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Friends and Family of Walter Hill

WALTER HILL, A REMEMBRANCE

by S. Kent Carnie

In the early 1980s I had been involved in selling some of my library and falconry memorabilia to finance a house purchase. In the course of various transactions I spoke to Walter Hill, a gentleman-falconer in Florida who eventually purchased several items. In our early discussions, Walter, referring to his age, asked the logical question as to what was to become, eventually, of the falconry materials he had amassed in his lifetime. I was hard pressed for an answer. I finally mentioned the possibility of McGill University in Montreal as perhaps a proper recipient, based on its particularly fine library of falconry books. Based on that connection, NAFA earlier had chosen McGill as the repository for its own corporate papers. That association with the sport, however tenuous, seemed our only choice. Walter however, practical as he was, reminded me that as a Canadian institution, a U.S. citizen would be unable to enjoy any tax advantage should he bequeath materials to McGill.

That discussion with Walter stuck in my mind, sharpening concerns that with Bob Widmeier's recent passing, his books had gone for fifty cents or a dollar each in a neighborhood garage sale. Even worse was the loss of all Luff Meredith's correspondence, photos and other memorabilia. As the "father of American falconry" the loss of those materials was truly a tragedy, gone was so much of our history. Gone as much as anything, for want of a place to look after it. Spurred by Walter's original concerns, the idea of a falconry archives was conceived, with the Archives of American Falconry to be born at The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho in 1986. Walter was an enthusiastic and most generous supporter of our efforts.

Within a few years it became obvious that to support the archives' efforts properly, on a sustained basis, some permanent means of funding was called for, specifically: an endowment, the interest from which would provide operational expenses in perpetuity. If we could somehow cover our operations for some five years, we could devote all the proceeds of a concerted fund raising effort to build the needed endowment. But first to cover those interim operating funds. Walter, who had originally planted the seeds of an archives, had proven a generous donor over the years, as much with wisdom and advice as with dollars. In recounting his own father's successes in fund raising, Walter had counseled me: "be specific." Don't just ask for help, be specific!" So I was specific; I asked Walter for \$6,000 a year for the next five years, describing the concept of a concurrent endowment program. He said yes. A formal proposal to NAFA for similar support elicited the same answer. That guarantee of funds kept us archiving during our focused, successful endowment campaign.

Walter's efforts for establishing and supporting the falconry archives are appreciated by many.



Walter had one of the world's most complete and remarkable collections of important sports and sports-racing Jaguars.