

THE BOOK CLUB: REVIEWS AND DISCUSSION

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Like many people who grew up in the 1960s and '70s, Kent Kaiser watched "Wild Kingdom." The program that depicted animals in their natural habitat made a big impression on the Niles native. Kaiser went on to become an outdoorsman who started successful nature tourism and hunting business on two continents. He writes about his adventures hunting big game and trying to avoid being preyed upon by corrupt officials in his memoir, "Hard Way Back." "From a young age, I always loved the outdoors," he says during a phone interview. "I love wildlife, and I am a free spirit who lives to be outdoors where I don't feel caged in." Kaiser says he spent much of his youth in Niles fishing and exploring nature. Then he would spend his Sunday evenings watching "Wild Kingdom." "I watched that 'Wild Kingdom' show in Niles as a young kid and then suddenly I can go live that dream, even more than what I saw on 'Wild Kingdom,' when I moved up there," Kaiser says. The "up there" is the state of Alaska, which is where his mother relocated after she remarried. The adventurous, athletic and ambitious Kaiser took to Alaska. He started an outdoor tourism business there. He moved to New Zealand, which is also known for its untamed areas, and started a business there. Along the way, Kaiser saw magnificent natural sights and had harrowing confrontations with dangerous predators. He also made his share of powerful enemies. He recounts all of these events in "Hard Way Back." "Why I truly wrote this book is to open the eyes of everyone to how there are some really crooked people in the government," he says. The bulk of the book tells the story of how a confrontation with some powerful interests in Alaska resulted in Kaiser facing serious criminal charges in this country and New Zealand. Kaiser recalls how he fought the charges and the corrupt federal official who attempted to have him unjustly convicted. Through all of the adventures, Kaiser says, he never lost sight of his goals. "The biggest part is that I always chased my own dreams and desires," he says. Faith also plays a big role in Kaiser's story; he became a born-again Christian at age 11. "Then I went out and did my own things," he says, "but when I was down in New Zealand, I reconnected with the Lord, so that is a big part of the book, too."