

Gary was honored by the California Hawking Club for his outstanding contributions to falconry.



DONORS:

Michele Ottersbach, Gary Beese, Marshall and Kathy Rodelli, Dan and Bev Fenske, Jamey P. Eddy, John W. Warren, Vahe Alaverdian

IN MEMORIAM:

*Gary
"G-man" Alten 1951 - 2008*



Avid falconer, high school Biology teacher, horseman, and wildlife conservationist are a few ways to describe Gary Raymond Alten. Gary's long courageous battle with cancer ended on December 15, 2008, at the age of 57.

A fascination for nature and wildlife, falcons in particular, started early in Gary's life. Sparked in the early years by summer camps in Seattle, WA and neighboring naturalist Jim Des Lauriers, Gary's parents recall him bringing home the usual stuff boys get into: pill bugs, butterflies, lizards, as well as the unusual: salamanders, snakes, and ironically...North American Kestrels. Gary's mom finally vowed she would not empty any pockets before doing laundry after finding one too many "living" things when she reached in. On one occasion in his early teens, Gary and his brother, Ron, tied string all around their bedroom and released a live bat just to witness echolocation live and up-close.

Gary formalized his passion and dedication to nature by studying biology at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1977. In 1977 he also authored the study of "Prairie Falcons in Riverside and Imperial Counties" for the Bureau of Land Management. Gary continued his educational pursuit and earned his Masters degree, also in biology, in 1981. It was Gary's way to help others understand our environment and all its living things. Becoming a biology teacher was a logical career choice. Gary spent 23 years with Chaffey High School, in Ontario, CA. During this time he was awarded Teacher of the Year, and taught courses such as Biology and Biotech. He was an active member of the school's club NESC (Natural Environment of Southern California), founded by friend and colleague Ted Reeves, which empowered kids with the knowledge and beauty of nature through educational trips to Joshua Tree and Yosemite, among others.

Gary spent many years becoming educated as a falconer, via observation, breeding programs, and the promotion of their welfare. Many seasons were

spent with Gary watching in anticipation of seeing incredible feats of speed and mastery of flight as the peregrine falcon rolled over and stooped in pursuit of its quarry, and afterwards re-telling the twists and turns the bird did on its way down to position itself for success. (As many falconers know, the falconer doesn't always get to see the stoop, they are so busy flushing game.) In his free time Gary would meticulously craft his own hoods and gloves for his falcons. He was a member of the North American Hawking Association and the California Hawking Club. On December 9, 2008, Gary was honored as the first recipient of the "Gary Alten Award" for his outstanding contributions to falconry by the California Hawking Club.

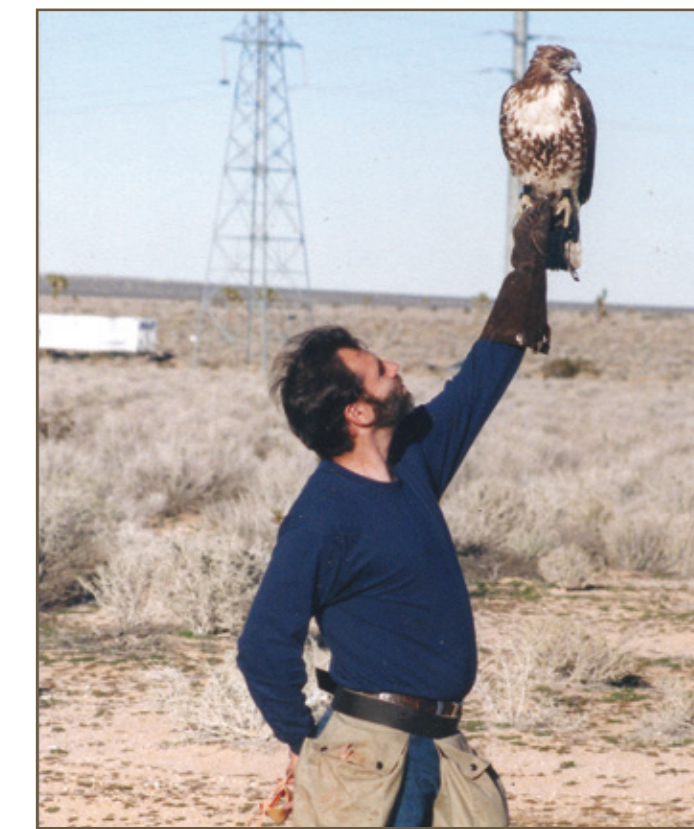
Gary monitored the repopulation of the peregrine falcon closely, enthusiastic about the increase in California breeding pairs after their numbers tragically declined from environmental toxins, like DDT, in the 1970s. The rise in numbers led to his petition to de-list the peregrine falcon from the California Endangered Species list in hopes of expanding the opportunity for falconers and the like to experience this incredible creature and to show that together, along with this regal bird's resilience, our efforts can have positive outcomes to their survival. On Dec. 12, 2008, 3 days before his passing, California Fish and Game Commission in Sacramento, unanimously approved the petition. In addition to his falconry endeavors, Gary co-authored a number of scientific papers with his brother Ron, on the life histories of various insects, particularly Cerambycidae (Long Horn beetles).

