

Grammy-nominated musician Steve Forbert uses Columbia girl's drawing in latest album



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Almost every Saturday morning for the past eight years, Dennis Smith and his daughter, Erin, have traveled from their Columbia home to Frank’s Diner in Jessup for their weekly father-daughter breakfast.

Dennis orders a bacon and cheese omelet with home fries and coffee, and Erin, 10, a fifth-grade student at Deep Run Elementary School in Elkridge, usually orders cereal or a bagel.

Then, they draw. Using crayons and pencils, they cover the diner’s place mats with everything from landscapes to characters from Erin’s favorite books.

“It’s our Saturday morning tradition,” Dennis Smith says.

It’s also a tradition that unexpectedly led Grammy-nominated musician Steve Forbert to feature one of Erin’s drawings in the liner of his latest CD.

Forbert, known for his 1980 hit single “Romeo’s Tune,” stopped at Frank’s Diner this summer while touring through Maryland. While there, he noticed one of Erin’s drawings, which diner owner Frank Davis had hung up more than five years ago.

The crayon drawing depicts what Erin calls a “weird wolf man” with a blue face and a young, smiling girl with blond hair.

“He’s [upset], and she seems to be happy about that,” Forbert says. “I thought it had a little bit of irony

to it, and I like the colors.”

Forbert, who released his 16th studio album, “Compromised,” in November, liked the drawing so much he wanted to include it in the CD’s liner, on T-shirts and on his website.

“I just saw it as a work in and of itself,” he says. “There was something true about it.”

Forbert asked Davis to reach out to the Smiths with his request. He did, and the Smiths happily agreed.

“I was really happy and excited,” Erin says. “I thought I was going to be famous.”

“I thought it was great,” her father adds. “Certainly not an expected outcome.”

Forbert paid Erin a small fee for the rights to her image. He also agreed to give Erin a cut of all T-shirt sales. The money will go into Erin’s college fund, Smith says.

“I think we’ve discovered a young artist,” Forbert says. “Maybe this will encourage her to get more involved in it.”

It has, Erin says. The Smiths now bring their own travel set of artist pencils to their weekly breakfasts, and in the future, Erin hopes to apply her art skills toward becoming an interior decorator.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/columbia/ph-mg-ho-steve-forbert-uses-columbia-girls-drawing-story.html>