A Biography – Bob Elgin

Charles Robert Elgin (1910-1984) was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa on May 21, 1910, to George and Emma Elgin. He grew up in Council Bluffs and attended Iowa State College, where he excelled in track and field. After graduating, he served in the United States Air Force during World War II, where he flew as a fighter pilot. After the war, Elgin returned to Council Bluffs and worked as a teacher and principal.

In 1947, Elgin married Jane Hill, and the couple moved to Des Moines, Iowa. Elgin was a pioneer in the field of falconry, and in 1967, he became the director of the Blank Park Zoo in Des Moines. He was known as the "Father of Iowa Falconry" and was a respected facility with a large collection of big cats, canines, reptiles, ungulates, elephants, primates, and raptors. Elgin was known for his wisdom, honesty and devotion to the humans and animals in his care.

In 1967, Elgin became director of the Blank Park Zoo in Des Moines. He educated himself on the care of exotic animals and built the zoo into a well-respected facility with a large collection of big cats, canines, reptiles, ungulates, elephants, primates, and raptors. Elgin was often featured in newspapers, magazines, and on television shows. He appeared with a jaguar on the Kennedy and Company show, and on the Sonora Desert Museum.

During World War II, Elgin was a commissioned Non-Commissioned Officer for the Air Force. Enthralled with things that flew, he honed his interest in falconry. In 1948, he began training a Cooper's hawk, sparking an interest in raptors. He contacted the government to see if he could have a wild Cooper's hawk, and the government agreed. Elgin was able to capture one, and he trained it to fly. He called it "Big Bird" and it became an important part of his life.

Elgin was known for his wisdom, honesty and devotion to the humans and animals in his care. He stayed in close contact with fellow falconers and was known for his passion for the sport. He was a true Renaissance man, with interests in opera, philosophy, politics, good food, and occasional drinks of fine cognac, and most of all, his wife Jane, an artist still residing in Iowa. He stayed in close contact with fellow falconers and was known for his passion for the sport. He was a true Renaissance man, with interests in opera, philosophy, politics, good food, and occasional drinks of fine cognac, and most of all, his wife Jane, an artist still residing in Iowa.

Bob and Morticia, a golden eagle

In his early years, Bob made many contributions to the sport of falconry. In the early days, he established connections with European falconers, and fly them, and it lives in my memory as the trip of a lifetime.

His two books, The Tiger is My Brother, and fly them, and it lives in my memory as the trip of a lifetime.

The Journey West After Falcons

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