

— continued from inside front cover

He was doing what many other area birders have done, said Beth Chato of Urbana. He was looking out over a borrow pit, a man-made lake, watching the birds.

According to police, another motorist, drunk and sleepy, slammed into the back of Bob's car. Machines kept Bob alive for more than 24 hours until his Aunt Nancy and Uncle Byron Chapel arrived from Michigan. Then it ended, Byron said, and doctors harvested the valuable tissue and life-saving organs from Bob's 55-year-old body.

The 46-year-old Peoria man implicated in Bob Chapel's death was charged Tuesday with two counts of reckless homicide and two counts of aggravated driving under the influence. He was being held in the DeWitt County Jail on \$30,000 bond. None of that was mentioned at the memorial service in the crowded hallway at the research center, the place where Bob spent his time when he wasn't above ground looking and listening for his beloved birds. Instead, Bob's friends and colleagues put the jigsaw puzzle pieces in place, and we all learned who the real Bob Chapel was.

I knew Bob as a library technical assistant at the UI archives. To me, he was the harried yet friendly man who could always answer a question about the university's history, or at least point me to a place where I could find it myself. Bob was the man who helped me discover the most compelling piece of UI history I know: that it was UI President Andrew Draper who brought squirrels to the campus about 100 years ago. More importantly, Bob was invaluable to Winton Solberg, the professor emeritus of history at the UI who has written two fine books on the early history of the university. At the service, Solberg told how Bob was such a purist about the archive's rules against eating and drinking that he would get a cup of coffee and leave it on a cabinet outside the room, striding 25 steps every so often for a sip.

But the best stories about Bob were the ones involving birds. His aunt told how when Bob was 4 or 5 years old she gave him a coloring book of birds. "Believe it or not, from then on he loved birds," she said. He was not a good cook and apparently not much of a homemaker. Touring his Urbana apartment, she said she found eight glasses, a plate, a toaster, a coffee pot and a pantry full of ... books about birds. Friends told about sloshing through lakes and streams with Bob, or taking long road trips all over the Midwest, some in sub-zero conditions, all in search of birds. Once he and a bird-watching friend spent the night in a broken-down car after a day of bird-watching, which only meant a morning of bird-watching awaited. And there were few who could beat Bob when it came to the annual bird count.

Bob died, binoculars in hand, looking over his birds. As a friend said, there are worse ways to go.

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# MEADOWLARK

A Journal of Illinois Birds

Volume 11, Number 3-2002

Tenth Anniversary Year

ISSN 1065-2043

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## About our cover

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Michael L. P. Retter created the cover drawing of Thayer's Gull for this issue of *Meadowlark*. Michael is a frequent contributing artist and author for IOS. A longtime Illinois birder and field trip leader, Michael worked as an interpretive naturalist at Cape May Bird Observatory in Fall 2002.

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