Frank Cooper Craighead Jr. was born in Washington, D.C. on August 14, 1914 to Dr. Frank C. Craighead and Carolyn Craighead. Frank, Sr. was a forest entomologist for the Department of Agriculture and Carolyn was a biologist technician. Frank Jr. had a twin brother, John with whom he did just about everything together. Their family history is full of stories about their ability to finish sentences for each other, and come to each other’s defense. Their younger sister, Jean, was born three years later and shared many of their adventures.

As teenagers, Frank and John were fascinated by raptors. After high school, Frank and John drove west in a 1934 Chevrolet, photographing and capturing hawks and falcons. During this trip they arrived in Jackson, Wyoming where they met arctic naturalists Olaus and Mardy Murie. Parts of this trip were described in their first magazine article, “Adventures with Birds of Prey”, for the National Geographic Magazine in 1937. “Hawks in the Hand” was the first Book that Frank and John wrote. Their M.S. dissertations were still used today in modern falconry.

In 1940, an Indian Prince named K. S. “Bapa” Dharmakumarsinjhi read their 1937 falconry article in National Geographic. He invited Frank and John to visit him in India. The National Geographic Society underwrote their trip to India. The National Park Service requested them to conduct a 12-year study on grizzly bears. This became another outstanding achievement for the Craigheads. It allowed Frank to organize the Craighead Environmental Research Institute in 1964. Frank’s greatest contribution to the grizzly bear study, to the wildlife ecology, and indirectly to modern falconry was his leadership in developing and using radio transmitters. Along with Hoke Franciscus and Joel Varney, Frank developed large-mammal radio collars. Several years later, with Joel’s expertise, they modified U. S. Navy navigation buoys to develop the first animal satellite transmitters. In 1971, their studies came to an abrupt halt when they disagreed with the Yellowstone National Park’s new superintended about grizzly bear management. They were replaced by a group of government research biologists, the Inter-agency Grizzly Bear Study Team, who had an entirely different approach to grizzly bear management in the Park.

In an unfortunate setback, Frank’s cabin in Moose, Wyoming burned to the ground in 1978. The fire was significant in that he lost most of his satellite designs, pictures, books and papers. He had been working on a pilot study to develop satellite transmitters for use on birds with a grant from NASA. Fortunately, the manuscript for “Track of the Grizzly” was already at the publishers.

Frank suffered another loss in 1980 when Esther pass away. In 1987 he married a wonderful Vermont school-teacher named Shirley Cocker. She helped Frank write his last book, “For Everything There is a Season.” Shortly after marrying Shirley, Frank was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. This became his last challenge, and remained to the end an inquisitive biologist. He would sit on top of Blacktail Butte near his cabin and watch ravens and raptors fly overhead. He delighted in calling to ravens and during the last few months of his life visited Lamar Valley in Yellowstone to see grizzlies again and to hold a fly rod in his hands.

In addition to his wife Shirley Craighead, he is survived by his children Lance, Charlie and Jana, his brother John, who lives in Missoula, Montana; and his sister, Jean Craighead George, an author of children’s books who lives in Chappaqua, New York.
Above the Village of Naini Tal, the Craighead Twins Caught This Glimpse of 5-mile high Nanda Devi (Himalayan Mountains)