Barn Brothers in Blake’s ‘eternal portfolio’

Friends and family recall Bob Blake’s generosity

Imagine a drop of water striking a pond, a momentary impression in what seems a solid surface. A glistening crown of droplets rising skyward and ripples radiating out... everything in their path.

Such a description of Ken Casner of Indian Land used to describe the life of his brother Bob Blake. Bob Blake, 60, a longtime Indian Land resident and local entrepreneur, died June 8 after a brief battle with esophageal cancer, diagnosed in December. He would have celebrated his 61st birthday tomorrow.

Though Blake was well-known for his business acumen, he was also known by many for his quiet generosity that, among other things, helped establish the Barn Brothers men’s fellowship in Indian Land.

Speaking during a party celebrating Blake’s life June 15, Casner liked to think of Blake’s life in terms of those rippling droplets, his unheralded acts of generosity and quiet encouragement of others, as well as the act itself and affecting others in unseen ways.

“You never know the impact a man can have on the life of another,” Casner said. “Bob believed Jesus offered him a good deal in life. He took it, and he’d want you to take it, too.”

Born and raised in Charlotte, N.C., many said Blake was a natural at finding “good deals” and turning them into gold.

Family and friends said as a young man he spent $300 on a real estate course, investing in both properties and businesses in Indian Land.

In subsequent years, Blake invested in both properties and businesses in Indian Land. One of the most well known was the former Bob’s Car LLC near the corner of Charlotte Highway and Shelby Road.

Many who spoke of Blake used contrasting terms, such as describing him as a superior businessman who never acted superior or a man who had a special talent for finding “good deals” and turning them into gold.

Casner said Blake didn’t attend the Barn Brothers’ Tuesday meetings much until early 2010 during a time of intense personal and business adversity, which Casner referred to as Blake’s “Crucible of St. Adversity.”

He said after receiving the support of the fellowship, Blake repaid it by becoming one of the Barn Brothers’ most supportive members, financially and otherwise, a man who had a special talent for getting through to men with his quiet wisdom.

Most of the time with men, we think we’re the only one who’s going through this,” Casner said. “Bob showed them they weren’t.”

About two years later, something else good happened to Blake – he met his soulmate, Marla Allen, whom he married almost immediately.

Over the course of the year they were married before his death, Marla Blake said her husband was intent on learning to put aside regret, focusing more on relationships and living life to the fullest.

She said it was during that time that he decided to work on developing his “eternal portfolio” by helping others – including arranging for ongoing support of the Barn Brothers men’s fellowship.

Marla Blake said her husband became more emotionally healthy as a result of his spiritual health, which improved even as his physical health temporarily improved and that will live on and impact multiple generations. “That’s what he wanted.”

Blake’s daughter Courtney said the party was a moving reminder of how much her father was loved. She said it was her pride to see how well he was loved by others;” Courtney Blake said. “Families, friends and his faith were very important to him.”

He finally found out what was important and learned to let the rest go,” she said. “And I think that’s what I learned from my dad – to live every day knowing what’s important.”

Blake's daughter Courtney Blake during a memorial party at Blake’s farm in Lancaster, a former Indian Land resident, died June 8. LEFT: Lori & Tony McDermott of Rock Hill, left, and Ed Sniadecki of Fort Mill reminisce about their friend Bob Blake.


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