The passing of a legend - David C. Sutherland III

Posted by TheDungeonDelver - 2005/06/08 22:53

A Great Man

I have some profoundly sad news to report. David C. Sutherland III passed away sometime Tuesday in his residence in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. While his health had been in sharp decline, he was fairly active in his last days and was taking good care of himself. Thus, his death comes as sudden and unexpected.

Dave is survived by his ex-wife and two daughters. His sister Trudy, brother Scott, and mother would like to pass along their warmest regards to all of those who participated in the Collector's Trove auctions of David's collection over the past year. The funds have been placed in an account to support David's estate and his surviving family members.

He will be interred with full military honors at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, MN.

David as you know was a longtime artist in the gaming world. Producing countless works at an incredible rate, he helped illustrate the games of our imagination for generations of players. Wargames, roleplaying games, strategy games, and board games. David had done it all with the care and intensity that only a true fan of the historical, sci-fi, fantasy game genre could uphold.

The seminal artist of the Dungeons and Dragons and Advanced Dungeons and Dragons game and the fantasy world of M.A.R. Barker's TÃƒÂ©kumel, David helped shape the very roots of the roleplaying games we all know and love. His work is the canvas of our youth and fond sentiments. Many of the top writers and artists involved with the roleplaying games industry owe their inspiration and calling to him.

David's involvement in the art of games goes back to 1974 and the breadth and depth of his work is a roadmap for the history of the industry.

Every game industry person that knew Dave respected him for his unswerving devotion to art and remembered him for his great heart. Dave was a truly honest, loyal, decent, kind hearted soul, that selflessly shared a particularly keen wisdom to all around him. Many of them owe their happiness in life and life's calling to David. He was truly a man for others.

Born in 1949, in Minneapolis, David grew up in the image of his artistic father, David C. Sutherland II. His father's work in the paper industry brought vast supplies of creative material to their home and fueled David's interest in artistic endeavors. So too, his father's love for drawing, woodworking, and painting fixed Dave's heart in the field of art.

Dave, like his father, served in the military. Dave saw active duty as a Military Policeman in the Vietnam War in 1969-70. Also, like his father, David avidly sketched and recorded his days during the war.

Dave loved to dance, was an avid reader of science-fiction and fantasy novels, and became involved with the Society of Creative Anachronisms in the early 70's. He spent his free time drawing sketches and cartoons regarding these pastimes.

Eventually, Mike Mornard, a friend of Dave, also involved in the Society of Creative Anachronisms, would introduce Dave to Professor M.A.R. Barker at the University of Minnesota in 1975. The latter was producing an imaginary world for use with the wildly popular Dungeons and Dragons game published by

TSR Hobbies of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The happy meeting of the two sparked a creative relationship and Dave began illustrating Barker's world for all to see. Soon, David was working for TSR and continued to do so for nearly 25 years. Loyalty.

Alas, TSR Hobbies was purchased in 1999 by Wizards of the Coast. Despite his unparalleled loyalty to TSR Hobbies the new company did not rehire Dave. In a particularly shameful moment for the roleplaying games industry, the company did not even give Dave so much as a single phone call.

This was a particularly devastating, heartbreaking, blow to David, a person founded in loyalty. Those years were unkind to David and they took a terrible toll on him. Soon his health was in sharp decline. Doctors gave him a terminal prognosis.

Work was sporadic for David during this time and he felt abandoned by the gaming industry. He was unhappy and unwell. He had given up wanting to live.

In autumn 2004, however, a meeting between Paul Stormberg of the Collector's Trove and Dave's sister Trudy, revealed Dave's fantastic collection of artwork, miniature sculptures, games, and game memorabilia. According to Dave's wishes the collection was to be auctioned off on eBay by the Collector's Trove. It was Dave's hope to add the proceeds to his estate so that he could provide a financial trust for his daughters upon his passing.

The response to the auction was tremendous, a huge outpouring of support from Dave's fans swelled interest in the auctions. To date the auctions and sales of Dave's collection have garnered over $22,000. Letters, cards, and emails poured in for David, all wishing him well and hoping for better health for him. Most importantly, they shared how much David's artwork had meant to them over the years.

The auction and subsequent communications were a real affirmation for David. Outside of his family and close friends, he never realized just how much of a positive impact he had on so many people from so many different walks of life.

This outpouring of well wishes and sentiments of appreciation gave David a new will to live. Every day he tried to rejuvenate his spirit and fine motor skills. He even finished a piece of artwork that had lain unfinished for years.

It would be tragic for a great man to die not knowing he was a great man. Dave knew. Thanks to all of you.

Cards and sentiments can be sent to Trudy DeKeuster, 13911 Castelar Circle, Omaha, NE 68144. Email correspondence and requests for additional information may be sent to Paul Stormberg at stormber@cox.net.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Stormberg

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