

Letter from the Editor

About a life, love, and a legacy



EACH OF US, with passing of time, whether we like to admit it or not, reflects more and more about the meaning of life, more specifically our life. There remains little doubt that our youth, in addition to being times of discovery and challenges filled with both anticipation and

anxiety, helped to shape our tomorrows and brought us closer to realizing our dreams. In some cases, fate—or if you will, providence—intervened.

I grew up in the 1950s to 1960s on a small farm near Mott, North Dakota. My father and his father before him were farmers. Thus, it was my dream to also become a farmer and produce things from my farm for others by working the land. However, born the second of three sons, by birthright my older brother got the farm. I got drafted.

After the military, I had to make some hard life decisions. Still interested in working with the land, I used my GI bill to go to college, earn a degree, and become a wildlife biologist. As a wildlife manager, I could still farm—in that I could farm—land for wildlife. The most important aspect of this career choice was that, unlike farming, I would receive a regular paycheck no matter what I produced. But even that career path changed after I was fired from my first real job (probably should have produced more) and ended up back in school, and eventually in academia. So much for my original dream. But, I am still receiving the monthly paycheck, and as far as that production thing goes—well, let's say the jury is still out.

In August of 1991, I moved my family from North Dakota to Utah to fill the position of wildlife extension specialist at Utah State University (USU). It was here at USU that I first met Dr. Michael R. Conover (Mike). Already well known for his research and publications in the field of wildlife damage management, Mike, even during his youth, had a passion for science and a vision for what the profession of wildlife damage management could truly be. His vision emerged as the Jack H. Berryman Institute for Wildlife Damage Management (BI).

Mike shared this vision with all, and in doing so he provided the stuff dreams are made of and opened the doors of opportunity to literally hundreds of students and professionals worldwide. His courage and willingness to take risks and to be all-inclusive were contagious. In 2002, Mike's first book, the first textbook dedicated to science of wildlife damage management entitled *Resolving Human–Wildlife Conflicts*, was published. This textbook is now the mainstay in dozens of wildlife curriculums worldwide.

Not one to rest on his laurels, his courage and the strength of his resolve and commitment to seeking and defining excellence in the field of wildlife damage management were front and center in 2005 at a BI Advisory Board hosted by BI-East at Mississippi State University. It was here he announced his intention to launch the first ever peer-reviewed scientific journal dedicated to unraveling and communicating the science of wildlife damage management to and for the wildlife professional. His announcement raised a few eyebrows, as few have ever been successful at launching a new, independent journal.

Well, you are reading the first issue of Volume 11 of *Human–Wildlife Interactions*. Thanks to Mike's courage, expertise, science acumen, and editorial skill, *Human–Wildlife Interactions* is now the premier journal reporting the science of wildlife damage management to the wildlife professional. Because of his dedication, the journal also boasts a strong impact factor, is financially solid, and in a growth trajectory that will enable the BI to continue to provide the very best in research and management information to our readers and the profession. Although Mike may have stepped down as the Editor-in-Chief of *Human–Wildlife Interactions*, he has left a legacy dedicated to excellence and a love and passion for students and professionals that few will ever achieve. For this, I will be eternally grateful. Thank you, Dr. Conover.

"If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write something worth reading or do something worth writing." —Benjamin Franklin

Terry A. Messmer, Editor-in-Chief
