

FROM THE CENTER

A Time to Remember and to Look Forward

OCTOBER 16, 1991 IS A DAY I WILL NOT SOON FORGET. FIRES BURNED OUT OF CONTROL IN SEVERAL PARTS OF MONTANA, DRIVEN BY WINDS THAT AT TIMES EXCEEDED 50 MILES PER HOUR. I HAD DRAWN AN ANTELOPE PERMIT FOR EASTERN MONTANA, MY FIRST, AND EXCITEDLY PACKED MY GEAR FOR THE LONG DRIVE EAST TO FORSYTH, MONTANA.

Just outside Bozeman, the radio announcer revealed that a fire, whipped by high winds, had led to the evacuation of the portion of Missoula where my wife was caring for our two children. A quick call home revealed that the fire had been controlled and the evacuation order had been rescinded. My guilt for not being there for my family during a crisis assuaged, I continued down the road.

Also on the news that day was a report that a small plane carrying two University of Montana graduates in Wildlife Biology, Kevin Roy and Kirk Inberg, and Montana biologist Ray Austin, had gone down somewhere in the vicinity of Yellowstone National Park while trying to find a wounded grizzly. The radio beacon was not working, and search parties were out.

Kirk was one of my first advisees when I arrived on the faculty at The University of Montana. His sister, who had been in my office only a few days earlier, was one of my advisees then. Kevin had recently finished his Masters degree on the reintroduction of fisher into the Cabinet Mountains of western Montana and was newly wed. They were both vibrant and energetic, personable, and dedicated to wildlife and wild areas: surely they would be okay.

The days went by while an

intensive search went on for the missing plane. Helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and search parties on horseback and on foot covered the area where the plane was known to have been. The days turned into weeks, then months, and the search had to be abandoned until spring when winter snows blanketed the area. Family members continued in the search long after others gave up hope.

On September 23, 1995, elk hunters returning from a trip near Jackson, Wyoming, found a downed plane and turned the aircraft's identification number in to authorities. In the plane were the remains of Kirk Inberg, Kevin Roy, and Ray Austin; they had died instantly.

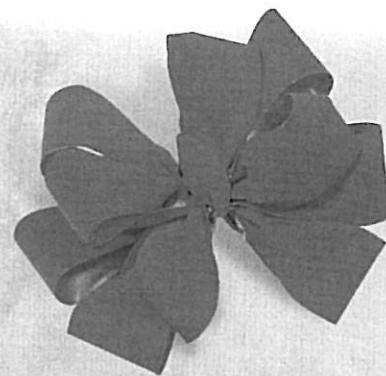
This is the holiday season, a time to look forward while remembering the past. So many dedicated individuals have contributed so much of themselves to the maintenance of our wildlife heritage. Kirk, Kevin, and Ray certainly did. These biologists touched the lives of many people, and they will not be forgotten.

We also owe thanks for the wildlife and wild areas we have today to many of our Boone and Crockett Club predecessors - Roosevelt, Pinchot, Lacey, Grinnell, Leopold, and many others. I am proud to be a member of an organization with such an impressive history and am excited about the conservation efforts we are currently pursuing. But we still have much to do. Conservation gains must be guarded, losses minimized, and new threats contained. If we remain vigilant and rededicate our time and talents to the conservation effort, our Club successors will be as proud of our accomplishments as we are of those of our predecessors.



Daniel H. Pletscher

ACTING B&C PROFESSOR
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