

From airwaves to the page

A creative journey and tribute to lifelong friends

Dave Anderson has worn many creative hats—rock guitarist, country radio host, college journalist and now author—shifting seamlessly from one passion to the next as his life and interests evolved.

When they met at a church in the suburbs of Chicago, IL, at 13 years old, the trio—Anderson and his friends Steve Hill and Derrick Waggoner—had everything in common. They loved superheroes, sci-fi and adventure stories, rock music and making mixtapes, and shared a sense of humor.

This meeting in 1979 gave Anderson the inspiration to write a book featuring the three of them. Even at that young age, his head was filled with ideas for the story based upon their shared interests—from superheroes to mystery solvers to cartoons.

Although some of their interests changed throughout the years, from middle school onward, Anderson's friendship with Hill and Waggoner was a constant. Their love for rock music led them to form a band in high school, with Anderson playing guitar. After high school, even as Anderson went to broadcast school and later moved throughout the United States, he made sure to see them at least once a year and stay in touch over the phone.

Having previous writing experience at his high school newspaper and writing songs for his band, he was initially interested in working for a newspaper as a reporter but said he “got sidetracked with the radio.” He joked that his wife has told him he had a “face for radio.”

After broadcast school, he found work at a country music radio station. “It’s kind of weird when you think about it, that I became a country music DJ. I grew

up listening to rock and playing rock,” he said, but remembered that his and his friends’ dads liked country music.

From 1993 to 1997, he was the “Wake-Up Crew Gerbil” on Q-98.5 in Rockford, IL, then he became just “the gerbil” and worked on Rooster 106 in Columbus, GA, from 1997 to 2003. In his gerbil days, he did “man on the street” interviews and was a “stunt man.” Anderson performed harrowing feats such as jumping 13 stories into a bucket of water—13 storybooks that is.

Ditching the gerbil pseudonym when he began his new position at 102.5 in Rochester, MN, he decided to start going by “Dave Berg” as an ode to the frigid iceberg-like temperatures in the city. In this new position he led many radio contests on air, which benefited charities.

His 22 years in the radio industry afforded him opportunities to meet several well-known performers. He met both the queen and king of country music—Reba McEntire and George Strait—as well as Garth Brooks, Blake Shelton, Kenny Rogers, Miranda Lambert and Little Big Town. Additionally, he met comedians Bill Engvall and Bob Hope.

“Right when they made their debut, [Little Big Town] came into the studio and I got to talk to them and got to hear their first few songs before they kind of made a big splash on the country music scene,” Anderson said. Years later he met the group again and Anderson was excited to say, “They remembered me!”

In 2015, Anderson was informed that there would be corporate downsizing and was laid off from his station. He worked odd jobs until 2017, when he received a postcard informing him that the Post Office was hiring, so he applied.



Dave Anderson



Anderson (c) and his friends Steve Hill (l) and Derrick Waggoner



The Rochester, MN Branch 440 member draws comparisons between delivering mail and radio hosting. As a letter carrier he engages with the community, which is like the “man on the street” radio segments.

Following decades of conceptualizing and jotting down notes, in 2022, Anderson finally began the process of writing the book he first envisioned in 1979.

One of the ideas that stood out to him was his idea to characterize the trio as superheroes but landed on making his book a mystery inspired by Encyclopedia Brown and the Hardy Boys, series he read growing up.

Although the trio’s friendship took off in their early teens, he decided to age them down a bit to avoid the “teen-age angst” and questions of personal identity that often come with coming-of-age narratives. Instead, he focused on the humor and fun times he shared with his two best friends.

Anderson chose the title, *The Adventures of HAW*, as an ode to the friendship of Hill, Anderson and Waggoner.

The book is about the three friends attempting to solve the mystery of \$100,000 that goes missing from the middle school principal’s office. Anderson said the story is about 50 percent true with added humor and plot elements. The book concludes on a cliff-hanger, so Anderson is planning to write a sequel.

“I’m thinking of a ‘Mission: Impossible’ type of story for the sequel,” Anderson said. “I’m working on that right now. It really depends on free time. I’m hoping that by summer I’ll be done with it.”

Although the book’s content is mainly fun and lighthearted, the plot inadvertently became inspired by the death of Waggoner, which happened in April 2023 when he was 57. Adding to Anderson’s loss, only a few weeks before he finished

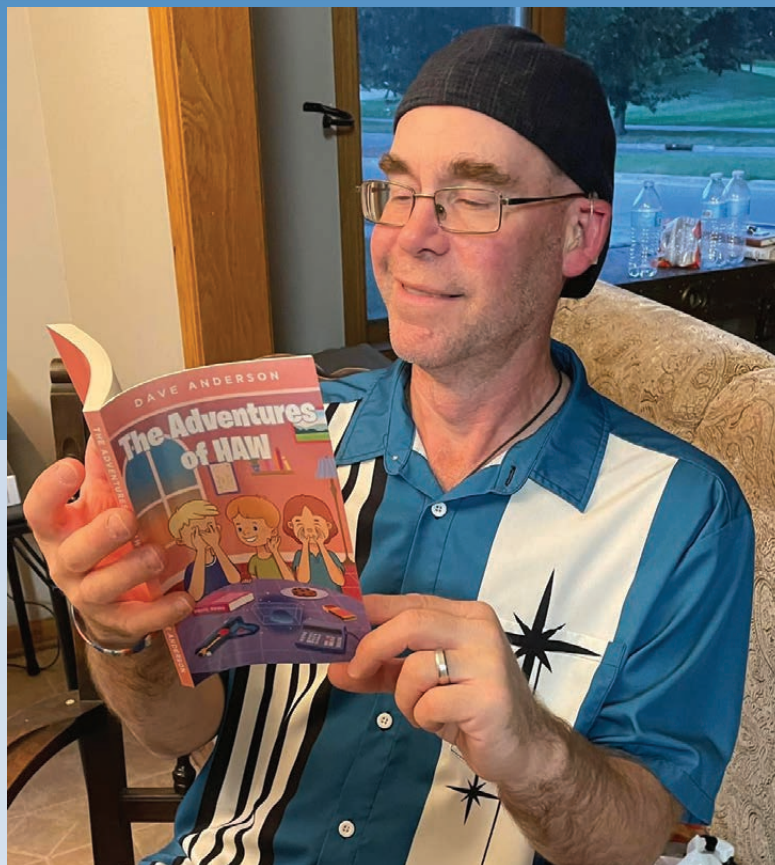
the book in 2024, Waggoner’s wife, Michelle, who the trio had known since childhood, also died.

“I found myself deeply affected by their loss and felt compelled to preserve their memory,” Anderson said. “Engaging with their memory after their deaths played a significant role in inspiring the book.”

In the sixth chapter of the book, Anderson delved into time travel. He dedicated a large portion of the chapter to Michelle and her experiences in seventh grade—when the book was set—and when she was an adult. He said that part of the book was one of the hardest to write, as it brought back emotions of those he had lost.

“It was very emotional and very real,” Anderson said. “I started thinking about my grandfather, and I started thinking about my grandkids, and the time that I might not be around to be there for them. I started to get emotional and get choked up while I was writing.”

If it wasn’t enough to have the book serve as a tribute to their decades-long friendship, Anderson shouted out his two friends and their wives in his acknowledgement, saying that he is “grateful and indebted” for their friendship. Under a photo of Waggoner, Anderson honored their friendship with the simple words: “1965—2023 Forever.” **PR**



Above: Dave Anderson with his book

Below: While working in country radio, he met some legendary musicians, including Reba McEntire (l).

