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**T**halter Cunningham began his involvement with raptors in the 1920s and '30s as a teenager in Chevy Chase, MD. He became a longtime friend, supporter and board member of The Peregrine Fund.

Halter was a neighborhood friend of legendary falconers, authors and naturalists, Frank and John Craighead. They loved peregrines. Peregrines migrated along the Atlantic coast. Assateague Island was a favorite trapping spot of falconers. They buried themselves in the sand, holding a pigeon to bait passing falcons.

Halter had homemade perches for his trained falcons in the back yard. He hunted with them in nearby open fields. He released them when it was time to migrate again. In later years, he and friend Brian McDonald developed the pigeon harness, a leather harness with several slipknots of fishing line sewn on. Once the pigeon was harnessed, it was released with a long cord attached. When a falcon snatched the pigeon, its talons were caught in the slip knots and the falconer could then capture the falcon and train it. One of Halter's pigeon harnesses was bestowed to The Archives of Falconry along with numerous other artifacts by his son, Tom.

In an article co-authored with William F. Turner in the September 1947 issue of Hunting and Fishing magazine, Halter (aka. "Dusty") explained falconry and falcons to the layman, calling the Peregrine Falcon "the finest thing that wears feathers."

"To look in on [the nest of] one of these rare birds:" he continued, "requires the following: a strong pair of legs, a broad back, a long rope, and not too much regard for your future."

Halter possessed all those traits. He applied them in other areas besides falconry. The day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, Halter enlisted in the Marines. He was in the first wave to land on Guadalcanal. He was awarded the Purple Heart for battle wounds he received there.

He worked as a game warden on the Chesapeake Bay after the war. Later he took over the family's business, Lanman Engraving Company. With Halter at the helm, the company became the largest privately owned pre-press and commercial printing business in the eastern U.S. Clients included major entities such as Smithsonian Magazine, National Geographic, and Disney.

Among his lifelong passions, Halter included polo, fishing, duck hunting. To the benefit of wildlife conservation, his passion for raptors never waned. Even in his mid-70s, Halter accompanied fellow board members of The Peregrine Fund on peregrine monitoring expeditions at South Padre Island, Texas.



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## PERHAPS THE BEST WORDS TO SUM UP HALTER'S LIFELONG CONSERVATION ETHIC ARE HIS OWN, WRITTEN IN 1947:

If we had our money back that we have spent chasing these birds from coast to coast, we could probably retire; but if we tried to place a value on the experiences that Falconry has afforded us, we don't think a million dollars would cover it. For the conservation-minded reader, remember that a lad who spends his time in the pursuit of hawking will save many more birds than he will kill, for through constant contact with wild things a fellow must learn to love them. We have acquired an intimate knowledge not only of birds of prey,

but of nature in general, which is of incalculable value, both physically and spiritually.

Halter explained falconry and falcons (specifically the Peregrine Falcon) to the layman in an interview for Hunting & Fishing magazine:

**"TO LOOK IN ON [THE NEST OF] ONE OF THESE RARE BIRDS REQUIRES THE FOLLOWING: A STRONG PAIR OF LEGS, A BROAD BACK, A LONG ROPE, AND NOT TOO MUCH REGARD FOR YOUR FUTURE."**

