



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY REX ZIAK

THE OLD WARRIOR DIES

I was asked by my family to say a few words about Kewpie. It is difficult to do this because it is difficult to believe that he is dead. It never occurred to me that Kewpie would die. He had been here all my life and I naturally believed that he would be here for the rest of my life. As the years went by some men got old, slowed down, stooped over, and showed their age. But Kewpie seemed to age much slower. At the age of 73 he was still strong as a bull, wise as an owl and clever as a fox.

I am happy to see that so many friends could be here. However, I naturally think about all of Kewpie's friends who could not attend. In the hills a black bear strips huckleberries from a bush and mourns Kewpie's death. Over the Columbia River an eagle teaches its young how to fish and mourns Kewpie's death. The geese that will return here from the north and seek refuge in the Knappa Slough mourn Kewpie's death. They know they have lost their very best friend. They realize that no one else will defend them. Kewpie spoke for the animals. He was the voice of the voiceless. The animals are crying because they know — They know if a logger is killed the boss just hires another logger. When a lawyer drops dead you just find another lawyer. When a senator breathes his last you just elect another to take his place. But the animals know that no one here or anywhere else will follow Kewpie. After all, how many here would risk their lives for the life of a bear? How many of us would dare confiscate the guns from poachers? The was only one Kewpie, and there will be no more.

Kewpie was a naturalist, a logger, a lover, a poet. He was a historian, an archaeologist, an anthropologist and a story teller. He could do any of these equally as well as the other. But mostly Kewpie was a warrior. A warrior in our society is confusing. When we hear of a warrior we naturally think of a soldier. But a soldier is not a warrior. A soldier is sent into battle, whereas a warrior seeks battle. Kewpie was a warrior. Perhaps one of the last. He was constantly in a fight. He seemed to thrive on conflict. He fought with big timber companies. He fought with his neighbors. He fought with poachers, trespassing teenagers and industrialists. He even fought with his own family. He constantly sought war. We do not understand this. We cannot understand this. Warriors do not live in this world with our ideals and values.

But Kewpie showed us what a fighter can do. Kewpie showed us the power of public opinion. Kewpie showed us what an individual can do. In Kewpie's name, please keep up the fight. Speak up about injustices. Speak out when you see some wrong. Defend nature and our environment. That is what Kewpie would have wanted us to do.

We will all remember things about Kewpie. It is unlikely we will forget them. Whether it was his deep voice, his poetic words, his thick powerful hands or his animated stories, Kewpie will live on.

—REX ZIAK

Rex Ziak is Bob Ziak's nephew. He gave this eulogy to his uncle at Kewpie's funeral, August 22. He lives in Naselle, Washington, and is a photographer currently on assignment in California.

"I feel I have a responsibility while I'm on this earth to preserve some beauty and pass it on to the next generation. Because if I do not pass something on, these children and the children's children will have a barren world."

— BOB ZIAK, 1917-1990

BY HOWARD BRUNER

Bob "Kewpie" Ziak is gone. Died August 16. The man who would teach us the value of other creatures' lives has left us. I am filled with remembrances and thoughts of this extraordinary man of the woods.

Bob Ziak was a man's man, a two-fisted barrel-chested warrior who contained elements so anomalous he disarmed his opponents through sheer amazement. His arsenal contained guns, fists, heavy machinery and poetry. A visionary in Can't Bust 'Ems and Hickory, Kewpie had reached a stage of development far beyond the norm for this woodsy resource dependent area. He had gone to the well and found that his life was inextricably wound up with the lives of the creatures and land around him. Perhaps he had caught a glimpse of the place we really are in the scheme of things. He had made the ultimate jump of faith in his denial of free agency without consequences. He accepted the responsibility we god-like humans have for all other forms of life.

This hard living, rough and tumble logger was also a gentle and nurturing force in the hundreds of thousands of lives he touched. By setting up and maintaining a sanctuary for game birds in this world-class mecca for fowl hunters, he had more of an effect on the fortunes of dwindling avian populations than will ever be accountable. Long before the counters and ogles put new value on the natural wonder of a goose "V", Kewpie had adopted his feathered brothers and sisters. When the call was made to cut the nest trees of the eagles, he was the man who put his body between further life and the ultimate desolation of an eagleless sanctuary. The bear of these woods had one voice speaking for them: Kewpie refused to let the high-tech, dog-enhanced slaughter go unchallenged and stood his ground against all comers. His was

a bravery and commitment the likes of which we will probably never see again.

I always had a thrill of anticipation when my travels took me to his magnificent sanctuary. For I was sure to see upwards of thirty species of birds from passerines (songbirds) to raptors. Depending on the season and weather a cast of hundreds was always to be enjoyed. And if one was lucky the man on the tractor, seeing a disciple from his white farmhouse on the hill would come down to do that which has almost gone the way of extinction; he would come down to pass the time of day. I can recall many times when I found myself transported out of the daily stress/performance cycle, having a conversation that was the ultimate in entertainment and relaxation. For Kewpie had that aura of one who was at peace with himself, and though more often than not our subject was centered on those who were less inclined to see the paradise factor in life on this earth, he had the gentle confidence of one who sees past all our earthly foibles.

Kewpie is gone. He is wild and free. Never again will I see the tractor with the dog in scoop and the jovial "mayor" of Brownsmead driving. That is not where I will find Kewpie. I will find him in a scud-torn autumn sky filled with the urgent cries of his brothers and sisters. I will find him in the winded trees of a spring glade, born on the cathartic edge of wildness. He will always be an integral part of that which he loved and helped. That which has now taken his spirit.

Howard Bruner lives in Astoria. Like Kewpie Ziak he has fought long and courageously to preserve wildlife and the natural environment.

I wish to add a few words of my own. I knew who Kewpie Ziak was long before I met him, and for the past five years I saw him once or twice a week, usually in a coffee place where he talked to everybody and genially reparteed with the help (he often brought flowers for the waitresses). He treated everyone the same, friend and foe, stranger and kin — straight in the eye and never mincing his words or passion, though he tempered his profundity with fellowship and humor.

He was a rare and singular man. He was inspiringly eloquent with a good humored lilt to his basso voice. He could be scathing or as oratorical as a Roman senator. He was a man of the woods who was legendary for his courage and protection of wildlife. He thought in terms of centuries, expressed through the cycles of his beloved forest. I should like to think that his legacy will be as lasting.

Something he said to Studs Terkel, quoted in "American Dreams Lost and Found" (1980) might just be his own metaphor: "Before I die, I'd like to hear the howl of timber wolves that used to exist here in our woods!"

His howl is greatly missed.

— MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

