

## ***My Everyday Heroes***

by Dan Livesay

Good morning everyone.

When Liz called me a couple of weeks ago and asked if I would make a presentation about what heroes I have had in my life, my first reaction was to say “no.” (Thinking to myself, “What heroes? I don’t have any heroes.”) But instead I said “I will think about it.”

And so I began thinking about hero possibilities that had been or are in my life. However, before I could bring any names to mind, I felt I had to define what I thought the characteristics of an everyday hero ought to be: Is it someone I would like to emulate as in a person who presents themselves with a flamboyant air of confidence, or a classy dresser? No, I don’t think so. Would it be a musician or conductor that I knew and respected? No, I know many of them too well. They are nice folks but not my idea of heroes. Could it be someone who does acts of bravery like a policeman, a fireman, a nurse or soldier or someone like Captain Sully who landed his plane in the Hudson River? Sure, those certainly are heroes, but they are not a part of my everyday life and, therefore, not an everyday hero for me. Or is it someone who is a leader, one who shows the way, a counselor, a confidant, a friend, one who possesses a positive attitude, is compassionate, and kindly. Whoa, where have I heard those words before? Then I asked myself, “Who do I know or have known that has or had those latter characteristics?”

Rewinding the tape (dating myself) to the 50's—that would be the early 1950's—I remembered my college trombone professor and recalled that he had those same characteristics, that of a leader, counselor, confidant, a friend, someone who had a positive attitude, was compassionate and kindly.

His name was Dr. Forrest Baird. He was a fine musician and teacher who always had something positive to say at every lesson. When I struggled with a musical or technical problem his standard comment was “That’s the fight” then he would suggest an approach that he would demonstrate. I always left a lesson feeling good about myself and had a sense of direction toward my preparation for the next lesson. When I reached my senior year and applied for teacher training, he became my student teaching supervisor. He would observe me in a teaching situation and then critique my classroom technique. He showed the same positive approach as in my one-on-one lessons with him. His influence helped me to become aware of my responsibilities and become a successful teacher—to treat my students fairly, to lead them in a positive way toward achievable goals, and to treat them as people who are unique and important regardless of their background or what they looked like. At the time, I wasn’t sure that I could live up to what I thought were lofty goals. These ideals, however, certainly set me on the right course. I must admit I wasn’t always successful but continued on for forty years remembering his comments and one in particular—“That’s the fight.”

There is one other person that has had a tremendous influence on my life who possesses these very same characteristics. That of a leader, counselor, confidant, friend, one who possesses a positive attitude, is compassionate, kindly and loving. That person is my best friend and wife of 52 years, Betty. Wow! Those of you know her know what I mean.

Well, my friends those are my everyday heroes. I leave you now with the question of the day. Who are your everyday hero's? I encourage you to think about it. Check them out. It's worth it.