

Life, like songs of Boss, often bittersweet

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By Michael Kelly

It's been a long, cold winter, but Springsteen is just around the corner – not a day too soon for David Parsow of Omaha.

He has attended 27 concerts by the New Jersey-born rocker, and will be there Friday at the Qwest Center Omaha. But the first time, 30 years ago in Omaha, “I had to be dragged there.”

Friends had an extra ticket, so he went. When Bruce Springsteen began singing, “Badlands,” thought, David was hooked.

For those who don't understand the fan attraction to The Boss, David puts it this way: “He's as great as the Rolling Stones, only better. We're not talking flash-in-the pan here. He sings the songs of life. He's like an old friend to me.”

As soon as tickets were available, David bought several. But then he read in this space about another fan.

Jim Black of Omaha had died at 55 after his weekly volleyball game. His funeral included Springsteen's “You're Missing.”

Shirts in the closet, shoes in the hall:/Mama's in the kitchen, baby and all/ Everything is everything./ Everything is everything./ But you're missing.

David understands loss – his brother and best friend, Dr. Jay Parsow, died in 2001 after playing basketball. He was 46.

“I remember all too vividly,” David said, “the loss of someone I thought would always be there for me.”

He contacted Janice Black, Jim's widow, and gave her four tickets for Friday.

She later heard from Springsteen's guitar technician on the East Coast, Kevin Buell, who is also providing four tickets.

So eight family members will attend in Jim's memory, wearing T-shirts with his photo on the front and lyrics from “You're Missing” on the back.

Janice is grateful for the tickets. But attending without Jim, she said, will be bittersweet.

David Parsow, 52, is a widely known clothier with a store in upscale Regency shopping center. His most famous customer is investor Warren Buffett.

With a collection of 75,000 comic books, including a few rare ones, David knows something about superheroes. Springsteen is no comic-book character, but otherwise fills the bill.

Near the Boss's stage at the Meadowland arena in 1999, the Omahan recalls, he felt as though he stood “with all of New Jersey behind me.”

This week's concert has been on his calendar a long time. But David also had a date with a surgeon several weeks ago, and had a benign tumor removed from a leg. The healing has been slow, but he won't be deterred.

He said no pain will keep him away. He will stand on his own two feet. As the words to one of Bruce's songs say:

I ain't lookin' for prayers or pity./ I ain't comin' 'round searchin' for a crutch./ I just want someone to talk to/ And a little of that human touch.

Even amid the sellout crowd, David may not be hard to spot. He stands 6-foot-6 and will stand near the stage, moving to the words and the music.

Ever since college in Arizona, friends have called him “Palm Tree.” (The nickname started because he was tall and skinny, “with hair down to here.”)

He may attend a couple of Texas concerts on this tour, but definitely is planning on one in Paris on June 27.

“Being in Paris, on my birthday, right in front of Bruce Springsteen – with all of France behind me?” he mused. “I'm there!”