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Phillip John DiMaggio

— by Linda DiMaggio

Phillip John DiMaggio was born in Reno, Nevada on September 13, 1948 to Sam John DiMaggio and Pauline Mary Frediani. Phil's father moved to Nevada from Michigan during World War II when he was stationed at Stead Army Air Base. His mother emigrated to the United States from Lucca, Italy and settled in Floriston, California before moving to Sparks.

Phil's first home was a small, three-room house located in downtown Sparks. The neighborhood was filled with Italian families - Isolais, Gandalfos, Ceccarellis, Scarsellis, Gilardis and Angelinis to name a few. Mario Frediani, Phil's young uncle, also lived with the family. The house had a wood-burning stove in the kitchen which was used for cooking and heating; it was usually hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

Phil grew up near B Street, Sparks' main street. As a youngster, Phil made friends with the owners of the Chinese Pagoda, the only Chinese restaurant in town at the time. They shared many lunches and fortune cookies over the years. Phil's visits to the Chinese Pagoda were among his fondest childhood memories. Phil's love of the outdoors started in his childhood. He spent many hours playing with Boots, the dog, and Bud, the duck, in the yard. He also loved fishing the Truckee River with his dad, Sam, and his uncle, Mario and family picnics at Nevada Beach, Lake Tahoe.

In 1958 the DiMaggio family moved to the outskirts of Sparks. Their new home was located on K Street near Sullivan Lane - there was a lot of new territory to explore. Most of the roads nearby were still gravel and the farm fields and irrigation ditches started a few doors down. Phil attended the newly-constructed Sparks High School. There Phil met Felton Hickman. Mr. Hickman was a music teacher, but since Phil did not have a musical bone in his body, how or why they met is unknown. Mr. Hickman was also a falconer. He sparked Phil's interest. Phil read all the books he could find on falconry and trained a red tail hawk. From that time until his

death, Phil was passionate about the sport of falconry. As the area around his house built up, keeping the hawk became difficult. He let the red tail go. Other interests - cars and girls - took its place.

Phil graduated from high school in 1966. In the fall of 1966, Phil started attending the University of Nevada in Reno and majored in Range Management. Phil's passion for the wide open spaces of Nevada greatly influenced his choice of career. At the University Phil met Larry Wahrenbrock. Larry had moved to Nevada from southern California several years earlier. Phil and Larry became fast friends. Together they explored much of Nevada. It didn't really matter if their hunting trips to the Sheldon were successful, they enjoyed the time communing with each other and the landscape. While in college Phil worked summers for the U. S. Forest Service. He was stationed at Carver's in Big Smoky Valley. From this base, he mapped the range in most of the Monitor, Smoky and Reese River Valleys. He became intimate with central Nevada and never tired of camping and hunting there. Phil also met Linda Hoggan at Nevada. Linda worked in the Renewable Natural Resources Department where Phil had most of his classes. They began dating and were soon spending most weekends during the spring, summer and fall camping, fishing and exploring in central Nevada. Phil graduated in May, 1970. He returned to Nevada the following fall to take more classes toward a Masters degree.

Phil and Linda were married on October 7, 1972. It was the opening day of duck season as they were often reminded by various uncles, cousins and friends. Phil and Linda continued to live in the Reno area where Phil worked in the family business, Big O Tire Stores (no permanent jobs in range management were available!). Central Nevada still beckoned to Phil and Linda and it was on one such camping trip to Kingston Canyon in Big Smoky Valley on July 4th, 1975, that Phil took his first steps toward becoming a Master Falconer. Linda's grandmother, Leila Rogantine, was with them and they were headed to visit Round Mountain when Phil spotted a Cooper's Hawk. After the visit to Round Mountain, Phil stopped the truck to take a look for the Cooper's. A while passed before he returned to the truck and begged "Gram"

to give him one of her nylon knee-highs. He took it and ran back toward the creek. He soon returned with his treasure - a baby Cooper's. Upon returning to camp he promptly commandeered one of the dish pans for the baby's bed. Phil and Linda returned to Reno and he set about getting perches, food and all the stuff needed for a baby bird. While getting all these things together, he also found that he needed some other things - like a falconry license, a capture permit and a sponsor.

