refuse to keep calling him Boyce) and Stonewall will always be intrinsically connected. He was one of the four figures featured in sculptor George Segal’s “Gay Liberation Monument”, commissioned by the City of New York in 1979 and fully realized and installed in 1992 in Christopher Park.

I wrote about that monument in 2015 after it was vandalized by several protesters who were angry about the perceived “whitewashing” (downplaying the significance of black, Latino and trans people in the events of the story of the riots) in a movie also called “Stonewall.”

Now, as then, I thought the targeting of Segal’s sculpture with vandalism (albeit temporary) was misguided at best. Now, as then, I think David would have been bemused by it all.

I was writing artist profiles for the long-defunct Fairhaven Navigator when Luis Villanueva was running Colo Colo Gallery. Brian Goslow, the editor of Artscope magazine, asked him if he knew a SouthCoast arts writer. Villanueva recommended me. David had been writing regular reviews for the magazine but at that point, David was ill and output as a writer had dwindled as it was increasingly difficult for him to get around. Goslow and I spoke and he offered me a gig.

I accepted but not without consulting David first. I liked him and respected him and I did not want to step on his toes. He gave me his blessing.

The Standard Times was publishing little art criticism as well at the time, primarily because of David’s decreasing availability. My wife Elizabeth suggested I reach out to former arts editor Joanna Weeks. I did. Weeks signed me on as a stringer. Again, David gave me a thumbs-up.

As David’s health continued to wane, he lived with the artist husband-and-wife couple Michael Hecht and Pat Kellogg. Elizabeth and I would occasionally stop by to visit with David, who was

always delighted to see us. We would bring him sweet pastries that Elizabeth had baked and recent copies of Men's Health, with bare-chested studs on the cover and its six-pack abs fetish. I'm not sure which he enjoyed more.

Local painter, teacher and writer Catherine Carter has her memories of David:

She notes that in 2006, she wanted to do some writing on the local arts scene. She nervously approached David, saying "...but I know that's your gig." She continued to say that "His face lit up with a smile. 'Do it!' he said. 'I don't want to be the only voice of support of the arts in the area.'"

Photographer Denn Santoro, who runs the S&G Project Gallery in the Hatch Street Studios building with his partner Helen Granger, had this to say:

"David always had an opinion. He didn't require you to agree but he was always worth listening to. He had perspectives from the wide variety of art scenes he had participated in from the gay scene in NYC to the straight scene there to what was happening in our city. His input and insights are much missed since we lost him."

Painter John Borowicz had his own thoughts on David:

"I loved hearing David tell stories about the New York art world. They were incredible stories about incredible people; first hand accounts about iconic people who changed the course of art history. He had been photographed by Andy Warhol and Robert Mapplethorpe. He worked in the studios of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.

"In the end though, these aren't stories about famous people that David knew. David was a rare person. He was unusually kind, generous and present. Those people all felt's David quiet benevolence and his gentle loving spirit. They cherished him for it, just like we did. No, in the end, they aren't stories about the people David knew. Collectively, they are one story about the people who knew and loved David."

And that is just about perfect.