



*Neva's dad and brother. Photos by Ted Koller*



*Neva's Dad.*

*AOK is a family tradition:*

## ***A memorial for a former board member from a current board member***

*Reflection and photos by Neva Heikes*

This last October I lost my dad and one thing I think of first when asked to speak about him is his love of nature. He was a farm boy who worked hard on his family farm in northwest Kansas. Growing up before video games and computers or even indoor plumbing, your time was spent outside using your imagination. Nature is foremost in your life when you live off the land. You learn to appreciate a pretty sunset or cool breeze on a hot summer night or the smell of much needed rain on the wind. Your baseball and bat may just be a stick and a rock. And walking the path on a dark night to use the outhouse probably gave you more nature than you wanted when a lone chicken hiding from the cooking pot pecks your ankle in the dark and you watch your life pass before your eyes thinking a rattlesnake has bitten you. More nature than I would want especially with a crisp catalog page. Oh, some of you know that reference. When he was all grown up, he married the love of his life and had two wild boys and a perfect daughter. Well that is how I see it anyway. He taught his kids about the joy of being outside with long hikes and nature trips to see local bird migrations. With a teenage daughter in the back seat, a trip to Nebraska to see the migration of the Sandhill cranes was in the works. Teenage daughter would rather be at the mall but with patience the majestic birds took hold and seeped into the souls of the travelers. Years later in the early nineties I had a degree in biology and had moved to Salina to be a

part of the Smoky Hills Audubon which turned into an adventure in AOK. I knew Dad would be a good fit into the organization especially with his experience as an accountant and banker. He used his insights to help AOK for many years and loved all the wonderful trips to meetings, especially to the Hutton Ranch every June. One special trip was when we were all in the back of a pickup doing a tour of the ranch when other board members were asking him farming questions. The other board members at the time were fascinated with everything he had to say about farming. Dad was surprised about how much he was teaching them. I remember the father/daughter time being a part of AOK and enjoying what it had to offer. Miss you Dad.

Neva grew up in northwest Kansas. Graduating from college with a degree in wildlife biology in the early nineties, the love of nature propelled her to seek organizations that would help her develop a way to bring her passion for nature and help bring education to people. She moved from Nebraska back to Kansas. She moved to Salina and found the Smoky Hills Audubon and through them discovered the AOK. She has been a member since the beginning and has enjoyed the people and the important work that the AOK has been involved with helping people see a different perspective on wildlife issues. She has been a chapter representative for many years for the Smoky Hills Audubon and has recently loved helping with the Celebration of Cranes.