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J. H. M. PIETERS (1893-1971)

By William G. Mattox

Falconry lost one of its best friends and finest exponents on 16 February 1971 when J. H. M. Pieters died at the age of 77 at Enschede, Holland.

In a sport which seems to foster personality clashes, back-biting, and petty rivalries, Hans Pieters differed. He stood out as a good and honorable man—forthright and scrupulously honest. He did not suffer fools, hated the pompous, and held suspect those who tried to make a spectacle of falconry. His philosophy was that since falconry and birds of prey had rewarded him with pleasures, excitement, and knowledge, even to consider selling hawks was unthinkable. He supplied countless goshawks to falconers in Europe and North America, even at times loaning out his own trained goshawks to falconers when replacements from the wild were unavailable. He expected only reimbursement for the cost of air freight, but this often came out of his own pocket when a falconer was churlish enough to refuse payment.

Hans Pieters was a gifted man. He had a deep interest in all animals and possessed a unique knowledge of raptors—especially goshawks. His fine book collection did not sit undisturbed on his shelves as a showpiece to collect dust and the admiring glances of visiting falconers. He read everything. His mind remained keen to the end.

Hans Pieters made all of his falconry furniture, from hoods and bags to bells stamped from his own dies. He gave up bag-making when his legs failed and he could no longer hold his saddlemaker's clamp. But the gloves kept coming, stitched in recent years by his beloved wife Corrie.

Pieters was a skilled taxidermist. He prepared everything from trophies of roe deer for local hunters to a massive woolly rhinoceros for the Natural History Museum of Enschede. The rhino project taxed even Pieter's ingenuity. Through 1952 and 1953, Hans experimented with a framework material which would be light but still strong enough. He had striking success and the rhino, moved in 1968 to the hall of the new building of Enschede's Natuurmuseum, stands as testimony to his skill and perseverance.

Pieters supplied hawks and equipment to falconers in many lands, but his greatest gift was helping and encouraging younger men. I first met Hans Pieters in 1954, arriving in Holland with an address sent me by Corny McFadden, who had known him following World War II. As a stranger I was a bit hesitant to knock at the door of the neat brick house on Groen van Prinstererlaan, but a broad smile and firm handshake from Hans Pieters dispelled all this in seconds. We talked in English, which Pieters commanded with surprising ease. He had, he said, been born in Ahaus, Germany, just over the border not far from Enschede. As a youth of 14, he had gone to Switzerland to learn about operating factories and for many years he managed a leather factory in Enschede. He retired at an early age—I suspect that as an avid hawkster he could not bear the 9 to 5 routine, or was it 7 to 7 in those days?—and he had contact with the factory only to obtain scraps of leather for jesses and hoods and for his bookbinding.

Pieters knew all the falconers of Europe and he was perhaps the most respected and beloved one of all. Honorary memberships were bestowed upon him



Johannes Heinrich Moritz Pieters

by the leading falconry clubs of the continent and by NAFA. He refused to join his own Dutch Falconers Club in a typical gesture: he saw no need for a formal organization when there were only three or four falconers in Holland. "It would have been silly", he said to me once, "a president, a secretary, a treasurer, and a member—perhaps that's the position they wanted me for!"

Hans Pieters went to his last falconry meet at Burgsteinfurt in 1966 (Deutscher Falkenorden). I remember him there swapping stories with his friend Renz Waller. By good fortune many of his friends were there whom he had not seen in a while, among them Eric Awender and Heidi. Hans spoke warmly of this outing in his last days. He had seen the hawks fly again, flown by men whom he had helped along the way.

They don't make men like Hans Pieters any more. We would all do well to be more like him; we certainly owe it to the sport. I was honored to have Hans Pieters as a friend for 17 years. What he stood for left me with indelible impressions.

Long live the memory of this good and gifted man.

OBITUARY

On February the 16th, 1971 our Honorary Member J.H.M. PIETERS passed away in his 78th year.

Falconer, austringer, ornithologist, breeder of dogs, ferrets and black game, taxidermist and maker of excellent hoods.

But in our memory he will live on chiefly as The Protector of Goshawks: it is impossible to say how many gosses' lives he has saved in the years 1945-1960 through his good relations with gamekeepers and shooters. Many falconers at home and abroad have had their share of them, and I really don't know whose joy was the greater: that of the falconer who got one or that of the man who presented it.

We wish his hospitable wife all the courage and strength to bear this great loss.

Knegsel, Summer 1971— G. A. van Nie

(From page 30 of the *Yearbook* 1970, Valkeniersverbond "Adriaan Mollen")



The death of J. H. M. Pieters

On 16 February [1971] our friend Mr. J. H. M. Pieters died suddenly at the age of 77 years.

In the last years it had become more and more difficult for him to walk, so that especially the younger people among us have not met him often. However, those who knew this many-sided man in his good years knew that he, besides his daily work, was an excellent taxidermist, an all-round animal lover and breeder who was always trying to learn new techniques.

His great love was for birds of prey and owls, and we consider him the father of many Dutch falconers. He, for himself and others inside and outside Holland, prepared all the equipment necessary for falconry such as gloves, bags, jesses, and bells. He knew the art of the falconer as no other did, and it was unbelievable how quickly he could man a wild bird.

Over the years he brought together an enormous collection of objects and books which had to do with falconry. Nevertheless, it was not only the collecting, but also all the books were studied carefully and the things which were mentioned in them were engraved in his memory, which until his great age still worked perfectly. Many people have profited from his extensive knowledge.

We should be thankful to him for the great difficulty and care, not to mention the financial sacrifices, which he took for many years to save our birds of prey.

Although there were laws and regulations, everyone knew that they, for the sake of monetary advantage, were violated many times. With much money and many good words Mr. Pieters managed to save countless birds which were released in safe places.

By the very nature of things, our Museum has had much contact with Mr. Pieters. He was one of those who christened our Museum in 1921, and he prepared many of the animals which were brought to us over the course of the years.

A special event was the reconstruction of a woolly rhinoceros, which came to being in the years 1952-53. It was a job which was completely new even for Mr. Pieters. In addition, they did not yet have the variety of materials that is now available, so that continual experiments had to be made in order to achieve as light and as strong construction as possible.

In the beginning, we were forced, due to lack of space, to place this unique piece [rhino] in the diorama hall of the old museum, but in 1968 we were able to give it the place it deserved: in the hall of our new building. May this perpetuate for a long time the memory of this gifted man.

—translated from the Dutch by Bill Mattox, originally published in a newsletter of the Enschede Natural History Museum