

For Pope

I am not a fan of euphemisms, but while reading the club history I found several references to members, “joining the majority”. In honor of that old Club tradition I now state that July 4th, 2017, literarian Edwin Pope Coleman joined the majority.

In 1969 I returned to Cincinnati a freshly minted college graduate with majors in English and Theatre, minors in Broadcasting and Education. I eagerly went about investing myself into Cincinnati’s vibrant arts scene. One of the names that I ran across with regularity was Pope Coleman, and although we met, we did not connect.

Pope remained an intriguing part of the community; creating the Cincinnati Institute, spearheading the Hillside Trust, serving as interim Department Head for UC’s DAAP School of Art, and also the Contemporary Arts Center...A side story is in order. Pope was born in Lexington. A true Kentuckian, Pope regarded bourbon as a near-religious experience. While serving the CAC during particularly austere times he was informed that they had made \$900.00 on the bar at the previous Friday’s opening. In those days, the CAC opened three separate shows in three separate galleries on the same night. Pope identified the flaw in tradition and staggered all future openings

creating enough cash flow from liquor sales to keep the institution afloat.

Pope was a man of imagination, a believer in the power of spirits and a consummate matchmaker.

When the city received the property we now call Yeatman's Cove, the plans presented to the public were pedestrian at best. Pope was aware of amazing public spaces created by designer Robert Zion, and arranged for Zion to visit Cincinnati and meet the powers that be.

The meeting was a disaster and Zion wanted nothing more than to return to New York. On the way to the airport Pope managed to get Zion aboard the old Newport Yacht Club, maneuvered him into a north-facing window seat and plied him with martinis until the designer had an epiphany which resulted in our now iconic serpentine wall, performance space and amazing greenspace.

I have illustrated imagination and the power of spirits. I now explain matchmaking.

Pope left Cincinnati for a decade and more, but returned for the new century. We met over drinks at Mike Fink's and subsequently lunched together on Tuesdays for more than 15 years.

In 2007, noted Cincinnati sculptor Pat Renick passed...joined the majority. She left a significant corpus of work, including two amazing dinosaur-inspired pieces; one fabricated from a Volkswagen beetle, and the other from a Vietnam era Cayuse helicopter. Pope wanted permanent homes for these striking, but huge sculptures. He decided to match me to the chore. Over a period of three years we approached an odd array of potential recipients...colleges and universities, military academies...even the armed forces. We succeeded.

Stegowagenvolksaurus is ensconced in the Steely Library at Northern Kentucky University and Triceracopter is now at home in the Langsam Library at the University of Cincinnati, due in no small part to help from literarian Jim Myers.

Pope's last great vision and project was the preservation of Rothenberg School, and the creation of a Rothenberg rooftop teaching garden.

The board of education wanted to demolish the school. Pope had a different vision. He created a community groundswell of opposition. Some of the opposition was from the young, hip crowd, but the bulk was from the people who had been in the neighborhood for decades. The old school was their school, and they didn't want some new substitute for what had been the heart of their neighborhood. Next

came the garden. It had to be ADA accessible, secure and financed by outside sources.

Pope, again the matchmaker, found a fundraiser who believed in the project as much as he, built a supporting coalition and lived to see the project a success.

Pope has been an infrequent Literary Club attendee for too many years, but he means too much to those of us who knew him to allow his departure without his own favorite sign of recognition.

Pope was a connoisseur of bourbon and enjoyed the best. He also had a quirky fondness for the well bourbon served at Newport's Mansion Hill Tavern. On each of the tables before you tonight are cups, and a bottle of Kentucky Walker. Please pour yourself a healthy round and join me in a toast.

To Pope...may you bring vision and imagination to the majority!