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December 1, 2010

Feature Obituary: David Becker, 63, respected art curator, lecturer

By *Melanie Creamer* mcreamer@mainetoday.com
 Staff Writer

PORTLAND — David Becker, an active Bowdoin College alumnus and a well-respected art curator, collector and scholar who contributed generously to social justice causes, died Friday. He was 63.

Mr. Becker taught and gave lectures at Bowdoin, Bates College and the Maine College of Art about art history, the history of print making and the history of graphic design.

For the past 40 years, he was a dedicated supporter of Bowdoin's Museum of Art, where he curated exhibits, illustrated books and wrote scholarly works on prints.

His passion for the arts compelled him to write "The Imprint of Place: Maine Printmaking 1800-2005."

Mr. Becker contributed generously to the museum. During his career, he donated more than 700 works of art, including prints, photographs and drawings. He made financial contributions to establish the Becker Print Gallery in memory of his parents and supported the renovation of the museum.

Kevin Salatino, director of the Museum of Art, said Mr. Becker was a world-renowned expert in the history of prints and illustrated books. He said Mr. Becker's death is a "profound loss" to the college and Maine's art community.

"David was a great benefactor and our biggest cheerleader," Salatino said. "He has been a guiding spirit for the museum for many years. Here, he discovered his love for art and he never forgot that. He was a wonderful person and a great friend."

Barry Mills, president of Bowdoin College, remembered Mr. Becker on Tuesday as a leader and champion of social justice causes.

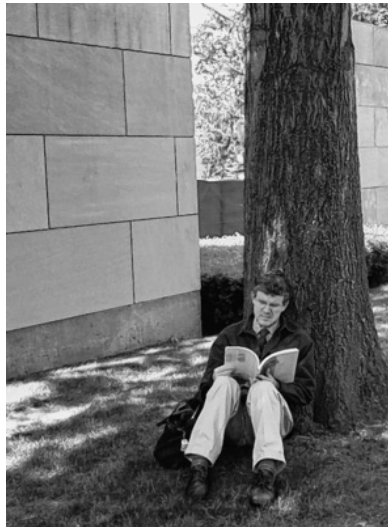
"He was a passionate advocate for the arts," Mills said. "He was a powerful voice on our campus for many years, ensuring that people recognized and respected all individuals on our campus. He was truly a remarkable guy."

Mr. Becker was an outspoken advocate for Maine's gay and lesbian community. He served on the board of directors for the Maine Community Foundation, where he was instrumental in establishing the Maine Equity Fund, which supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. He was also the founder of OUT, a fund for gay and lesbian liberation.

Meredith Jones, president and CEO of the Maine Community Foundation, said he was a quiet and unassuming guy who had an infectious laugh and a generous spirit.

"David was one of the most generous people I have ever met," Jones said. "It's a sad day for Maine and for the gay community. He was such a treasure."

Skip Brushaber of Westbrook, a friend of Mr. Becker's for the past 21 years, will give the eulogy at his memorial service on Dec. 11.



David Becker taught and lectured on art history at colleges in Maine. [click image to enlarge](#)

Family photo

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"He was my best friend," he said. "I admired his sense of social justice. He was really committed to the dignity of every person. Anyone who came in contact with him, he carried a piece of them in his heart."

Staff Writer Melanie Creamer can be contacted at 791-6361 or at: mcreamer@pressherald.com

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