

Ted Eckardt, Whose Mother Dreamed a Dream

When you ask an adult how his musical education started, you will often find a mother at the end of his answer. A mother who held onto a dream that her child would have music in his life. Would thereby find joy that he could not express in words. Would thereby find comfort in times of sorrow. Would thereby find companionship that comes only when people play music together. Ted Eckardt is one of those men who traces the beginning of his musical education back to the mother that dreamed it for her son.

Ted, whose ancestry is German, explained the following about his mother and his childhood during World War II. “We were deported from Panama, and after two internment camps, we ended up in the internment camp in Crystal City, Texas. The deportation resulted in all our property being confiscated.

“Our condition for release was that my sister and I accept the superintendent of The Lutheran Orphan’s Home as our legal guardian.” As part of the agreement, the children’s mother would be given food, shelter, and employment.

Although she was in such a precarious position, Ted’s mother held onto a dream for her son and took a risk to try to make that dream for him come true.

“My mother asked my guardian to arrange to get me a trumpet for Christmas,” said Ted. The time was 1944, and few musical instruments were being made. Metal went to the war effort, and the large music manufacturing companies switched from the production of instruments to that of ammunition and jet engines. Only a mother’s prayers could have made a trumpet become a reality for her child at such a time.



Ted was astonished at the gift. “I didn’t know a thing about musical instruments. I couldn’t even blow the darn thing!”

The son of Ted’s guardian also received a musical instrument for Christmas- a trombone- and together, the two boys started taking lessons at 75 cents an hour.

The lessons paid off. With the solid foundation provided by private instruction, Ted was prepared to play in his high school’s orchestra. During the fall, he played football, but after an injury ended his involvement in the sport, he joined the marching band.

After high school, Ted put his horn away. He would occasionally bring it out of the closet to play hymns for himself, but his old friend lay largely unused for fifty years.

Then local community-band legend Harvey McIntyre entered the picture. “When Harvey started the New Horizons Band, he came to my house and arranged for me to get a different trumpet and join NHB.”

As Ted renewed his skills, one of the instructors, Don Allen, a band director who was himself a trumpet player, encouraged him to join the trumpet section of the Hot Springs Community Band (which eventually became the Hot Springs Concert Band). Ted decided to accept the invitation but continued to

stay part of New Horizons as well.

“It was a decision I cherish to this day. Being a musician in our great band with fellow musicians is a thrill for me,” said Ted.

A mother, an innocent who along with her children was deported from her home and detained in internment camps because of her heritage, clung to a dream that her son would nonetheless have music in his life. Her dream came true. And because of his mother's dream, Ted Eckardt found joy that he could not express in words, found comfort in times of sorrow, found companionship that comes only when people play music together.

May we all accept Ted's story as a gentle challenge to dream of a musical education for every young person we know, and for taking the lead in making such dreams come true.