

To the Families of Ellis Heyer and Collin LaMore,

Working, playing, and living in the outdoors can grind away all but the most fundamental aspects of a human being. Long days in the wind and rain wash away superficial goals and worries; the icy fingers of cold strip off pretensions and lay bare the true character of the fortunate souls huddled wet and exhausted on a quinzhee floor. I think for Ellis and Collin that innermost core was a deep-seated *joie de vivre*, an unremitting positivity that pushed them to explore, to enjoy, and to fit more life into a few short years than many men experience in all their decades.

Their loss created an emptiness that no one can fill, but as a recipient of the Heyer/LaMore Leadership Award it is an honor to carry onwards the kindness, enthusiasm, and love of the outdoors that Collin and Ellis exemplified in their lives. This coming summer I have the privilege of working for Outward Bound, an international organization that aims to change lives through challenge and adventure in the outdoors. Through my work, I hope to instill in my students a sense of self-worth, perseverance, confidence, and compassion. I want to show them their true character, want them to see that it is good, and want them to aspire to greatness. I would like my students to find that indefatigable happiness that defined Ellis and Collin. I can think of no better way to honor my friends and to keep their spirit alive and strong in the world today.

In a way, I owe the opportunity to work for Outward Bound to Collin and Ellis. They were—and still are—important members of the Outdoor Pursuits Program community that prepared me for this line of work. This program has not only given me the technical and interpersonal skills necessary to teach and explore in the outdoors, it has been a pillar of support throughout my college experience and has helped me to grow and develop as an individual. Without Ellis, Collin, Michael, Dan, and every other member of the OPP community I would not be who I am today. Thank you for giving the world and our program such wonderful sons and for the strengths and lessons they brought to all of us. Thank you also for your generous gift, with which I plan to equip myself for the outdoor work I will do and for international travel at the end of the summer. In one of my most memorable conversations with Ellis, he was covered with a very uncomfortable looking rash from swimming in tropical waters and grinning from ear to ear as he told the story of how he got it; if I can take a trip like that then I'll know I've done something right.

Soon after Collin and Ellis passed away, a good friend from the OPP wrote about how losing a friend makes us realize our own mortality. As strong, confident outdoorspeople in the prime of our lives, it takes a loss to remember that we too will die. When I think back to Ellis and Collin, however, I am more strongly reminded that we too will live. We will rush headlong into this daring adventure of life. We will laugh and cry and love, we will climb mountains swim rivers, we will lose ourselves in the night sky and find ourselves in the embers of a campfire burnt low. We will each die, but if Collin and Ellis have taught me anything, it is that the first and most important thing to do is to live. I will carry in my heart their zest for living, and will strive to pass it along to others as I live my own life. To do so is more than just an honor: it is truly a joy.

Sincerely,

Forrest Wells