

THOUGHTS ON CHRIS

MARY DEARBORN

CHRIS WAS PROVINCETOWN TO ME. *Provincetown Arts* was part of this, of course. When I would come to town in the summer the first thing I'd do was to buy the magazine; when I arrived at wherever I was staying, I sat down and read it, and while I was there I continued reading and eventually read it all, including the ads. Chris spoke to me from every page, and the summer wasn't complete until we talked over the issue and I listened to his plans for the next one, and how I might fit into it. For Chris was always suggesting story ideas to me, seeing connections between me and Provincetown that I did not always see myself.

Some of these connections were more obvious than others. I came to know Chris well when he became very involved in my 2000 biography of Norman Mailer, providing me with anecdotes, nuggets of wisdom, and people I should contact and ways to contact them. But while Norman had promised not to hinder me in my work, he would not help me either, and his fundamental disapproval made this a sticky subject for Chris, who wanted to keep his friendships with both of us. When I realized that Chris valued my friendship as much as he did Norman's—though in very different ways, of course—I knew what I had suspected all the time: that Chris was one of the warmest creatures I'd ever met, remarkably guileless, not interested in politics with a small “p”—that is, to the extent that an editor of an important art journal could afford to be either. Between me and Norman, Chris kept the peace, which impressed me no end.

But that's just a distillation of the person. Why do I think of Chris immediately when I think of Provincetown?

Because he cared about the community's artists—he was a fan, but a most intelligent one, who could take their measure and profile them in ways that

made you understand the work and feel the artist's presence through the work.

Because he understood the town, in his bones, as a community. Without Chris, it would have been impossible for me to situate a subject like Norman in this place, among these people.

Because, due to his background, he was a living link to the Provincetown of the 40s, 50s, and 60s—the artists, writers, characters, and not-so-ordinary working people who gave the town its personality and verve, not to mention quite a few comedies, tragedies, and long-running soap operas. He could make it come alive.

Because he and the magazine were part of the glue of the place—everyone knew everyone through Chris. Who could ever replace him? As it is, the complete run of his magazine is a kind of running history of the people and work that made Provincetown an art *scene* in the best sense of the word, a place where people really did come to find inspiration—and often succeeded. Chris played an essential part in all of that.

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But I remember Chris most as my friend. I was always delighted to see him at various openings and parties over the course of the summer, but I especially looked forward to our annual talk, which usually took place on the front porch of his wonderful old house on Commercial Street, crammed with books and art. Last summer the rain poured down beyond the leafy green that sheltered us from the street, the roar of the summer rain forcing us to struggle to make ourselves heard. Chris always managed to let me know that he cared. I will miss those summer conversations on his porch perhaps most of all.