

MEMORIAL – DOUGLAS MAUNDRELL

Doug Maundrell joined the Literary Club in 2016. At age 73 in the 21st year of retirement from the Cincinnati Police, he died suddenly, sitting in a chair at home, on January 19, 2021.

Doug resisted for years the urging of friends to join The Literary Club. He feared not being up to it – “it” being the writing and presenting of papers from a podium facing professors, financiers, doctors, lawyers, and others who in his words, “wrote books.” Doug gave two papers and a Memorial Day 2020 reflection. We learned that Doug had an intellect and a natural way of telling stories the rest of us could only imagine.

He started both papers with a Dragnet paraphrase – The stories you are about to hear are true. Names have *not* been changed to protect the innocent. There are no innocents here.

What Doug shared was not what might have been expected from an ex-policeman. He painted with words characters more grippingly authentic than Dickens could conjure. There was Two Dollar Betty, razor-blade cutter of her own wrists. We met Seafood Sally, a brazen enchantress of cops, who got her nickname because she had crabs. There was Doris, the jewelry thief, who hid her shoplifted loot in a Vaseline bottle, safe from all but the most daring of detectives. We met Doug’s downtown beat partner, who astonished Doug one day by buying a chocolate ice cream cone on duty, a no-no of police propriety, but then they went to the sixth floor of a building and his partner hurled the cone downward to splat across the top and windshield of the 3-way white Caddy owned by the pimp who managed downtown’s prostitution ring. Who would forget the “raving, laughing, drunken goof” who naked one hot summer night straddled the female statue atop the Tyler-Davidson Fountain 43 feet above the square. “It may surprise you to know that the police do have an intelligence arm,” he told us. The cop-baiting, raucous crowd was on the miscreant’s side. So, Doug inveigled the Fire Department to handle the take-down. Doug avoided headlines as the drunk descended and the crowd relented, because “Everyone loves Firemen.”

Some of us knew Doug long before he joined the Club. For me it was 67 years ago. Doug and I were in kindergarten at Mt. Washington Elementary School. We built a totem pole in our Cub Scout uniforms. He went to Country Day in 7th grade, then on to the University of Cincinnati, and we reconnected thanks to the Club. Bill Killen met Doug through their wives’ book club. They formed the Book Club Orphans, meeting for dinner over 20 years while the women had their separate gatherings. Bob Watkins remembers Doug as our Gentle Giant, a gentlemanly guy, afflicted with a sense of inferiority, intimidated by some papers. Bob advised Doug to talk about something he knew, and Doug did that, causing us to wonder if we could match his story telling and to think differently about the life of a policeman and the humanity of our city. Doug told Bob that no policeman walking a beat should do that for more than twenty years. You see too much. You harden. Doug told Tom Murphy that in 26 years he never drew his weapon. Tom recalls Doug’s humane approach to his job. Rich Lauf reports that Doug never rose in the ranks by choice – he loved being a patrolman, that Doug saw the imperfections of his colleagues, that with more officers like Doug within our police forces, many of society’s current raging debates would be rendered unnecessary.

Bob, Bill, and Doug gathered as a troika on Monday nights along the back wall of the Club's main room, arriving early, listening as the evening's words washed over them.

Doug is survived by his widow, Helen Magers, a stepson and two granddaughters.

We remember Doug with his bald pate, thin brown eyebrows slanting 45 degrees, snow-white mustache, neatly trimmed chops along his chin-line like finely trimmed cotton balls.

Doug's stories were not those of a professor, or lawyer, or physician. His were about people we are likely to avoid, unknown to us, until he brought them alive.

Doug came to treasure his time at the Club, and he became a treasure to us.

Since words evolved, humans have gathered - around campfires, in legion halls and bars and clubs, through radio and television, and now over the internet. We share stories. Doug was a master of that. We are grateful for our memories of him.

The Memorial Committee: Joe Dehner, William Killen, Richard Lauf, Thomas Murphy, Robert Watkins