Since Phil had never had a falconry license, he needed to serve an apprenticeship. He began to make friends in the falconry community; one of the first people he met was Dave Jamieson. After some encouragement, Dave agreed to be Phil's sponsor. Phil trapped a kestrel in the desert near his home, did some more reading and the year passed quickly. He was now a Master Falconer and his friendships throughout the falconry community grew. One friend, Bruce Guimont, had a Harris hawk that needed a home and Phil was happy to oblige. He named the Harris "Elvira" (the song was popular!) and together Phil and Elvira began hunting jack rabbits.

Many life changes occurred over the next several years. Phil and Linda's son, Brian, was born in 1980. Also, retirement would prompt the sale of the family business. Phil began working with a friend, Terry Baroli, remodeling houses and he began artificially-inseminating Elvira. Elvira began laying eggs and raising chicks. He also acquired a naturally-bred pair of Harris hawks from Larry and Karen Kottrell.

He now had a federal breeding project and after a few years of house remodeling, Phil decided to get a "real job". He began working for a property management company in south Reno. He was the grounds maintenance supervisor at the Meadow Ridge development. The perfect job for Phil - no time clock, plenty of ditches in the area, hours in the afternoon were usually free - what he needed now was a goshawk! On June 9, 1988, Phil took his first goshawk from the Desatoya Mountains in central Nevada. With Phil on this trip were Louis Picininni and Richardo Velarde. Appropriately enough, her name was Toya. Together they were soon taking jack rabbits, cottontail, quail and ducks. Phil flew Toya for two years.

In 1991, Phil took a second goshawk from the Desatoyas and Mike Gordeau was along. Phil climbed the tree and Mike picked out two birds - one for himself and one for Phil. While Phil was skinning back down the tree another vehicle came up the road. Mike hastily backed the truck out of the way and almost rolled it. Phil and the driver of the second truck tied ropes to the truck and pulled Mike and the truck back up to the road - some expected excitement!

Later that year, Phil met Randy Lenz at a hawking club picnic at Mike and Karen Yates' home. Mike and Karen graciously hosted the picnic for several years and it was a great time to renew old acquaintances and meet new friends. Randy and Phil became good friends and hawking partners. Together they took several hawks, went on countless scouting trips and generally enjoyed flying their birds and each other's company.



Their first trip together to take a bird was in 1992. Phil asked Randy to be his spotter when he went to take an eyas goshawk. Since Randy considered a goshawk to be the "Holy Grail" of falconry birds, he jumped at the chance. Randy, Phil and Brian, Phil's son, headed out to the Desatoyas. After turning off the highway, Phil spotted a badger sunning himself on a rock outcrop. He yelled at Randy to turn the truck around and film the badger with his new camcorder. It sounded innocent enough to Randy so he complied, parking the truck so that the badger and the rock outcrop were on the passenger side of the truck. Phil hopped out and disappeared. Meanwhile Randy got out of the truck and was fumbling with the camcorder and battery trying to get things put together. Brian wisely stayed put! The next thing Randy heard was Phil's excited voice yelling "head's up". Just as Randy got the battery clicked in, the camcorder switched on and looked down, the badger came out from under the truck lunging at him ready to do some serious damage. Randy ran around the truck and hopped into the bed - just in time. The badger high-tailed it for his hole. They have been laughing about that badger for almost 20 years.

Eventually, Phil decided that he didn't want to repair sprinkler lines forever and he went back to school to become a commercial refrigeration technician. He worked for Source Refrigeration for about 15 years. He also became interested in the art of bonsai through Richardo Velarde. He spent hours trimming and wiring until each tree was close to perfection and harmony.

Over the years there were many birds flown, much game taken, many chicks hatched and sent to falconers from California to Scotland and England, countless memories shared, stories told and friends made. Falconry was a way of life for Phil; one which rewarded him with many hours of pleasure and cherished friends.

