



Donors

James and Lucille Badura, Bob Collins, Patricia Czachowski, Marcia Dunn, Great Lakes Falconers Association, Robin Guy, Linda Knight and Rogelio Solis, Bonnie Masterman, Steve Myers, Kathleen Wolf



IN MEMORY OF JERRY HOLZER

by Bob Collins

On September 18, 2007, longtime NAFA member Jerry Holzer, 77, of Barrington, Illinois passed away following a long illness. He was the beloved husband of Mary Ann Holzer. Jerry was one of NAFA's earliest members, a past-president of the Great Lakes Falconer's Association, a mentor, sponsor, counselor, advisor, and friend to numerous falconers over the years.

He was a retired high school biology teacher, an avid outdoors-man and environmentalist, beekeeper and private pilot. He was devoted to his horses and dogs. In falconry circles, Jerry was known for flying redbills and great horned owls at game with great success without fanfare.

In the late 60's and early 70's, Jerry's owls and beagles were a combination years ahead of the times. Before captive breeding became routine, Jerry's consistent success at breeding great horned owls in the basement of his apartment building while living in downtown

Chicago is testament to a triumph of the human spirit, his creativity and determination. Stories of Jerry's humorous breeding owl anecdotes and cemetery hawking are legendary. A scientist to the end, Jerry donated his body to the Anatomical Gift Association of Illinois and requested that no services be held.

Jerry will be greatly missed. Jerry's name will be added to the Archives of Falconry's Wall of Remembrance. Anyone wishing to submit a "Remembering Jerry" story or photograph is welcome to send one to the Archives.

If anyone wishes to make a charitable donation in Jerry's memory, please consider: The Peregrine Fund, Attn: TAF, 5668 W. Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, Idaho 83709; Hoved Animal Rescue Society, PO Box 94, Barrington, Illinois 60011; or, Chicagoland Shepard Rescue, 2116 N. Sawyer, Chicago, Illinois 60647.



Jerry and Bunny Holtzer with their captive-bred owls, ca. 1976.



Thoughts from family and friends:

What more could a wife ask for! A fledgling Great Horned Owl sitting in the middle of our dining room table, shaking downy dander everywhere and panting the foulest breath imaginable. Promptly named Winky, he was my instant and unforgettable introduction to proud, historic world of falconry. Clumsy and curious, clown and cutie, he perched in our “adjusted” bathtub – showering with us, watching TV, demolishing a carrot cake or two, gaining valuable flight experience from the top of curio cabinet. Even earning a degree in “wisdom” at the high school where Jerry taught. But somehow along the way, he grew into a handsome and formidable hunter, supplying us with many delicious rabbit and pheasant dinners.

A special thrill for Jerry was his Great Horned Owl breeding program, of which Winky was the foundation “stud”! Jerry was a pioneer in successful Great Horned Owl captive breeding and Winky’s offspring were scattered throughout the country.

In addition to Winky, our apartment was home to many transient birds of prey. Many Great Horned Owls of course, plus a Snowy Owl, Sparrow hawk, Sharpshin, and Redtails. My freezer was full of rats and our lives revolved around falconry meetings, game dinners, annual meets, demo flights, and a world of new adventures and friends (many of them feathered!). Jerry was so proud and honored to be elected president of the Great Lakes Falconer’s Association and worked tirelessly to help the club and falconry grow. But, falconry was not his only passion. He was an avid hunter, fisherman, and environmentalist. Our move to the country enabled us to breed, train, and ride Arabian and Paso Fino horses, rescue dogs and cats, and help me train and show my champion Doberman in obedience, agility, and tracking.

Most of all, Jerry was the kindest, gentlest and caring person in the world. He thoroughly enjoyed people from all walks of life – listening, laughing and learning from them. He was always ready to help anyone and everyone, from a biology student or apprentice falconer to a lost traveler or a friend needing a ride. He was dedicated to preserving, protecting and loving nature and all her animals, birds and plants. He never ceased to be thrilled at a hawk flying overhead, the chatter of baby raccoons, the discovery of a new plant, or a swarm of bees.

Jerry was my beloved husband who filled each day with absolute joy for almost 42 years. My eternal love and gratitude.

Did I ever tell you, you are my hero –
Everything I ever hoped to be.
I can fly higher than an eagle –
You are the wind beneath my wings.

— Your Bunny (Mary Ann Holzer)

I’ll always remember Jerry’s easy manner, his gentleness, his wry sense of humor, and of course, his love of all the creatures on earth.

— Love, Jeanie

My most vivid memory of Jerry goes back to a family gathering when I was a teenager. Unlike any other adult there, he engaged me in conversation. It doesn’t sound so extraordinary as I tell you about it here, but it made a big difference to me then to be caringly acknowledged.

— Love, Nancy

I reflect upon many inquisitive and just fun conversations with Jerry. Jerry was a strong man who modeled a humble heart for the rest of us. On a regular basis, I use his salutation of “Catch you down the road”...and his advice of “All things in moderation”.

— Per

He lived in a house set back from the road, like Snow White’s cottage, a home set in nature. ... a man with a twinkle in his eye – a curious mind and a naturalist’s heart. A generous man, sharing his life’s joys, his fishing, his bees. A man who loved falcons and sat with his dog by his side. A man who loved his wife – cherished and respected his wife. A man, who even in ill health, could make a new friend with one sentence. Dear Jerry, we did not have long enough, but long enough to love you.

— A friend.

Jerry Holzer was a naturalist with a curious mind. He was a man who loved the earth and its creatures. He was a man with a twinkle in his eye. Jerry wanted to share his love of beekeeping with a novice. I am honored to have this good man’s veil, smoker, and journal. I asked Jerry about a page in his journal where he wrote “the bees were vicious today”. He roared with laughter as he said “I must have been stung that day!” Jerry taught me about building hive bodies and queen pheromones. How he longed for one more chance to capture a swarm. Jerry was a man who was always teaching, always learning, and always up for the next adventure. Jerry Holzer was my friend.

— Respectfully, Gail Myers

(When we last met)...you said you wished that you had someone you could pass on things to. Jerry, I don’t know why it didn’t hit me when you told me this, but I want you to know that you already have. You have passed on so much knowledge about and appreciation of biology, dogs, horses, and owls...to literally hundreds of your students. When I talk to fellow Glenbrook North (high school) alums, they all remember you, and I don’t know of anyone who didn’t have anything but good stuff to say about your class. You taught a class that was nothing like anyone had experienced in the

past...You gave us freedom to move around and learn from you and others in the class...learning from you was easy because you had such passion for what you taught. You passed on your love for nature to me and an uncountable number of students. I can honestly say I wouldn’t be doing what I am doing now without your influence! ..not too long ago, you gave me a copy of my honors biology research paper. You actually kept it all these years! That is a treasure to me as I lost all my papers in a flood...”The effect of radiation on fruit flies”...Jerry, you started me out as a toxicologist and I remained one after 35 years! That is a gift that can never be forgotten! ... You passed on to me, and now my kids, the phrase “press on”. Silly as that sounds, it is part of our family vocabulary. ... I would not be where I am without your direction, guidance and hard work...you shaped my life.

— Love, Robin



L to R: Don Cronin, Bob Collins, and Jerry, their former high school teacher. Since 1961, life-long friends and falconers. Photo taken May 1990.

