



Alan Drake Remembered: Gentle giant was a source of confidence for youth

Alan Davis Drake was born on June 5th, 1945 in New York City. That was the first and last moment his life can be effectively captured by words. Alan lived a special life, dotted with occasional normalcy, which the Long Branch Free Public Library is honored to have been a part of. He came to us on a winding path, taking time to find his way and enjoy the journey.

Alan's first job was teaching at a school in Bedford Stuyvesant, New York. After that, he worked for many years in the construction trade, managing a hardware store. During this time Alan also acted in community theatre, engaged in archeological and anthropological studies at Easter Island and in Hawaii, wrote poetry, and edited a literary magazine for new and upcoming authors. Several years ago Alan returned to teaching at Lakewood High School, concurrently beginning his much-loved, evening and Saturday job as Coach Drake, library assistant extraordinaire in the childrens room. Alan also started Cloud Mountain Productions, recording audiobooks, poetry and short stories for the listening public; all in his beautiful, deeply resonant voice, and all available on the internet for free (<http://paintedricecakes.org/CloudMountainProductions>).

Alan engaged in all of these activities with joyful fascination and kindness. His wife, Terri Blair, told us he chose to move through life with loving-kindness. This idea is made obvious once you hear the story about the time he played Daddy Warbucks in a production of Annie at the Count Basie Theater. At every performance, before the curtain went up, he tucked in each child and gave them encouraging words.

Alan was wholly present in every moment and had a way of making each individual to whom he spoke feel special. He had the special talent of being able to make children feel comfortable and confident, such as when a child completed an art project differently than the others and Alan quickly did the same so the boy would not feel alone and wrong. As a role model, he stood for self-respect and dignity- always wearing a jacket and tie. This is something both his students at Lakewood High school and a decade of children at the Long Branch Library responded to.

Alan Drake was a large, imposing man. Truly a gentle giant, Alan, at 6'2 got serious when necessary but more often than not sought out fun whenever possible. His hobbies ranged from travel to photography to poetry to appreciating literature and food. He was not satisfied living through the experiences of others and, instead, followed all his interests, big and small. Alan was always excited to share these interests with others, whether it was presenting a library program on China recounting a trip he took to visit his son or just discussing the latest photography technology with a coworker.

A Buddhist memorial service will be held at the Quaker Meetinghouse in Shrewsbury, New Jersey on Sunday, November 21st at 5 pm. Dairyu Michael Wenger from the San Francisco Zen Center will be officiating. A Quaker memorial meeting for worship will take place on Saturday, December 18th at 1 pm., also at the Quaker Meetinghouse, located on Route 35 at Sycamore Avenue, Shrewsbury, N.J. All are welcome to attend either or both of these services. For further information, please call 732-741-4138.

We will remember Alan for his booming voice, his slightly quirky sense of humor, his full and giving heart, and especially for his genuine affection for life.