



Obituary

Born: Friday, June 3, 1955

Died: Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Michael J. Kroetch, 65, peacefully took his last breath in his home in Stevensville, Montana surrounded by loved ones on May 11, 2021. He challenged cancer and was positive about life throughout the past year and a half. He was born June 3, 1955 and grew up in San Leandro, California. After graduating high school, Mike moved to Horse Creek, California where he fell in love with the wilderness and raised two daughters. Mike began his career as a wildland firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service in 1974 and enjoyed every moment. Mike spent his fire career in various capacities, starting out on a fuels/fire crew and continued over the years with the Scott Bar engine, Redding Hotshots, Scott River Fuels Officer, Scott Valley Rappel Crew, and Fire Management Officer at Oak Knoll and Scott River Districts. Mike especially loved the implementation aspect of fuels and fire use to achieve healthy ecosystems and protect the forests he loved with all his heart. He was most at home in the woods and we cannot think of him without his iconic mustache, logging jeans, suspenders and a well-worn T-shirt. He took pride in a solid work ethic, physical fitness, and completing his work to perfection. He mentored so many firefighters along the way throughout his career, and that was always one of his greatest achievements – to teach others. If we just listen, we can hear him telling us all to “get back to work”! Mike had a love for storytelling and had more to share than he could keep up with. After his career, he started a new chapter in life in the Bitterroot Valley in Montana. He continued his work with self-employment in fuels reduction and fire suppression. His chipper was his pride and joy and his attention to detail and service to the customer were of high importance to him. His last fire assignment was on the Beaverhead Deerlodge NF with his chipper, high up on a ridge overlooking Idaho and Montana. He was the first one to the coffee pot each morning, telling his tales to the young firefighters brave enough to face the freezing early morning temps while waiting for breakfast, listening to the elk bugle in the nearby meadow and anticipating the start of a new day. He simply loved each day and he loved to work. Mike was extremely creative and talented. He loved many hobbies and recreation during his life, and his consistent true passions were welding, construction and motorcycle riding. While he spent time with ATVs in the dunes, bicycle trips, and hiking; in the end, his greatest wish involved loading up on his KTM for adventure someplace new. He loved life in Montana and was so thankful every day for the experience, as well as all of the new riding opportunities. He had explored most of the accessible roads in western Montana and neighboring Idaho within his first two years and only wanted to keep going further, all the while planning the next BDR trip or other adventure. He also loved the desert country and provided

Service Summary

Funeral Service

Location: - *Not available* -

fond memories of a happy man even in heat, dust, sand and every conceivable inconvenience. His riding companions and many others that knew his passion for riding hope he is now out scouting new trails with water at the campsites for when we ride with him again! Mike is the son of the late Thomas and Doris Kroetch. He is preceded in death by his brother Tom. He is survived by his wife, Paige Boyer; his two daughters and their families, Kjerstina (Kroetch) and husband, Abe Gutierrez; Michael Kroetch, her partner Harley Dahlin and their son Perrin; his former wife Karen and her husband, Tom Boehme; and his brothers Bob Kroetch and Jim Kroetch. Mike's familial roots are in the Coeur d'Alene/Spokane area and the San Francisco Bay area. We are all very happy he had room in his life for so many loving relationships. Mike did not want a service or memorial. An online memorial will be available instead at:<http://www.whitesittfuneralhome.com/obits/obituary.php?id=721575>. Please post memories, stories, photos, etc. to share your love of Mike and his life. An informal gathering will be held in California at a future date to gather friends and family in his honor. The family wishes that any memorials be made to the Wildland Firefighter Foundation in Boise, Idaho. Website: www.wffoundation.org .