

# The Wichita Eagle

## Wichitan illustrates ‘I Survived’ series, featured New York Times Best Sellers List



**A Scott Dawson illustration from “I Survived the Battle of D-Day, 1944” by Lauren Tarshis (2019) pg. 102.**

COURTESY OF SCOTT DAWSON ILLUSTRATION

BY ABIGAIL HALL  
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Wichitan Scott Dawson didn't expect to illustrate children's books for more than a decade — nevertheless an on-going series on the New York Times Bestsellers list — but he's happy to be along for the ride, he says.

Dawson has created illustrations for Lauren Tarshis' "I Survived" series since the first book "I Survived the

Sinking of the Titanic, 1912" debuted in 2010, and has continued to create images to correspond with Tarshis' words for the succeeding 18 books. The most recent book, "I Survived the Great Molasses Flood, 1919" is set to be published in September of this year.

The series is currently no. 10 on the New York Times Bestsellers Children's Series list, and has been for 49 weeks.

"I gather we're gonna do these for awhile longer," Dawson said. "(Tarshis) says 10 more years. I went —

'what?' So I think I'm gonna be doing these for awhile."

Dawson, a Southeast High School and Wichita State University graduate, said he wanted to be an illustrator since he was in the second grade, and despite the changes in the industry, his passion never left. He's been a freelance illustrator based in Wichita for 30 years.

"I have always felt honored that an artist of Scott's talent and dedication works on my books," Tarshis said in an email. "Scott takes my mere words, and adds further research and his creativity and skill to bring to life characters beyond my imagination"

In addition to his illustrations for the "I Survived" series, he has sold work to local advertisers, regional and national campaigns, and even poster prints through his Etsy shop.

Even still, Dawson says it's getting more difficult to make a living off freelance illustration.

"Illustration was big three or four decades ago," Dawson said. "With computers things have changed a lot ... It's kind of like being a blacksmith or a milkman."

In addition to his freelance work, Dawson often speaks at local and national elementary schools about his work.

Locally, he's given presentations to students from second to fifth grades in Valley Center and Goddard, and has plans to visit Haysville schools. During his presentations, Dawson shows students a video with samples from across his career, previews of his illustrations from the next "I Survived" book, which is published twice a year, shows his students how to draw illustrations with chalk and paper on an easel, and opens the floor for questions and book signing.

"I love that age because they're old enough to get what you're talking about, but they're not starting to be cool yet," Dawson said.

Dawson creates nine illustrations for each "I Survived" book, including an image for chapter pages, and descriptive images that help tell the story.

Despite most of his work coming from regional and national sources, such as the book series, which is based in New York, he chooses to stay in Wichita.

Dawson said at one point he had dreams of moving to Florida so he could golf year-round, but stays for a fundamental reason — family.

"I have five grand-kids, and every one lives around Wichita," Dawson said. "So I thought that would be dumb to move someplace else."



**Scott Dawson signing a book for a student on Feb. 4, 2019 at West Elementary School in Valley Center.**



**From "I Survived The Sinking of the Titanic, 1912," by Lauren Tarshis, pg 66.**



**From "I Survived the Attack of the Grizzlies, 1967" by Lauren Tarshis (2018) pg. 26.**

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