

The Tom Ruane Memorial (Athena)

I first met Eileen Travis at the Art in the Orchard show, in 2023. She was very much taken by a sculpture that I had entered in the show titled Diana, a modern version of the classic goddess. She asked me if I would be interested in creating a memorial sculpture as a tribute to her late husband Tom Ruane. At first I was a little skeptical, having heard many stories of artist's commissions going wrong; especially with the amount of time involved in making a sculpture of that size (4-6 months). Eileen, being an artist herself as well as a landscape architect, assured me that she understood my reluctance, but that I had nothing to worry about. And after learning about what a wonderful, loving, funny man Tom Ruane was, and thinking about the recent loss of my own brother Tom, I couldn't refuse. And when Eileen said she wanted a sculpture of the goddess Athena, I was convinced!

You can tell, after seeing Athena for the first time, that there are quite a few items involved in making her. As a scrap metal sculptor, I always have a large supply of interesting, old, antique parts on hand. For Athena I would need more, and I would also need some special items to reflect Tom Ruane's spirit. There is a baseball with Tom's name on the "sweet spot", reflecting Tom's love for the game. There's a Jamaican candle box with a smiling face, to show Tom's sense of humor, as well as other items to try to portray Tom's life and energy. I am honored to have been chosen to make this memorial for Tom. At times I felt he was watching over me.

It is completely by design that Eileen Travis chose Athena, who represents Knowledge and Wisdom and the guarding of these treasures, as a memorial to Tom. And to have her placed in such an honored location in front of the Forbes Library, to be enjoyed by the whole community is a wonderful thing.

Brian McQuillan 2024