

to the late KEITH BOYD, Curator of  
the K.M. Boyd Museum

I'm referring, of course, to the late Keith Boyd, the founder, the father, the promoter, the protector of the little museum at the corner of Church and Concession streets that so appropriately bears his name.

Keith has been gone for several months now, but his memory lingers... no, it's really more than a memory.

A memory fades quickly, in spite of the best intentions that we might have to hang on to it. In Keith's case, it's more like a presence, with his legacy growing stronger with each passing day.

In other words, Keith is still very much among us and particularly among those who carry on the work of collecting and preserving local history in his name.

That's why it won't be a time to mourn at the museum Sunday but a time to celebrate the remarkable contribution of one man to the place he called home.

As everyone likely to read this column already knows, Keith was the driving force behind the creation of the museum; from acquiring the building to filling it with relevant artifacts.

As readers also know, Keith passed away late last year after the failure of a heart that he received during transplant surgery.

Keith was a local businessman, Russell Hydro manager, husband, father and community activist. But more than anything, Keith was known for his daily determination to catalogue Russell's history.

For much of his adult life, Keith made it his mission to collect and store pertinent pieces of local memorabilia, to the extent that, for years most of the available space in his Castor Street home was filled to overflowing. Joyce is still finding things tucked away in dark corners.

In the 1980s, necessity prompted him to begin searching for a permanent home for his collection, a search that ended when he cut a deal with George Gifteas which saw the old Baptist Church trucked across the Castor River and set on its existing site.

Under Keith's supervision, the trove of special objects, photos and documents grew. He always insisted that it should be more than a showroom for antiques; each piece has special meaning to Russell's social, institutional, industrial and commercial history.

Keith became the museum's curator, a position now filled by wife Joyce and his sister Betty Hay. He hand-picked people

with particular expertise and avid interest to help him manage it by way of a board of directors. Those asked, including myself, were honoured to serve.

In fact, I've enjoyed three special honours in connection with Keith and the museum. The first was being asked to participate; the second was being named chairman of the board, a position that I now fill; the third will occur Sunday when, along with local historian Wendell Stanley, I'll unveil the photographic portrait of Keith which will grace the museum from that moment on.

An exhibit depicting Keith's life and contribution is being mounted as part of Sunday's activities and will be on display during the summer.

As museum chairman, I'll probably get to say a few words during Keith's memorial. Due to time limitations, I probably won't say everything that I might want to.

So I'll put it on the record here and now.

I'm not much of a "fan". I don't normally look up to people or adopt them as role models. As I go through life, I often seem oblivious to what others are doing around me.

But every now and then, someone steps from the faceless crowd to have a huge impact on me and the way I conduct my personal business.

The men and women that I've come to genuinely admire aren't high-rolling business tycoons or television personalities. They form an interesting crowd of characters, with a couple of things in common: almost all of them have country roots, an easy-going, philosophical view of life typical of a rural upbringing, and almost all have been dedicated to a cause.

At the forefront of this group is Keith Boyd, partly of course because of what he did, but mostly because of how he did it.

Keith was a true country gentleman, with the ability to lead without ever appearing to do so. People instinctively gravitated towards him and felt comfortable and confident in serving him in his particular cause.

With a wink of an eye, a friendly quip, or a conspiratorial hand on a shoulder, Keith could persuade you to do damn near anything... but his requests were always modest.

So it's more because of his nature than his work that his physical presence will always be missed. Luckily, his spiritual presence will always be felt.

by Tom Vandusen Jr.