Remembering David Ryan

My first contact with David was a blistering letter from him in 1993, chastising me in the strongest possible terms for accepting an award from the Boy Scouts. He'd read about it in the Carleton Voice, our quarterly alumni magazine. He was appalled that the president of his college would accept an award from an organization that discriminated against gay men and boys—and he drew some strong conclusions about me and about Carleton. All those who knew David would recognize the passion that he conveyed.

I wrote a rather long letter back to David. I talked about my own background, about the progressive attitude of the Boy Scout Council of which we're a part on matters of sexual orientation, and I told him what we'd been doing at Carleton. I also mentioned the adverse mail I'd received when we had introduced a gay and lesbian breakfast gathering at alumni reunions. I told him I hoped he'd get involved and see what we were doing, and even help us out.

Well—David made some inquiries among some other gay alumni, and I guess we passed. He began to come to alumni events in New York, he and I had a couple of long and to me fascinating conversations over dinner here. I learned a lot about him and his life, and we shared a lot of ourselves with one another. And, when I was saying goodbye to Carleton two years ago, David volunteered to be the host for the event. Circle closed, friendship cemented.

I shall always remember phoning David's apartment and receiving his greeting in English and French. I will remember, too, the passion he brought to his interests and causes, including the one to save his neighborhood. I'll remember hearing from him how his two French B&B guests had left on a beautiful morning on September 11th, and never came back. Every encounter with David was memorable. In sports he'd be called an impact player. Lots of lives go un-remarked and un-noticed. But David I will always remember, and with great affection.

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