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## Falconer, Steward of the Land

Scott Baker was an outstanding falconer. His life was centered around his birds. He had two college degrees from Humboldt State: Animal Husbandry and Wildlife Management. Scott had several careers: running a "Birds of Prey" show at the Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque, N.M., working at the Alligator Farm in Rapid City, S.D., and working for the state of Wyoming marking Sage Grouse nest so that the Oil/Gas companies would not disturb the nests. During this entire time, he had at least one hawk or falcon that he hunted, cared for, and often raised their young.

After his wife, Maria, passed, Scott moved from Albuquerque to Wyoming where he built his own cabin on three acres near Boulder. With the wilderness of the surrounding area he was able to expand his passion for birds of prey as well as his love of the land. He enjoyed his life in Boulder, travelling with his buddies Mark, Tui, and others on their motorcycle adventures from Alaska to Baja California.

Scott began his love of falconry at the age of 14. He was working in a veterinary office in Southern California when someone brought in a baby Red-tailed Hawk that had fallen out of her nest. Scott brought the baby hawk home, named her Bertha, and raised her himself, reading books on how it's done. Then of course, he read up on training a hawk to hunt. Bertha, lived with Scott for 12 years. She was well-behaved and a very efficient hunter.

After college, Scott went to Rapid City, S. D., and worked at the Reptile Gardens. He showed me the scar where he had been bitten by one of the gators. After that he went to Albuquerque, N. M. and started working at the Rio Grande Zoo. Besides running the birds of prey shows for several years I found a certificate making Scott a qualified elephant handler. It was during this time where he almost caused me to get a divorce. He brought his pet, Ricky, to our house in New York to show him to us. Ricky was a prairie rattler. Needless to say, my wife was screaming at me, our three boys were screaming and crying, and the dog was barking like crazy. I made Scott take

Ricky back to his van. Afterwards, he explained to us that he had operated on Ricky, removing his venom glands/tubes. He had read a book, put Ricky in the freezer, and operated on his kitchen table.

He met and married his wife, Maria, in Albuquerque. She became a doctor, and as she just finished her residency was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She passed within two years. Shortly after that Scott moved to Boulder, Wyoming and built his cabin. He lived there until his passing on February 12, 2014. He died doing what he loved, riding his Husky out in the open desert.

Although falconry was Scott's lifetime passion, he had many other interests. He had as many as (7) motorcycles at one time, from the Ducati world bike to his off road Husquavarna. He would compete against the pros with the Ducati, often finishing the road courses in the middle of pack. But his favorite type of riding was off road or cross country. I have several collections of pictures of his trips with Mark down to Mexico where they had way too much fun.

He also collected and played several guitars, with the support of his neighbor, Lars. He was quite good, preferring the blues.

One of my favorite memories of Scott was his love and mastery of fly fishing. We would make an annual trip to Farmington, N.M. to go fly fishing. I was not too good but was very happy to sit on the bank of a river or creek and watch the master work the stream. I still cannot execute his forward rolling fly cast with no back cast.

The underlying theme that flowed through all of Scott Baker's life was his love and care of the land/wilderness. He always tried to leave "no footprint" during his travels. Animals and wildlife were treated with respect at all times. Yes, he was a steward of the land. He will be missed by his many friends for his stewardship, falconry expertise, and certainly his ready smile and open door.



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