

CHRIS BUSA: A MAN WITH A MISSION

D E N I S E D O H E R T Y P A P P A S

CHRIS BUSA WAS LIVING PROOF OF THE ADVICE “Do what you love, the money will follow.” For thirty-five years as founder and editor of PROVINCE-TOWN ARTS he continuously searched for the best topics, finest cover stories, and most up to the minute Ptown “buzz.”

As art lovers, my husband Dean and I became magazine donors because we recognized, in fiscal matters, Chris was pure of heart. His simple financial goal was to pay his staff and keep his magazine going forward.

I’m betting many Mailerians heard Chris regale them with his promotion of what he dubbed “The Provincetown Economy.” “In my youth,” Chris would recount (remembering his Italian-American childhood summers with his father, artist Peter Busa) “artists painted all afternoon and when the fisherman arrived in port at day’s end, they would trade art work for the daily catch.” Who needs money with such an arrangement? With this philosophy, Chris valiantly produced a remarkable annual issue year after year.

Most graciously, when Terry Khan was the magazine’s board president, he and his lovely wife, Lesley Sylvester, hosted elegant, classic Cape fundraisers. Their “Oysters and Opera” events always sold out; Chris and his charming, devoted partner and marketing director Ingrid Aue treated all comers with sincere warmth and camaraderie. Chris took pride in promoting emerging artists and remained friends with luminaries and big names in the art world who touched down in his spit of sand by the sea.

“Encyclopedic” is how we all described his complete knowledge of town history. Each year of the Mailer Center’s tenure Chris led tours for seminar-ians, pointing out Dos Passos’s home and his wife Katy’s tragic death, shar-

ing the location of the Provincetown Player's wharf, throwing in amusing anecdotes of Tennessee Williams and Marlon Brando's escapades dune-side.

Norman Mailer graced the inaugural issue of PROVINCETOWN ARTS. Chris adored Norman, his neighbor a few doors down on the other side of Commercial Street. He promoted Mailer and his talented offspring in many future issues.

Chris always encouraged my writing and he was especially happy when I wrote "BEHIND CLOSED DOORS—THE FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE AT THE WRITERS COLONY IN PTOWN", the brainchild of Lawrence Schiller, a colleague and dear friend of Mailer. Larry's purpose was to nurture creative writing talent. An award winning writer and producer, Larry championed Mailer's legacy saying "Norman brought to my table the wisdom learned by being run over by many trucks in his life."

Who but a person of Larry's genius and talent could enlist Keith Richards, Bill Clinton and Muhammad Ali to pitch for the Writer's Center? Invaluable mentoring by dedicated experts- including our own Mike Lennon-inspired scores of poets, biographers and non-fiction talents.

Thanks to Chris I also wrote magazine pieces celebrating Mailer Colony alums and their work. I reviewed Judith Stein's EYE OF THE SIXTIES: RICHARD BELLAMY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MODERN ART and Robert Dowling's award winning biography EUGENE O'NEILL: A LIFE IN FOUR ACTS.

At the magazine's launch party in 2016, poet Marie Howe, that year's cover person, told the crowd of townies, tourists, artists and fans "This magazine is our town's annual yearbook." Indeed, author Paul Lisicki, picking up his copy quipped "This will keep me busy all winter." Art critic Susan Rand Brown told me "as an arts writer with a Ptown focus past issues remain irreplaceable sources of information, conveyed with grace and style."

For many years, Dean and I hosted after launch debriefings at our home on Thistlemore Road. We served the magazine's signature cocktail, a blueberry vodka drink. We would toast amazing staff talents and praise Chris for crafting such a magnificent edition for yet another year. Alas, this year was to be Chris's last—but what an endearing legacy he left behind. "May perpetual light shine upon him."

Many thanks, dear Chris, from Denise and Dean.