

Van Dyke

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“Security swooped in, but Dick waved them off,” he said. “The man was very starstruck and excitedly saying how he just loved the ‘Dick Van Dyke Show’ and how he grew up watching his movies. Dick laughed and carried on with this guy for like 15 minutes. Dick was genuinely grateful for this person.”

Ready said he laughed to himself about how a man in a Rolls Royce and fur coat who approached Van Dyke meant nothing, but a genuine person who appreciated him and his work meant everything.

“Dick’s co-star, Scott Baio, must have caught the same vibe I was,” Ready said. “He walked over and said ‘He’s such a gem, isn’t he?’ I agreed.”

Van Dyke and Ready talked ‘pretty much daily’

Ready fondly recalled time he spent with Van Dyke in written recollections and an interview given this week to The

Capital-Journal.

“The dude was always happy,” Ready said. “He loved life. He was bigger than life.”

Ready said the two became friends in the 1990s as Van Dyke called asking for technical help with products created by NewTek, a Topeka company where Ready had begun providing technical support in the late 1980s.

Topekan Tim Jenison in 1985 founded NewTek, which gained national attention after its commercial release in 1990 of the Video Toaster, the first computer-based hardware system that could be used to edit live video.

The radical new tool put the means of video production into the hands of ordinary people, costing a few thousand dollars but rivaling the output of professional systems costing 10 times more.

Ready was among employees who took calls from NewTek’s customers, who included Van Dyke beginning in about 1991.

“Every time he’d call, for one reason or another, he’d just ask for me,” Ready said.

He said he liked the humor Van Dyke showed as he self-deprecatingly told

him he was “definitely a C+ student, so treat me as such.”

“I said, ‘Well, that’s great, because I’m a C+ instructor at best,’” Ready said.

Van Dyke and Ready talked “pretty much daily for a long time,” he said.

Van Dyke sent Ready autographed photo of himself

After Ready’s son, Garrett Ready, was born in 1995, he said he got a phone call from Van Dyke congratulating him while adding, ‘You can take a week off of me calling you.’”

Van Dyke once sent Ready an autographed photo of himself “out of the blue,” Ready said.

“On it he wrote clever sayings that were relevant to the NewTek video toaster,” he said.

Ready left NewTek after it moved in 1997 to San Antonio, then worked for a Topeka advertising agency before becoming co-owner of Gizmo Pictures Inc., a Topeka video production company.

Today, he is semi-retired.

Ready said he and Van Dyke last talked by phone about 20 years ago.

Dancing with penguins got Van Dyke interested in animation

Van Dyke has a passion for 3D animation and loves the technology behind some of the scenes in which he’s appeared, Ready said.

Van Dyke told Ready his interest in animation and special effects began as he performed in the popular 1964 film “Mary Poppins.”

Van Dyke told Ready he’d been “amazed” by a scene that showed him dancing with animated penguins.

“He actually said that he had the ‘easy’ part of dancing like a penguin whereas the ‘magicians’ who animated the penguins were the real heroes of the scene,” Ready said.

A day with Van Dyke

Ready recalled how he was attending a tech-related convention in about 1993 in southern California when Van Dyke asked him to hang out with him for a day and visit Amblin Entertainment at Paramount Studios.

“They were working in Lightwave 3D, on a show called ‘Sequest DSV,’ and invited him down to look at their new ‘Render Farm,’ which consisted of 40 Amiga 4000 ‘Toaster’ systems that were networked together to speed up frame rendering for the animation sequences of the show,” Ready said. “He jokingly said that he needed me in case the conversation got techie and he would be exposed for having ‘more money than brains.’”

After the tour, Van Dyke took Ready to visit his brother, Jerry Van Dyke, on the set of “Coach,” a TV series in which Jerry Van Dyke was a cast member.

“As we strolled through the back lot, a long tourist bus drove up with 60 or so people on the ‘Back Lot Tour,’” Ready said. “I heard the driver with a microphone say: ‘We have a celebrity spotting

on your left. Please give a warm welcome to Mr. Dick Van Dyke and ... guest!”

Ready laughed, he recalled.

“I could see the driver’s assistant frantically scanning my face to figure out if I was anyone remotely famous,” he said. “Dick smiled and waved and signed a few signature books that were held out. A couple smartass 10ish-year-olds held their autograph books out to me to I signed one of them “Guest” and wrote ‘Monsters are real’ in the other.”

Ready never actually got to meet Jerry Van Dyke, he said.

Van Dyke and Topekan bonded over shared passion for animation

Everywhere Van Dyke goes, people display a reaction of “Oh God, it’s Dick Van Dyke,” Ready said.

“And he’s truly aware of it, but he just downplays it so well,” he said.

“Everywhere Dick Van Dyke goes, it’s the same thing,” Ready said. “Everybody just adores him. And he just shrugs it off.”

Van Dyke wants to be a “regular person” and doesn’t want special treatment, Ready added.

“When you’re with him, it’s like you’re with one of the biggest stars ever, but you just don’t feel like that,” he said. “He makes you feel like you’re the important one in the conversation. It was never about him.”

Ready said he and Van Dyke bonded over their shared passion for 3D animation.

One reason they got along so well was because Ready wasn’t starstruck and interacted with Van Dyke in a manner that was “just normal,” Ready said.

“We talked about computer geeky stuff,” he said. “We didn’t talk about ‘Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.’ We talked about animation and computers and how to do things. It was more like two guys in a garage talking about cars rather than some schmo from Kansas talking to some superstar.”

Ready recalls traffic confrontation that turned pleasant

“As a driver, he is kind of scary,” Ready said of Van Dyke.

He recalled riding with him in a rented black Mazda Miata five-speed as Van Dyke pulled out into traffic, then “kind of laughed” as he tried unsuccessfully to shift into second gear and other cars went around him, with the drivers honking and making nasty gestures.

One motorist got so angry that he tailgated Van Dyke and Ready all the way to the next traffic light, then pulled up beside them.

“The men in the car motioned for us to roll down the window,” Ready said. “As he rolled it down, the men’s demeanor changed and they yelled: ‘Hey, you’re Dick Van Dyke! We love you man.’ Dick smiled and waved and said: ‘Thank you. I’m sorry I cut you off. Now if I can just figure out this stick shift!’”

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