

Dave Cook

Becomer's Mystery Person of the week - February 25, 2008

I was born and raised in Long Beach, California.

I was a beach kid and didn't wear shoes all summer.

As young boys we went to the train trestle and held on under the supports over the water when the trains went by.

I was knocked about 30feet when I was riding my bicycle in Belmont Shore, (never told my mom until I was about 50 years old)

One of my earliest memories was talking to the GIs in foxholes on the beach in Long Beach and watching Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose fly its only flight.

I was teased in grade school because I had to wear glasses.

In high school I was involved in the Slide Rule club and was a chemistry lab assistant. I was headed to a career in science, but I also worked on the high school newspaper and yearbook.

I went to Long Beach City College and discovered science was not for me.

I went to U of C at Berkeley and dropped out after one semester. I tried Chemistry, Engineering, English Literature, Physics and Journalism at LBCC and Berkeley.

I was drafted into the Army and lucky for me I was assigned as a photographer. It was a good time for me (if you consider the military a good time). I got to tell generals what to do, covered research projects and public relations. I traveled to Barbados during a science project and got to sit on a sixteen-inch battleship gun.

I spent fifteen months in France and enjoyed that time. I got to travel and photograph places to visit, did secret projects and had six gendarme nationales confront me and my associates with submachine guns. They thought we were going to blow up a bridge (this was during the Algerian uprising) and in reality we were photographing and measuring the bridge for the military. It worked out fine and we had wine together.

I have never been in jail, but I was involved in a robbery. While in France a group of GIs organized a secret night raid on a farmer's apple orchard and I was driving the getaway car. One of my GI friend's wife wanted to see a bordello in Paris, so we dressed her up as a man, a little shoe polish for 5 o'clock shadow, and spent about ten minutes before they became suspicious. It really was flocked red wallpaper, chandeliers and plush velvet.

I traveled throughout France, Switzerland, northern Italy, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Brussels.

Also, I was one of the first Playboy Club key holders.

After returning from the Army I became involved in photography and worked in the aerospace industry.

It was in 1967 that I met the most wonderful woman I have ever known. It was love at first sight. But I had to marry her to get my pajamas back. She had left her luggage on the train when she met her friends in Fullerton upon arriving from the Midwest. My roommate was dating her roommate and we had them over for dinner and had a great time. When Susie was leaving she asked me if I wore pajamas. And I thought, ah ha, things are looking up. I gave her a pair of royal blue pjs for her to sleep in until she got her luggage and when I finally got them back after marrying her they were a dinghy gray color. She didn't know how to wash clothes.

But with the help of Susie I went back to college. This time I attended Art Center College of Design

(at that time in Los Angeles; now in Pasadena) and majored in Photography and graduated with a BFA with Distinction. All those years photography was always in the background and finally it surfaced. I also discovered when I became involved in the advertising photography field that I was anal-retentive and a control freak. In my field everything had to be perfect.

After graduating from ACCD I opened a small studio in Los Angeles and I was asked to return to ACCD to teach photography. It was then that Susie and I, with our new son Chris, moved from an apartment in LA to Northridge. After seven years we moved to Rockford, Illinois and had an incredibly successful advertising and commercial photography business. Susie was the studio manager and we had a wonderful life. We spent thirteen years in Rockford and then moved back to Southern California.

I've been to over fifty airports and was listed in "Who's Who in Advertising". I photographed advertisements for national and international companies for consumer and trade ads and annual reports. My clients have included Bergner's Dept Stores (Illinois and Wisconsin), Brach's Candy, Kellogg's Cereals, Mrs Smith Pies, Western Digital, Honeywell, Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Lamborghini, Equal Sweetener, Hewlett Packard, Hughes Aircraft, Litton Industries, and Wet Seal, to name a few.

Susie and I have traveled to Ireland, England, Bermuda, the Bahamas and cruised the Mexican Riviera. During these years I did a lot of backpacking into the local So Cal mountains and the Sierras of California. A friend and I got lost during a snow storm for eight hours (very scary), but luckily stumbled out 100 yards from our car.

I've covered most of the John Muir Trail and most of the passes from the Eastern Sierra. I traveled with a friend in 1998 to see Macchu Picchu Sanctuary in Peru—one of the most moving and stunning experiences of my life.

For many years I was a skier and skied in California, Colorado and Wisconsin (an intermediate skier)

I've owned way too many cars in my life. I've had 29 and for awhile we jokingly said I belonged to "The Car of the Month Club" Fords, Chevys, Corvettes, Cadillacs, Mercedes Benz, Oldsmobiles, Jaguar, Honda, Toyota, etc.

I'm retired now from the photography business, but I'm still involved. I have taught photography at Mount San Antonio College (MtSAC) for fifteen years. It keeps me feeling young and involved in the new revolution of digital photography. I still do an occasional photo shoot, video editing and DVD presentations.

I would love to have dinner with Leonardo DaVinci, Carl Sagan and Albert Einstein.

There are so many verses that are important in the Bible, but I enjoy Psalm 118:24. "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it."