ON MARCH 4, 1992, THE FALCONRY COMMUNITY LOST A DEAR FRIEND WITH THE PASSING OF TOM BUCHANAN, 45, OF ABILENE, TEXAS.

Tom had been an avid falconer for over 30 years and excelled as a longwinger, flying peregrines for the previous 20 years. He got an early start with wildlife. When he was 4 years old, he helped nurse an injured screech owl back to health. This led to a lifelong interest in preserving and re-introducing endangered species.

Born in Oklahoma, Tom grew up in Fort Worth, earned both his B.S. in Wildlife Management and M.S. in Animal Behavior Psychology from Texas A&M University. He was hired at the Abilene Zoo as General Curator and Zoo Supervisor. He became Zoo Director in 1987. During his tenure, an education building and community diorama were created. Urban wildlife, 20 live birds and reptiles, a desert habitat, and a handicapped facility were established. He established an Asian Monarch Center through the 1970s and 1980s. This research resulted in an extraordinary accomplishment: the first captive breeding of secretary birds, trumpeter hornbills, March’s palm vipers, Angolan colobus monkeys, and thick-billed parrots. Tom is proud that he was one of the first falconers to successfully raise a pair of Golden Eagles— the progeny going to falconers!

In the mid-1980s, Tom began a project which became his career achievement: the zoo's impressive, much-acclaimed, award winning “Discovery Center.” He worked day and night on this visionary building and its purpose to educate the public on the importance of habitat conservation “from one's backyard to throughout the world.” He went so far as to create an important habitat or rest area for migrating Monarch Butterflies!

Tom was an exceptionally creative and sensitive man. His love and understanding of all living things was enormous. He was a accomplished herpetologist and a Bonsai enthusiast. His world, however, revolved around falcons. He was the first to breed peregrines in the State of Texas in the early 1980s and was cited by Texas Parks and Wildlife for many wildlife issues, including falconry. Tom frequently attended NAFA meets and was named “Falconer of the Year” in 1991.

A loving son to his gracious mother, Betty Bradshaw, Tom was devoted to and is survived by his lovely wife, Mary, who opened their home and entertained many falconers over the years. Words cannot express the void he leaves and how Tom will be missed by his many friends.

(Jim Ince)