He Follows an Art
Nearly 50 Centuries Old

Jerry Grisco, a breeder at the Los Angeles plant, devotes his spare time to an unusual hobby — one that's nearly 5,000 years old. He and some 13,000 other patient persons in this country practice falconry. He is a member of the Southern California Falconry Association and has been interested in his hobby for three years.

As he explains it, falconry is the training of certain types of formerly wild hunting hawks so that they will fly, hunt, take food from live birds (known later), then return to the leather- gloved talons of their masters.

Originally, falconry was strictly a form of hunting. Ancient Persians discovered a way to train hawks and through this gave rise to the method of taking those sport at great distance. The art was passed down through the ages and was most popular in medieval Europe and Britain, where different types of hawks were used to hunt according to their size. It is said that a knight would sacrifice his freedom before surrendering his falcons.

Today, says Jerry, falconers are more interested in training and flying of these birds than in using them as hunters. State laws allow falconers to hunt only "unprotected" game with their hawks.

Most falconers are content to "teach" their birds into flight and have them attack live birds. A bird is usually a handsome, well-bred hawk, footed with leather, and attached to a five-foot string. Fresh meat is tied to the line and is swung in a vertical circle.

A falcon is trained to the lure by the convenience and knowledge that food is at hand. He will swoop down on it and grab the food.

Most falconers are of the hawk family and are obtained when they are small from nests in mountainous areas.

It takes a good three months to train a falcon and during this time the trainer must spend several hours each day carrying his bird on his arm. The birds are fed fresh meat and are taught to take food and return with it to the trainer.

In the field, falcons are cast from the for to start their flights and after three or four hours at 2,000 feet, Jerry says a "kill" has been made and the bird will be used as a point or a "vulture" for the rest of the day.

Jerry's Coopers Hawk, Coco

DONORS:
Ryan Grisco, Dennis and Rosalina Grisco, Richard and Barbara Grisco, Dawn and Mike McCollough, Christina M. Grisco, Patricia Dahl, Yolanda, Randall and Shawn Grisco

SCEA 1954-55 Top L-R : Jerry Grisco with haggard gos, Bob Klimes, Briane Grisco, Bob H., Gil Nash, Bottcher E., Jimmy Yester, Howard Haigh, Dave Weeks, Tom Cade

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During his life as a falconer, Jerry flew Goshawks, Prairie falcons and a Coopers Hawk.

Jerry was the eldest of the six Grisco brothers. Brian, the second eldest, was the first to get into falconry. Jerry soon followed.

Jerry was inducted into the Army in 1949 for two years. He was an Army lifeguard in the USA and an MP in Korea. When he came home in 1951, he worked in plumbing with his dad. In the meantime, he saw Brian working with his birds and became interested. Brian belonged to the Southern California Falconers Association. After acquiring a prairie falcon, Jerry joined the club. He flew a couple of prairies, but came to realize that he preferred shortwings.

He got the opportunity to get a gos from Al Oming, a friend who was in charge of the Edmonton, Alberta game farm. Al would send club members merlins, goshawks, and different kinds of owls when asked.

Jerry flew a goshawk for two years and an intermewed Coopers named Coco for six years. He hunted his game at the Sepulveda Basin along with most members of the SCFA.

Jerry worked as a brew master for the Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer Company while practicing falconry. He and his bird were featured in their company newsletters. He was married and had a son. Jerry died quite young at the age of 48.