

Remembering WAYNE BEATY

To say that Wayne Beaty was a friend to 9 legions would likely be an understatement. Within hours of his passing on Saturday, December 9, 2023 almost 400 people had offered individual condolences. His loss is mourned and his life celebrated by his wife Rebecca, son Jake, daughter Heather, and those hundreds who commented.



A native of Birmingham, Wayne grew up in Hueytown where he was in the band, developing and cultivating his lifelong love of music.

After high school he attended the University of Alabama for a year and then, like so many young men of that era, found himself in the Army. He was a proud member of the 101st Airborne, serving a year in Vietnam stationed at Camp Eagle. Returning to the States, he was stationed at Fort Benning, where he and Rebecca lived for about a year.

Growing up in Hueytown, he loved NASCAR and automobiles. Later working at Western Auto and at Brownell Pontiac, he honed his natural God-given skills as a mechanic and fixer of all kinds of things. It was never an imposition for anyone to ask Wayne's advice or help on a car problem. He loved any opportunity to work on a car. Need a part? Wayne would scour the junkyards until he found it and installed it.

The Beatys moved to Montevallo in 1978 when he took a position as superintendent of the coal Washer at Boothton. Then, he began going to government surplus auctions with his father-in-law and found the employment niche that really suited. He started Beaty Diversified Sales in 1981 and toured the country in his 1972 blue truck.

An indefatigable sense of humor. Nobody left a conversation with Wayne without having laughed a time or two. And if his language was frequently "colorful," it was never vulgar. Friend Doug Rodgers said: "Your multitudinous voluntary efforts in our town have made it a better place to live, and you and Rebecca reared two fine children in the community, an accomplishment not to be taken lightly." Two of those community efforts were theater and Boy Scouts.

Wayne fell in love with community theater purely by chance. While attending an audition event at Mike Mahan's he participated in a reading and found himself with a part in a play. He was hooked and for decades he was a mainstay of the Montevallo Main Street players. He served as a board member, producer, prop manager, set builder and all-around supporter whenever needed. He also occasionally took the stage. His performance as Elwood P. Down in Harvey is memorable in MMSP lore. Jimmie Stewart played the role no better in the movie.

He was equally involved in Boy Scout Troop 559. Dorothy Grimes, mother of two Eagle scouts, said: "Wayne gave those boys more than just rope skills and camping experience. He

made scouts a place to have fun and be happy while you were learning. He cared about them all and they all knew it."

One of those Eagles, David Grimes, agreed: He was not one to teach conventional rope tying and fire building skills. I don't ever recall him teaching me a single by-the-book merit badge class, but you were blessed as a Scout if you experienced the 'Wayne Beaty merit badge.' Unlike the merit badge sash that gets put away in the closet and lost over time, you have to carry and use the 'Wayne Beaty merit badge' for your whole life experience.

"The WB merit badge taught you invaluable life skills. Things like getting your hands dirty rebuilding the engine of a '66 Mercury (like he did with Larry Readell). How to smile and laugh when life isn't going as planned; when the rain is pouring down and the mosquitoes are relentlessly attacking in the backwoods of Bibb County. How to drive a 3-on-the-tree truck (I think Wayne's truck was more like a 2-on-a-tree) with loose steering, and if you can drive THAT, you can drive ANYTHING. How to give to those less fortunate like the time he passed around a one-a pound bag of peanut M&Ms on a camp out knowing that's the best treat some kids would have that weekend."

He was a founding member of Round Table, a loose "philosopher's club" at JeRoe's Deli on Main Street. It was a gathering that daily drew a disparate group of Montevallo folks with verbal solutions to all of the world's problems and more.

Steve Gilbert summed up Wayne's death this way: "The heart has four chambers. One chamber is filled with sadness at the passing of my friend. Another chamber is filled with joy, that my friend has crossed over from this life and his spirit is free and that his body and soul no longer suffer from the pain and ravages of cancer. "Another chamber is filled with anger, that the Vietnam War is still taking lives some 50 years after the laying down of arms. Anger that our government still does not provide those that serve the assistance and care they need and deserve. "The fourth chamber is filled with memories of time spent talking about racing. We were two old gearheads from Hueytown. Memories of lunchtime conversations around The Round Table at JeRoe's. Memories of building sets for the Montevallo Main Street Players productions and countless others. "Three of the chambers will be empty with the passing of time. The fourth will remain."

Contributions in Wayne's memory may be made to Montevallo Main Street Players P.O. Box 33 Montevallo, AL 35115 or <https://www.montevallomainstreetplayers.com/>



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