

Excerpted from an interview with Carolyn Driedger conducted by Alys Adams and Liz Westby on November 20, 2019. This interview is part of the Mount St. Helens Oral History Project of Washington State Parks.

Excerpt begins at 44:51

Carolyn Driedger (CD): Okay. So, David was, apparently David was really shy, but congenial, but he had a fear of public speaking. So, there are a couple reports of him going to science meetings knowing he was up and going up to the podium and then fainting. So, they got in a habit of giving him a paper bag and he'd breathe into paper bags. Remove the possibilities of hyperventilation or whatever.

Anyway, so he had this fear of public speak, but despite that he was really bold in the face of the news media. When they talked to him about what might happen, he gave it straight and he gave it right. I think that people weren't used to hearing it straight like that at the time and he did a great job with it. It still inspires me to look at the KING 5 interviews with Jeff Renner where he's there stating exactly what might happen. And he was right on.

I just want to talk a little bit more about him. I mean, Tom Casadevall should really talk more about this, but. And there are somethings I learned about Dave from his colleagues and one of them was Tom Casadevall. Tom told me that he was the one who was slated to go talk to David's parents, chosen to go talk to David's parents. They were both gas geochemists. So, Tom went back to talk to David's parents, showed him the aerial photographs and the maps, reports, and just wanted them to understand that there was no way that David could have survived this. His body was not found, but there's no way he could have survived. And I guess that was a pretty devastating time for everybody. But Tom talks about getting to stay in Dave's bedroom, his childhood bedroom that night and he slept in Dave's bed and he said he closed the door and on the backside of the door there was a statement written there that David had put there at some point in his youth, maybe his high school or college career. It was a quote from Teddy Roosevelt and it was some portion or maybe more or maybe less of this quote from Teddy Roosevelt.

Here it is, "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

You can see his inspiration and reading that still inspires me. I was thinking about this earlier, something that occurred to me is that, you know, until there's loss it's really hard for us to remember that relationships in life are just so fragile. And life it really fleeting. So, there's not really a moment to spare in living life to the fullest and appreciating those around us.

Alys Adams (AA): That's really beautiful. Thank you.

CD: Yup. You're welcome.

AA: Try not to cry

[Laughing]

AA: There's just so much going on.

Excerpt ends at 49:09