

Remembering Reinald Werrenrath

Good evening. My name is Tom Ross. At Betty's request, I'm speaking on behalf of the Ross Family. I am joined here tonight by my three younger brothers, Hal, Richard and Rob, plus Rob's bride, Lisa. Last Thursday we flew in from Seattle, Colorado Springs and Florida.

We are very glad to have been invited to attend this gathering honoring Reinald.

Our extended family is also here in spirit, especially my departed Mom and Dad who were great friends with both Betty and Reinald.

Our family moved in next door to the Werrenraths in 1946 when I was 4 years old. Truth be told, Betty quickly became my second mother.

Especially to my 4-year-old eyes, Reinald was a very impressive fellow. He was so tall and strong and athletic.

He also had all these impressive handyman tools, even electric tools. And he knew how to use them.

One early memory sticks in my mind. He had a single car garage with a worn wooden floor. One day he decided to replace the floor with concrete. When Renny and I learned about this project we asked him if we could have the remnant boards; they didn't seem all that worn to us. The grease spots from years of sheltering cars didn't bother us a bit.

He was very careful in cutting and removing the boards with his electric saw and other tools. These boards soon became a two-story fort that Renny and I built in my parents' back yard next door.

A little later he introduced me to the miracle of a radio that had moving pictures and sound. As you have already heard he was an early pioneer and entrepreneur in the Television world. I knew he actually created educational kids shows. A few days ago, Betty reminded me that 2 of them were Zoo Parade and Ding Dong School. Articles on these and his other breakthrough and award-winning shows can still be seen online.

I was always struck with his overall demeanor. He was always so calm and understated and reasonable, even, heaven help us, when he caught Renny and me smoking in a tree. I confess that I had conveniently forgotten this embarrassing incident until Betty reminded me a few days ago.

One of my most vivid and recent memories was playing tennis with him in 1993 when he was 77! I was 51 and played very regularly since we had a tennis court on our property. I don't think he beat me but he sure held his own. I remember thinking at the time "wouldn't it be great to play active tennis at 77." I will be 77 next month. I still play golf but haven't had the nerve to try tennis in years.

My respect for him has only grown over time. He was a mighty impressive guy. As others have mentioned his was truly a life well lived. He will be greatly missed by family and friends alike.

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few fond memories of a truly great guy!