

Farewell to a legend: David Boyd passes away

- By **REBECCA LEFTWICH**
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David Boyd Sr. is pictured in 1982 with his Green Eyeshade Award for excellence in journalism. Boyd was in the first self-syndicated artist to win the award.

Legendary political cartoonist, artist and character David Boyd Sr., 83, passed away Tuesday after a lengthy illness.

A graduate of The Citadel and a U.S. Army veteran, Boyd made his way to Newnan in the 1960s to head the Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce.

He later tried his hand at private business, but eventually decided to combine his love of politics and his talent for drawing into a successful career.

Boyd published his first political cartoons in 1968, in The Newnan Times-Herald. The cartoons were so popular that he ended up selling them to several other Georgia newspapers.

Later, he partnered with local attorney Gus Wood to create Mark-Morgan Features, a syndicated newspaper service that, in addition to Boyd's cartoons and comic strips, offered a political column, crossword puzzle, horoscope and church page. Mark-Morgan content was published in more than 200 newspapers.

"What David was able to achieve was significant," said longtime friend Keith Dunnivant, a historian and author who lives in Newnan. "He was able to leverage his particular art and his view of the world and turn it into a viable business. He filled newspapers throughout the South with significant commentary about politics."

Dunnivant first met Boyd in the spring of 1992, shortly after moving to Newnan. Boyd was behind the counter of The Print Shoppe on East Washington Street when Dunnivant dropped by to see about having some business cards printed.

They struck up a conversation over a photo of Jack Kemp that hung on the wall of the shop, discovering not only a similar political philosophy but also several common acquaintances.

"Next thing I knew, we'd been sitting there for about two hours," said Dunnivant.

Boyd asked Dunnivant if he was hungry and invited him to lunch at a new-ish restaurant, the Redneck Gourmet – an establishment in which Boyd went on to hold court for many years.

"It was a red letter day in my life," Dunnivant said. "Ninety percent of the people I met in Newnan, I met at the counter at the Redneck Gourmet."

Boyd was renowned for his political cartoons – in 1982, he became the first self-syndicated artist to win a Green Eyeshade Award for excellence in journalism – but his illustrations also appeared in books and magazines and on greeting cards.

He lent his considerable drawing talent to books by notable humorist Lewis Grizzard and created an entire series of iconic characters for comedian Jeff Foxworthy's "You Might Be a Redneck" books and merchandise.

But Boyd's real passion was politics. His scathing cartoon commentary made enemies of a wide swath of public figures, some of whom sought him out for a confrontation and left his presence having made a new friend. Others were greatly amused by his portrayals of them.

One was an Atlanta politician who had received multiple DUIs and was roasted by Boyd in one of his cartoons.

"Sometime after this, the politician, who had a sense of humor, came looking for David because he wanted the original of that cartoon," Dunnivant said. "He was able to tweak the politicians, and many of them were able to take a joke because they understood that (Boyd) was an important part of the whole process."

Boyd thrived on the furor and controversy he created and the people he met as a result, according to a 2016 story in The Newnan Times-Herald, written after he announced his retirement from the cartoon business.

"A few of those folks contacted me and I got to know them, and we became friends," Boyd told writer Alex McRae.

McRae also was a bosom friend, dating back to 1976, when McRae first moved to Newnan.

"We became lifelong friends, and I can't imagine how things would have turned out for me without Boyd," McRae said. "He could always pick me up when I was down and pump me up when I was low. He was my rock when things weren't going my way."

McRae said he and Boyd had many adventures together on the road through the years, but "we both vowed not to disclose some of the stupid stuff we did."

Those stories may remain untold, but other Boyd stories abound, many centered on his passionate beliefs, his contagious zest for life and his wily sense of humor, Dunnivant said. One running joke involved Boyd's uncanny knack for cheating death.

As a young man, Boyd survived a tragic car crash. Later, he triumphed over a brain bleed and cancer. He even famously ran over himself with his own car in downtown Newnan.

"He's had more lives than any cats you know," Dunnivant said. "David survived some really close calls and had a good, rich, vibrant life."

Boyd will be sorely missed, his friends say.

“We usually watched the election returns together, so it will definitely be different this November,”
Dunnavant said.

“His passing leaves a huge hole in my life,” McRae said.

Boyd leaves behind his wife, Rosalyn, three children and seven grandchildren.



The family of David Boyd Sr., seated, surrounds him at the 2017 opening of The Boyd Gallery. From left are Bonne Boyd Bedingfield, Rosalyn Moore Boyd Johnson, Rosalyn Boyd and David Boyd Jr. (PHOTO COURTESY PURE GRIN PHOTOGRAPHY)

