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Great Lakes Falconers Association



Ken, Ken Jr., and apprentice Earl Nowakowski with his first redtail. Nearly all Illinois falconers caught their first redtail at Invergo's.



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Ken Invergo — 1939 - 2001 (NAFA member since 1964)

In the environmental classic *Sand County Almanac*, with Essays on Conservation from Round River, Aldo Leopold wrote:

When I was a young boy, there was an old German merchant who lived in a little cottage in our town. On Sundays, he used to go out and knock chips off the limestone ledges along the Mississippi, and he had a great tonnage of these chips, all labeled and catalogued. The chips contained little fossil stems of some defunct water creatures called crinoids. The townspeople regarded this gentle old fellow as just a little bit abnormal, but harmless. One day the newspaper reported the arrival of certain titled strangers. It was whispered that these visitors were great scientists. Some of them were from foreign lands, and some were among the world's leading paleontologists. They came to visit the harmless old man and to hear his pronouncements on crinoids, and they accepted these announcements as law. When the old German died, the town awoke to the fact that he was a world authority on the subject, a creator of knowledge, a maker of scientific history. He was a great man — a man beside whom the local captains of industry were mere bushwhackers. His collection went to a national museum, and his name is known in all the nations of the earth.

In his Good Oak essay, Leopold wrote:

There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other is that heat comes from the furnace.

Aldo didn't know Ken, but his writing describes Ken's character and life. Scientists and government biologists throughout the world benefited from Ken's research and

banding of hundreds of birds of prey during the fall migration along the Mississippi River.

The falconry community is a little thinner because of the death of Ken Invergo. Though short in stature, Ken stood tall alongside of all those who were fortunate enough to come in contact with him. His generosity was legendary. His home was always open, his blind was always available, and his wife Jo could make a meal on a moment's notice.

The memories that so many of have of fall trapping with him along the Mississippi are too numerous to count.

Nearly every apprentice in Illinois trapped his or her first redtail at Invergo's farm. Then Ken would host sponsors and apprentices under the stars after a day of experiencing the thrill of hawks plummeting from hundreds of feet in the sky. These campfires are memories to be treasured.

