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“Peregrine falcons were his love and joy.”



DANIEL JOHNSON BRIMM III was born on Feb. 16, 1924 in Mineola, N.Y., the second of three children to barnstormer Daniel Brimm Jr. and Ruby Durant. He graduated from Port Washington High School in Long Island, N.Y., in 1940, then entered the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md., where he was commissioned as an ensign in 1945 with a degree in aeronautical engineering. Mr. Brimm was chief engineer aboard the USS Wantuck before receiving flight training at Pensacola, Fla., and being assigned to the aircraft carrier Bonhomme Richard in the Philippine Sea. At the beginning of the Korean War, he was a fighter pilot, often going on missions behind enemy lines. Retiring from the Navy, he worked for one year at General Dynamics before starting Chem-tronics. In 1950, he married Constance McCord and the couple had four children before divorcing. In 1984, he married Althea Cochran. In 1995, Mr. Brimm bought Bailey Creek Ranch near Julian to use as

a falcon breeding facility. He also became a gentleman farmer of sorts, growing organic apples, peaches, plums and pears. “He was such an environmentalist, he asked what I thought about growing organically,” said ranch manager Roger Sonnenberg. “It was really hard going in the beginning because there were no real choices in controlling bugs and problems organically back then. He was a pioneer and very hands on, but really the focus of his energy was the falcon breeding. Increasing the population for the Fijian falcon was the impetus for buying the ranch.” Mr. Brimm is survived by his wife of 26 years, the former Althea Cochran; sons Daniel of Coquitlam, B.C., Canada, and Randy of Carbondale, Colo.; daughters Sandra Koteen of San Francisco, and Michal Ann Brimm of Basalt, Colo.; stepdaughters Althea Brimm of Carbondale, Colo., Caroline Wright of Laguna Beach, and Emily Grant of Del Mar; sister Rembert Kinsley of Ross, Calif.; nine grandchildren and two great-granddaughters. He was predeceased by his sister, Marion Fechner of Grass Valley, Calif.

He worked tirelessly to bring the peregrine falcon back from the brink of extinction.

Environmentalist, engineer & Falconer

As a champion and student of peregrine falcons, Daniel Brimm’s life was not without danger on occasion. Once, while preparing to follow a colleague down a 500-foot high cliff in Fiji to observe a nesting raptor, he slipped and began sliding off the cliff. He was stopped from going over the edge by his helicopter pilot who lassoed his leg with a rope. “We joked later about what Dan might have said to me as he fell past,” said Clayton White, a Brigham Young University professor who worked with Mr. Brimm for 20 years to save Fijian peregrines from extinction. The expletive would not have been suitable for general audiences. Mr. Brimm died Dec. 19, 2010 of congestive heart failure at his home in La Jolla. He was 86. A passionate environmentalist and falconer since early adulthood, Mr. Brimm was able to finance his peregrine conservation work from the fortune he amassed at Chem-tronics, the El Cajon-based aerospace components manufacturing company he co-founded in 1953. During his 33-year tenure, he became president and general manager in 1973 and chairman, president and chief executive in 1978. In 1977, he patented Unistructure, his process for chemically etching titanium on the exterior of jet fighter engines. The strong, lightweight titanium ducting was used on the B-1 and B-2 bombers, as well as the F/A-18, F-16, F-14 and F-22 fighters, and the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Retiring in 1986, Mr. Brimm devoted himself to resurrecting the raptors whose populations had dwindled to near extinction in the 1970s from DDT poisoning. A member of the board of directors of the Peregrine Fund, a group formed at Cornell University to breed the birds in captivity, he worked tirelessly to bring the peregrine falcon back from the brink of extinction. He also bred and rehabilitated injured falcons at his La Jolla home for release back into the wild. “Peregrine falcons were his love and joy, no two ways about it,” said wildlife photographer Anthony Mercieca. “They are fairly common in San Diego now because he was instrumental in getting their numbers back up.” Intrigued by White’s studies of the little-known peregrine in Fiji, Mr. Brimm joined him in the mid-1980s and funded most of their venture for 15 years. “Dan’s contribution was to give the scientific world a lot of knowledge about an unknown bird from a very exciting place and to give different details that you wouldn’t get from the Northern Hemisphere where all the science literature typically comes from,” said White. “His legacy will be that he established that peregrine falcons do, in fact, breed in the Pacific islands.”



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- Clayton White, Brigham Young University Professor



Dan Brimm with Fergus Clunie, caught in a rainstorm climbing to an eyrie near Suva, on Viti Levu, Fiji, 1986.