As well as being a wonderful friend, family member, and mentor, Gary was a man of integrity and dignity that added warmth, laughter, and meaning to those who were fortunate enough to cross his path. Gary had heart, and he is greatly missed by his beloved wife, Cindy, his family and friends.

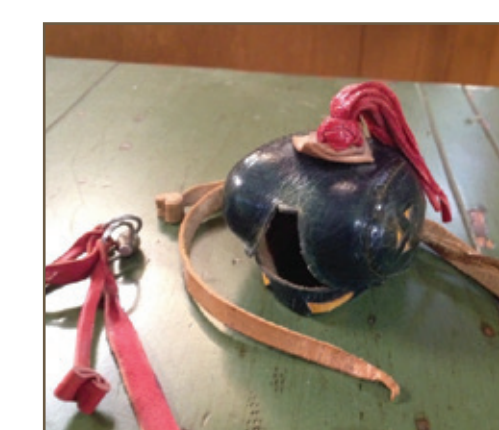
We are all better people for having known him, and anytime we hear the scream of a red tail, or call of a falcon, we have to look up and smile, because we know Gary's presence is on the wing and never very far away.



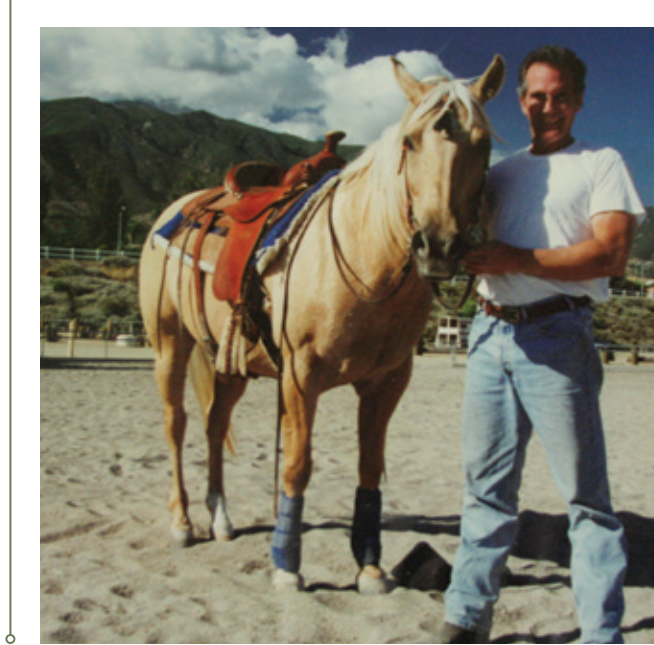
Above, Gary and sister Cynthia introduce baby brother Mark to falconry, July 1963.



His brothers Ron & Mark are falconers as well.



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