



## STEVEN LOUIS BAPTISTE

Steve was born January 3, 1938 in Gloucester, Massachusetts and died January 23, 2014 in Reno, Nevada at the age of 76. His parents were Louis Baptiste (Portugal) and Clara Elizabeth (Smith) Baptiste (Massachusetts). Steve had three siblings – sister Joanne (Baptiste) Adams, Barbara Jean Davis, and his late brother James Smith Baptiste. His children are Deborah Lee, Deanne Baptiste, Danette Baptiste, Toby Baptiste, Stephanie Waston, Denise Foder and Matthew Martensen. He had 20 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.



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When Steve was a child, the family lived in Gloucester. In 1947, they moved to San Diego, then Chula Vista. He worked odd jobs as a teenager, including selling ice cream to sailors in San Diego, then carpentry with an uncle, and then as a glazer. In 1958, Steve bought a guitar, formed a band and a part-time music career was begun. In 1960, he moved to central California and started a business breeding game birds for nearby hunt clubs. In 1963, he became a full time musician.

In 1964, he fell in love with falconry and obtained his first bird – a redbill. His nighttime work as a musician allowed him time to fly his bird during the day. In 1976, he and his wife moved to Sparks, Nevada and he began work in the gaming industry. His falconry interest intensified and he began breeding birds for his own use. Steve was becoming a self taught biologist.

In 1977, he and son Matthew moved to a ranch in Palomino Valley and started breeding birds full time. He soon became known internationally as a breeder of fine falcons. He started a wetlands project with good friend Dan Brimm. People were soon coming from all over the world to see his breeding project and watch as a pair of falcons would raise the chicks while flying free and bringing food from throughout the valley!

As a hobby, he played “Texas Hold-em”. He was an excellent poker player – so good, he would tell friends and family that poker wasn’t gambling!

He loved hunting with his falcons in the high sage desert. When his brother Jimmy passed away, Steve commented “My favorite times with Jimmy were when he would come and visit. We would go hunting with the falcons and dogs. Once, he, our nephew Jamie, and I were in a dune buggy in the mountains above the ranch. We spotted a herd of wild mustangs. We were downwind and were able to sneak so close that we reached out and touched a mustang stallion that was watching over the herd. Sometimes we would go to Idaho and enjoy the wild places with hundreds of deer, antelope, and sage hens.”





## A Master Falconer *by Mike Yates*

**Steve had a rapport with falcons like no one I ever encountered.** At any time of year his breeders and falconry birds welcomed him to their chambers, and he had few if any peers when it came to stripping semen from a tiercel. This deep understanding of what made his falcons tick led him to try and succeed at experiments that wouldn't have even occurred to a lesser sage.

Rocky Montgomery recounted that in the early 1980s Steve had some downy gyrs in his garage on an artificial scrape made from a tire filled with gravel. He went out to a chamber and retrieved a gyrfalcon in its first moult that he had flown the previous season. Stepping her onto the edge of the tire, Steve handed her a quail and she proceeded to feed the downies without hesitation. Steve returned to the chambers and fetched a jerkin of like description, setting him next to the gyrfalcon. He immediately joined her in feeding the young.

Many of us recall in later years driving down Steve's lane and seeing 15-20 young gyrs and gyr hybrids in various stages of development and hack on the house, tables and lawn. On shaded tables were the youngest, and they were often attended by a breeding pair at liberty from their chambers. They fed quail Steve provided to any of the young that were yet incapable, but also brought in prey (usually mourning dove or Steve's homers) that they caught in fair chase. When the female of the pair was finally history, the male (named Swede) continued the breeding season vigil alone.

Having Steve as a friend was at once a privilege, an education and an entertainment.

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