

Remembering Dave Anderson

By Scott Laird

A number of years ago local artists were invited to create a piece of art from several historic photos of Vernonia, with the completed artwork raffled as a fundraiser. I don't remember what the fundraiser was for, but I do know that I bought several tickets and put them all in the jar in front of a painting of the old Vernonia railroad station done by Dave Anderson. I had met Dave on several occasions, one of those at his art exhibit "To Break a Butterfly," and was deeply moved and touched by his art work.

My name was drawn, and I received that painting. The next time I saw Dave I told him how lucky and honored I felt to have received this beautiful piece he had created, and he in turn told me he was happy that I was the person who won it. That was Dave – he had a way of making everyone feel special. That painting hangs in my living room and will remain one of my most cherished and treasured possessions for as long as I live.

I, like so many others in our community, was saddened to learn of the passing of Dave Anderson on June 29. I didn't know Dave as well as I would have liked, but I know the world is less rich without him. Many people knew Dave, and his wife Cleone who passed away in 2017, as members of the community, and knew him better than I did. He was well liked by those who knew him, loved by his family, and respected as an artist.

I was first introduced to Dave when the 22 pieces that make up "To Break a Butterfly," were on exhibit at the Vernonia Community Learning Center in 2013. I had read about him previously here in *Vernonia's Voice* when Evan Doyle previewed the show when it was on display at Pacific University in 2008.

Dave was a professional musician, worked for national corporations as an ad director, and had owned his own graphics art business. I know Dave was much more than his paintings to many people, but it was through his art that I knew him.

"To Break a Butterfly" is a tribute to the children of the Terezin Concentration Camp. Through collage, Dave created a reflection of their art, writing, and emotions; from 1942 to 1944 15,000 children were imprisoned at Terezin, Czechoslovakia during the Holocaust and less than 100 survived. While imprisoned, the children of Terezin were allowed to ex-



press their emotions through art. Their work was then hidden in walls and cases so that someday it might be found and their experiences shared. Dave was touched by their story and moved to create art from it when his business partner found a twenty-five-cent book at a garage sale and gave it to him. The title of the book "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," was compiled poetry from the children of Terezin.

"It is not an easy subject matter – each piece takes a lot out of me," Dave told Evan in her interview with him.

I remember the exhibit and the way Dave was able to set the tone with his use of colors and images that was both respectful to the subject matter, while telling a most intimate story of death and suffering. His use of dark maroons, purples, and black, along with bits of text and related objects, left you deeply saddened. Bright colors minimally inserted provided some glimmer of hope, even though you knew the

ending to this story was truly horrific. The power of Dave's art in this exhibit was how deeply he allowed us to look into the fragile minds of children who were brutally losing their innocence, all shown with such beauty and grace.

When Cleone passed I spoke with Dave and helped him publish her obituary. I saw him several months later and he didn't seem well – he looked thin and tired. He told me he was really struggling. I promised myself I would invite him to come for dinner. Life got busy, but just a few months ago I picked up the phone and called him. He said he had been battling cancer, but was doing much better. We made plans for a dinner, but our schedules didn't mesh, and sadly that dinner never happened.

I'm not sure I've ever met anyone with as much talent as Dave, who was so humble and genuine. For someone so accomplished, he was always so gracious and unpretentious. He seemed so caring and authentic, a really kind and gentle man.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who knew Dave as really just an acquaintance, who was also touched by his talent and his loving soul, and who felt like he was a life-long friend. He will be missed, and the world now feels a little more empty.

A Celebration of Life for Dave Anderson will be held on July 20 at 12:00 pm at the Natal Grange.

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