

Bob Bivens (1936-1991)

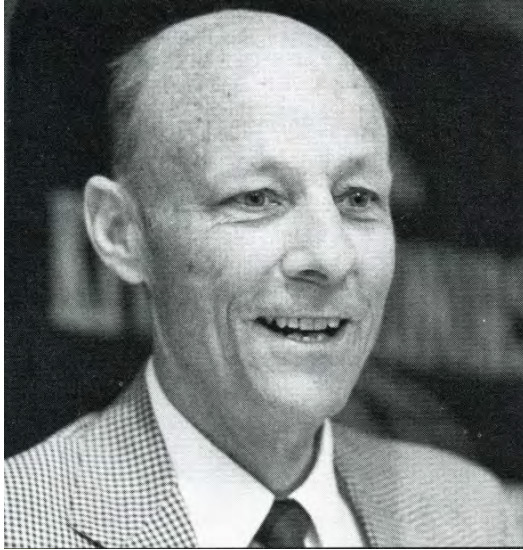


Photo courtesy Great Falls Tribune

*From the Great Falls Tribune, Great Falls, Montana*

Robert A. Bivens, 54, who blazed the trail for renewed recognition of Lewis and Clark in Great Falls, Montana, died August 29 in a local hospital after an extended illness.

Memorials are suggested to the American Cancer Society.

Born in Commanche, Okla., on Sept. 6, 1936, he graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1959 and later earned a master's degree in business management from Oklahoma State.

Bivens, who spent 24 years in the Air Force, was assigned to Malmstrom AFB in 1979. He retired there as a lieutenant in 1983 and adopted Great Falls as his home. He joined Cogswell Real Estate Agency and became actively involved in the community.

It was his interest in the Corps of Discovery and its impact on future Great Falls that spurred the Lewis and Clark heritage movement here eight years ago. Friends have said Bivens was frustrated that local natives were often ignorant about the history surrounding the Lewis and Clark Expedition's role in this area. He stood up at a community goal-setting meeting at the Rainbow Hotel in 1983 and asked for an opportunity to ignite interest in the Expedition.

A Lewis and Clark interest committee formed at the session soon grew into the Portage Route Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. He served as its first president and was named to the board of directors of the national organization.

Bivens helped draft a bill introduced by Rep. Ron Marlenee in 1987 to authorize construction of a Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center at Giant Springs.

He also testified before Congress on the bill and was chairman of the committee which drafted the mission statement for the interpretive center, was named to the center's Citizen's Steering Committee as the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation representative, and wrote and narrated the script for performances by the Lewis and Clark Honor Guard Inc.

Bob Doerk of Great Falls, immediate past president of the foundation, paid tribute to Bivens in the May 1991 issue of *We Proceeded On*, the organization's national publication. Doerk likened Bivens' vision that led to creation of the Portage Route Chapter to that of President Thomas Jefferson who commissioned the Exploratory Expedition. Both laid the groundwork for a myriad of results.

Bivens' community involvement went beyond Lewis and Clark.

He had served on the board of directors of Big Sky Chapter of the American Red Cross since 1979, served on the United Way Board from 1980 to 1986, and had belonged to the Great Falls Advertising Federation since 1984, serving on the publications committee and as contributing editor of the club's newsletter, *Advents*. He also served on the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Tourism Advisory Committee helping to initiate a conceptual design for a chamber visitors' center.

In 1980 Bivens was instrumental in forming the Missouri Breaks barbershop quartet which later became the Boothill Betterment Society. As a member of the Treasure Statesmen, he wrote the script for the last three annual shows and often was master of ceremonies.

Bivens sang with the 1989 Montana State Centennial Barbershop Chorus which toured the state.

Survivors include his wife, Diane; daughters, Jill of Bozeman and Jenny of Great Falls; mother, Myrtle Bivens of Healdton, Okla.; brothers, Marlin "Bud" Bivens of Milsa, Okla., and Lonnie Bivens of Healdton, Okla. His father preceded him in death.

from *We Proceeded On* 17(4):30 (November 1991)

*Prepared by Bob Gatten, 2011*