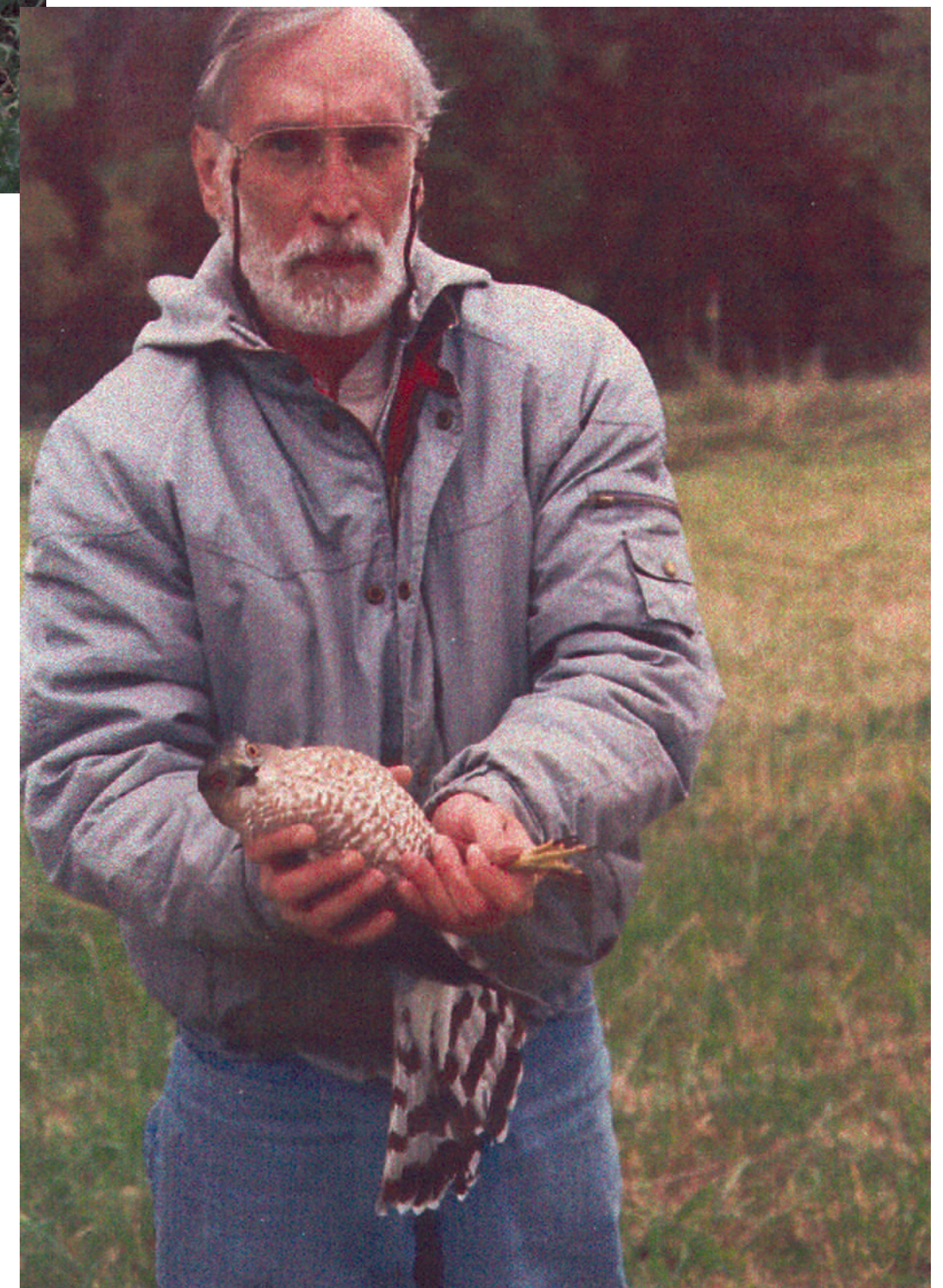
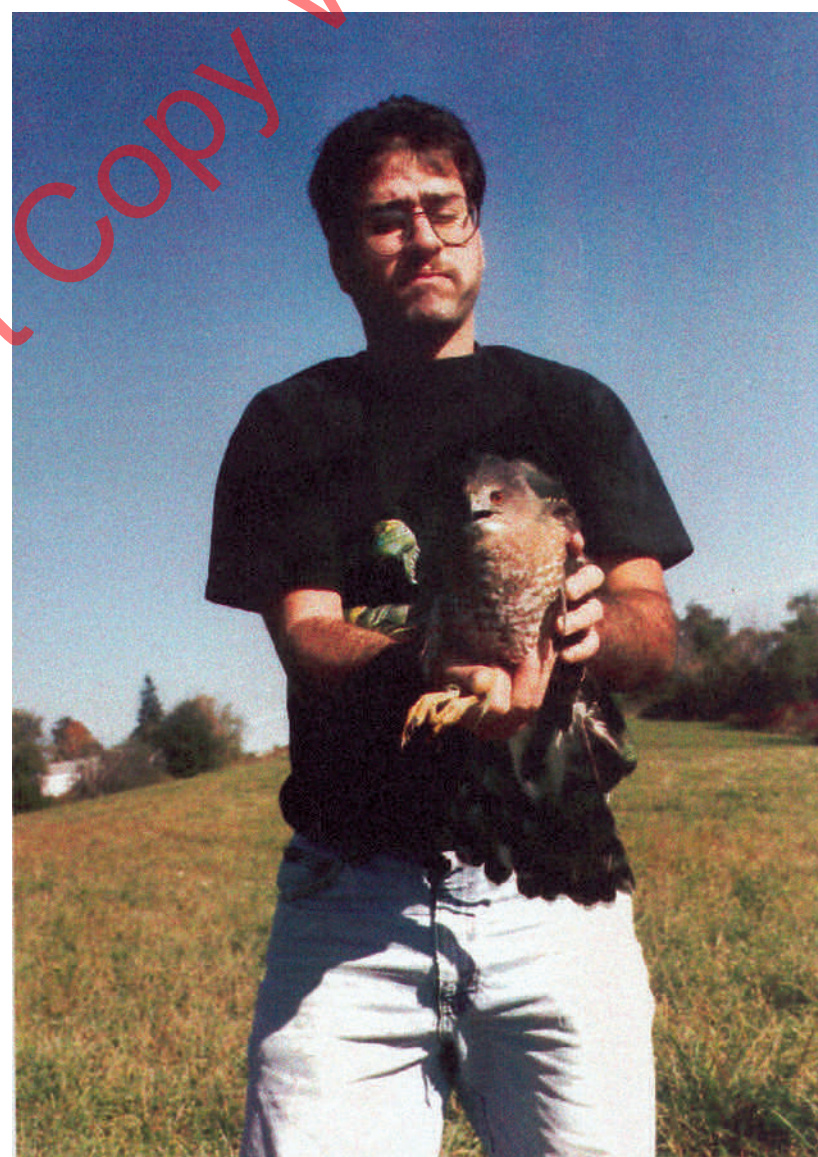
Ken flew every species of raptor (his old flying area has a road called Falcon's Ridge Way that was named for his prairie), but his true love was reserved for the redtail. He trained some of the best.

His sense of humor and love of a good practical joke made many field meets memorable. When Don Bandauski and Larry Miller started a sentence with, "You know what we should do?..." Ken would light up and his mischievous mind would be racing. "I'm in!" he would announce, and another adventure was soon put into motion.

Ken fought a long, painful and courageous battle with cancer. But those of you who saw him in 1999 in Waverly saw his determination not to let the disease deter him from his friends and his passion for falconry. The fight is over— now, his pain is no more, but the hearts of all of us who had the pleasure of knowing him are filled with the memories that make life worth living.

—Written by Larry Miller and Bob Collins





Ken Jr. not only worked with his father in the family quail-breeding business, but also loved trapping and banding as much as father.