



David Scondras

January 5, 1946 - October 21, 2020

Former Boston City Councilor and devoted husband dies at 74

David Scondras was born in Lowell, Massachusetts on January 5th, 1945 to the late George P. Scondras and Dorothea (Coravos) Scondras.

He spoke Greek before English and served as an altar boy at the Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church where he considered becoming a priest. David attended Lowell High School where he excelled as a student and athlete. He was on the Lowell High Swim Team and graduated as Valedictorian.

David was recruited to Harvard University's mathematics program. While at Harvard, David was involved in the Vietnam anti-war movement and helped occupy University Hall in Harvard Yard. David took off a year to focus on his anti-war activities before returning to finish his Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics.

After Harvard, David moved into the Fenway neighborhood of Boston working on a Master Degree in Economics at Northeastern University. During his studies he served as an instructor and worked at the Boston Center for Older Americans delivering hot lunches and other services to local seniors. Seeing more need, David and a neighbor conceptualized and incorporated the Fenway Community Health Center whose mission was to provide free medical care to needy recipients. It was immediately successful.

In 1976, David cofounded Symphony Tenants Organizing Project (STOP) to address the increasing number of suspicious fires happening in the Fenway. Based in part on Scondras' work, an early warning system was developed that could accurately predict which buildings were most likely to be targeted for arson. STOP's efforts led to the conviction of a thirty-one member arson-for-profit ring in the Fenway. David helped form a support platform called Urban Education Systems to help other major US cities combat arson rings.

David's work and neighborhood organizing attracted local leaders to ask him to run for office in 1981. In his first race, David missed being elected to Boston City Council by a few hundred votes, almost unheard of for a first run in Boston. However, that year city activists managed to pass a referendum to district the city to better represent minority and neighborhood interests and in 1983 David ran again in the newly created District 8 (Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Mission Hill and Fenway-Kenmore) and won, thus becoming the first openly gay individual elected to the Boston City Council.

During his decade long tenure, he sponsored over 150 pieces of legislation ranging from fair and affordable housing, minority rights, gay and lesbian equality, a water table trust to monitor foundations in Back Bay, rat and garbage control, a Human Rights Ordinance and Commission, and the Family Protection Act which extended benefits to domestic partners. His office was well known for its effective constituency service response rate.

After the Boston City Council, David became the director of the Boston Human Rights Institute, a group he helped found. It was unofficially renamed Search for a Cure to more accurately reflect its new focus on AIDS education, prevention, research, and universal access to treatment. David traveled tirelessly to work with a wide-ranging coalition to produce and fund a 'HIV test and treat' program for Malawi, Africa's poorest country. He led the effort to start India's first AIDS organization and served on South Africa's AIDS Panel under President Thabo Mbeki.

In 2008, David and his partner Robert responded to the economic downturn by starting Whitman House, a bed and breakfast in Cambridge, MA, which attracted an international clientele. The architecture and David's sociability made the business a success and allowed David to continue his vital work at Search for a Cure.

In 2017, David finished his four-book autobiography titled *Angels, Liars, and Thieves*; holding book signings at the Fenway Community Center and the History Project in the hopes it would be a definitive account of this era in Boston history.

David Scondras passed away Wednesday, October 21, 2020 with his husband at his side after a long hard fought battle against polycystic kidney disease.

David enjoyed cooking, painting, traveling, studying, critiquing movies, teaching and playing the piano, often by ear. He also loved doing complicated math problems for fun and discussing local, national and world issues and events with friends and strangers alike.

He is survived by his husband and partner of 42 years, Robert Krebs, his three sisters, Diane Eacrett, Joyce Quinney and her husband Jack, and Patricia Adamkowski and her husband David, along with many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Cemetery

Private

MA,

Comments



“ My deepest sympathy to the Scondras family. I remember David from being a member of the Transfiguration Church . I remember being in the church choir with him. I also remember his becoming Valedictorian of the Lowell High Class of 1963. I figured David would go on to do wonderful things...what a wonderful distinguished life he led as a public servant. May his memory be eternal.



Joan (Mavrogiannis)Tsoukalas - November 08, 2020 at 06:09 AM



“ I lived with David at 109 Gainsborough St in our anti war days. David was both a mentor and an inspiration to us. Part of David’s legacy is that between us there were three doctorates and multiple master’s degrees. We were all in are on way public servants and community activists.
We all have found memories of happy healthy times.

Vincent Milaiko - November 01, 2020 at 10:07 PM



“ David's passing has truly impacted me. I had the opportunity to room with him at 109 Gainsborough street in the 1970s. My first contact with him was his eloquent speeches against the US invasion of Vietnam. He inspired me and no doubt many others. His concern about human suffering was deep as well as his passion to make things better. The world is a lesser place with the loss of David.

Michael Vance

Michael Vance - October 31, 2020 at 02:50 AM



“ David was an inspirational leader of the Gay & Lesbian community in my youth. He was always kind. He was always interested and generous with his advice. I had lost touch of him for many years, and am now the sadder for it. Peter Hamilton Nee

Peter Nee - October 30, 2020 at 03:41 PM



“ I met David in the early 70s reporting for a local weekly about the Boston Center for Older Americans. In his wonderfully open and casual way, he started telling me a story which began, "I'm gay. I had a lover in this building..." and went into an elderly Greek couple in the building losing everything in a fire. And so I was drawn into a friendship and collaboration on tracking arson-for-profit, and David and Robert helped me over the jumps of understanding something about their lives as gay men. He opened many hearts, even on the Boston City Council. His obituary on the Globe quotes one politician, Ray Flynn, who was and is a South Boston anti-busser, a right-to-life Catholic, opposite David in many ways, about their working together on housing and tenant issues. Ray also had and has the open and inclusive style, and went on to be a great Mayor. I don't know if one influenced the other, or if they just found each other, but it was a sweet tribute across the aisles and across the years. Robert, my thoughts are with you in this time of loss.

Mark zanger - November 04, 2020 at 08:59 PM



“ My heart goes out to Robert and David's whole family. I was an intern for David when he was a Boston City Councillor in 1985-87. He was a pioneer and a tireless advocate for so many issues that were not on most people's radars back then. I learned so much from him and from everyone in that office...Gary, French, Rosemary... I'm glad to see this kind remembrance of him because the one in the Globe was so mean-spirited and should not have been published. Sending Robert (in particular) a big hug and healing thoughts. --Lori Rutter



Lori Rutter - October 30, 2020 at 03:40 PM



“ I am very sorry to learn that David has passed away. He was a great community and political leader. He made many important contributions in Boston. I believe he cared very much about helping people. I send my condolences. -- Laura Dowd

Laura V Dowd - October 30, 2020 at 10:21 AM



“ The loss of David is shocking and difficult to comprehend. He was so full of energy, ideas, compassion.

While he surely had his faults and demons, i always found him energetic and enthusiastic, thoughtful, intelligent, caring, chaismatic, strategic and principled. I don't know that he and i ever had a conversation that wasn't focused on achieving an objective of his - including a very enthusiastic talk (I listened mostly) in which he assured (and almost convinced me) that he would certainly be elected Mayor of Boston in the near future.

David now remains as a part of Boston's history and folklore. He was a colorful, important figure in our City's history, who gave it his all to make us a better, more compassionate and inclusive City.

He will be remembered and missed.

Al Wallis

AL WALLIS - October 30, 2020 at 04:03 PM