



Past President of the California Hawking Club

**DONORS:**

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**G**ary Beeman passed away peacefully after a long battle with emphysema. Gary grew up in Orinda, CA and was among the first class graduating from Miramonte High School. He attended the University of Montana where he received a Bachelor of Science degree before returning to Lafayette, CA to raise a family. Gary worked as both a pest control expert and as a Wildlife Biologist studying rare and endangered animal species including the Alameda Whipsnake and California Kangaroo Rat.

An active falconer for over 50 years, he was an avid conservationist who successfully bred falcons in captivity and was the first to produce prairie falcon/peregrine hybrids in California. Over the years, he gave away numbers of his home-grown prairie falcons to appreciative falconers in the West. He served as president of the California Hawking Club and was an early honorary member. In addition, he enthusiastically mentored apprentices and generously shared his knowledge of raptors with fellow falconers.

Bill Swearingen of Lafayette, CA was a close friend for over 40 years and remembered him this way: "I first met Gary at a falconry meeting in Concord, CA regarding the use of captive-bred raptors for use in falconry. At the time, he was flying a prairie/peregrine hybrid tiercel named "Primary," which was the first he had produced. This little falcon had more guts than many larger birds, would wait-on at 800 ft., and knocked down ducks ranging in size between green-winged teal and mallards. Things did not always go well for "Primary." One day, while hawking on a cattle ranch near Moraga, "Primary" went up well and all of a sudden, a large falcon appeared and was gaining fast on the tiercel. One minute he was flying for his life and the next he hung from the feet of the larger falcon like a dead pigeon! The larger falcon turned back over Gary, which was when "Primary" broke loose and dove straight to Gary and safety. Later, this marauder was identified as a passage gray gyrfalcon, the first ever seen on the ranch.

Gary was a good tree climber and went up to many a nest to collect an eyas Cooper's hawk or sharp-shinned hawk. At times, he would return eyasses to the nest in order to select a different sex of youngster. He never complained when asked to go out of his way to do something for a friend.

As the years went by, most of the ponds and fields where we flew our birds disappeared as houses and warehouses were built. But Gary didn't let this stop him. He went up to the Napa Valley and received permission to fly our birds over the ponds of five different wineries. We had it good there for another five years. When "Primary" died at the age of 12, falconry was not the same for Gary. He tried other raptors, like Harris' hawks, but as his health started to fail, he didn't have the energy needed in the field. As for me, I am now 82 years old and still flying a merlin on the ranch in Moraga. But without Gary, it's not the same. I will always be grateful for the memories!"

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