

Of a certain age...

Diane Goble
Columnist

I think one of the most interesting places in town to hang out is Sisters Habitat for Humanity ReStore. You just never know whom you'll run in to, what stories you might hear from the old-timers, or what might happen while you're there. Recently we were treated to an impromptu concert for over an hour.

A Yamaha keyboard in a beautiful custom-built wooden stand with matching bench was donated a couple of hours before I arrived for my volunteer shift and I noticed it right away. Wow! What a deal for the right person, I thought.

A short time later one of our regular customers stopped in to look around to see if there was anything he couldn't live without, as many of our customers do, and he stopped to tickle the ivories, as many customers do when they see a piano keyboard on the floor. Pretty soon he sat down and started playing around with it to see if it worked. It worked ... and for the next hour or so he captivated us with

some of the most enchanting sounds.

Fortunately there were only a few customers in the store at the time so I sat down behind him on one of those comfy donated recliners we always have, closed my eyes, and let the sounds flow through me. He was playing stream of consciousness — as he told me later, he can't read music — his fingers just seemed to know where to go. The sounds transported me to white sand beaches, crystal-clear waters, gentle waves lapping the shore, the sun disappearing below the horizon to reveal a sky full of colors so bright, it took my breath away.

I'd had a nerve-racking weekend dealing with computer problems and had to run into Bend first thing that morning to get geek help, and almost didn't go into the ReStore for my afternoon shift, but I did, just to get away from my malfunctioning computer. And then the keyboard was there and this customer came in, and it was some kind of serendipity thing.

I told him the keyboard had his name on it and he thought long and hard about

whether to take it home with him. He'd play it for a while then stop, turn it off and think about it. Did it really sound that good? Was this really meant to be? He hadn't played for years but had been thinking about returning to it recently. He'd turn it on and start playing again, transporting me to other worlds. His music got deeper, more intense, more uplifting. He was playing from his heart. He'd stop ... turn it off ... turn around ... think again.

I told him if he didn't buy it, he'd go home and be back in an hour wanting to buy it and it would be gone (as often happens to our customers). He said he knew that — it had happened to him before. He turned it on again and played some more. One of the other volunteers told him he would buy it for him, but he had to leave it in the ReStore and come in twice a week (during his shift) and play it for a couple of hours. At the end of two years, he could take it home. The customer laughed.

He was on the fence but afraid to walk away or even get off the bench in case someone might come along and snag it from under him.

Then, as if on cue, another customer approached the keyboard while he was mulling it over and asked if he might sit down and play it. Reluctantly (and with the caveat that he had first dibs), he relinquished the bench. The new player sat down and ran through a few chords demonstrating that he knew his way around a keyboard. After a few minutes of playing some classical piece, he got up and went to the register to pay for his other items saying, "If you don't want it, I'm ready to buy it right now!"

That pushed our guy off the fence and he made the decision to buy it. I think it was all meant to be. The other customer even called back later to make sure he bought it or he was going to come back to get it.

Sometimes it seems like we're floundering, not knowing what direction to take or decision to make, then something totally out of the blue occurs, like stumbling upon a keyboard in a Habitat ReStore, and life takes on a whole new meaning. Oh, we volunteers are so blessed to be part of this community.

Standoff defendant can be his own lawyer

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — One of the defendants involved in the armed take-over of an Oregon wildlife refuge has been allowed to represent himself in the case.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports U.S. District Judge Anna Brown allowed Jason Patrick to be his own lawyer Wednesday, but not without questioning his ability to act appropriately without legal counsel to guide him. She appointed Andrew Kohlmetz to be his standby attorney.

In previous court appearances, Patrick has been scolded for making outbursts and speaking out of turn.

The 44-year-old roofer from Georgia is now the third co-defendant in the case to represent himself. A request from a fourth defendant, Duane Ehmer, is pending. Patrick has pleaded not guilty to conspiracy and weapons charges.



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