



Founder and President of the Falconers' Association of North America and the Falconry Club of America



West Point 1917



Luff Meredith and daughter Anne 1947

Colonel Russell Luff Meredith is recognized by many as "The Father of American Falconry." A leading authority on the art, he began his over 50-year love of falconry when it was all but a lost art in America. He became its most authoritative voice during the sport's formative years on the continent. As early as 1911, when only 19, he wrote an article published in the magazine *Outdoor Recreation* about hunting English Sparrows with a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Born in Seattle, Washington, where his father was chief of police, Luff was raised by his paternal grandfather in Washington, D. C. following the duty-associated murder of his father. His grandfather, then Chief of the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing, had been a Civil War officer. The standard of ethics and conduct learned from his grandfather had a marked influence on the young Meredith's life thereafter. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1917 and served as a pilot in the old Army Air Service. Seriously injured in an airplane accident, he retired in 1927 but not before winning a Distinguished Flying Cross for a 1923 mercy flight through a raging snowstorm in the north central U.S.

Always busy encouraging sincere neophytes, he tirelessly sought to improve his own methods and practice. Uppermost in his mind was his desire to see falconry accepted in America as a legitimate hunting sport, the "gentleman's sport" he envisioned. Toward that end he strove to get the sport honest recognition in the minds of its many antagonists. As Meredith's falconry reputation and influence spread, he saw the need to unite those sincerely interested in the sport through an association and a journal. He proposed what became the Falconers' Association of North America (FANA) at the banquet following the First National Falconry Meet, held in the vicinity of Philadelphia in the fall of 1938. This was the beginning of what became the first national falconers' organization in North America. He served as its president through

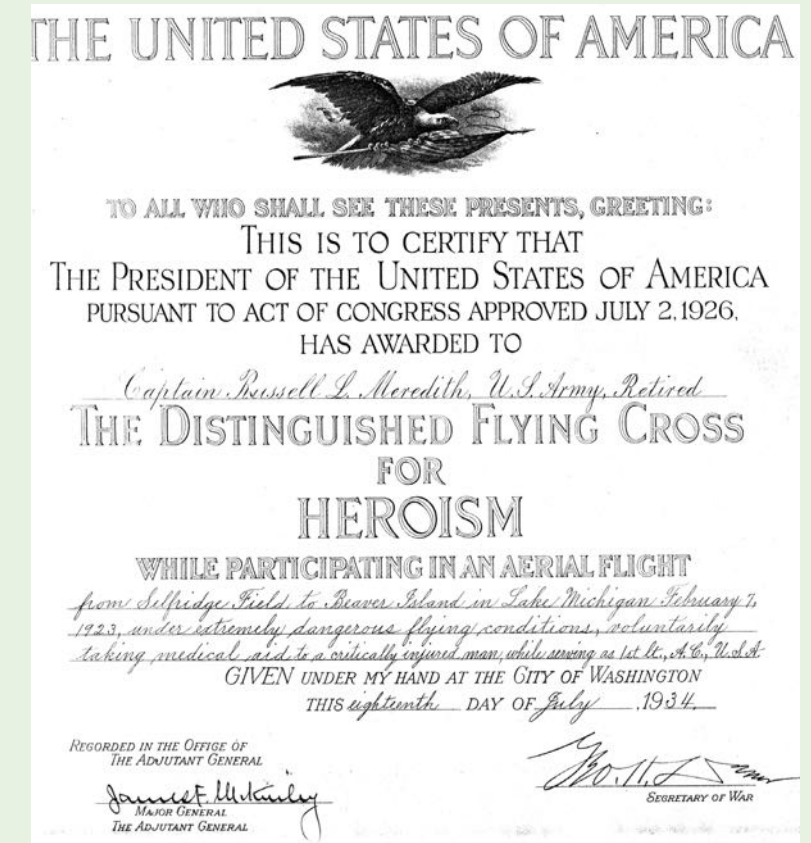
its short existence, terminated by World War II. In 1941, he was recalled to active duty and placed in command of the Great Falls Montana Army Air Base. He was awarded the Legion of Merit for his work with the Russians in arranging airfields in World War II and became "The Colonel" within the falconry community. With peace once again established, Meredith continued to pursue his organizational vision, establishing the Falconry Club of America in 1953. He led that club almost single-handed until it faded in 1961, coincidental with his own decline in health.

Meredith was a respected member of the British Falconers' Club and, before World War II, the Deutscher Falkenorden, the two most prominent falconry organizations of the time.

His falconer friend Charles E. Hall, a physiology professor at the University of Texas, put it well when he said: "When Luff wasn't taking or training falcons, he was busy in the workshop devising better methods of trapping, better leashes, jesses and bells, better hoods, baths, and perches; and better ways of encouraging advancement of the sport and discouraging those who thought of falconry only as a means of making money or who taught and held birds without having proper facilities or time to devote to the birds that he most admired and respected."

Living, sleeping, talking falconry for most of his life, "The Captain", and later, "The Colonel", as he was respectfully known, unquestionably did more for the sport in the United States than anyone from the early 1930s until he succumbed to cancer at his south Texas coastal home in 1965. With the skin study of his beloved tiercel "Fritz" at his side, Luff was buried at West Point overlooking the historic peregrine eyries on the Palisades.

What American falconry had become by the close of the 20th century was built upon a foundation strongly influenced by Russell Luff Meredith.



1938 Capt. Meredith with Fritz



With Kikiwik (Gyr) at his home in Bend, Oregon 1955

The Father of American Falconry



1932 Capt. Knight at Luff's mews in New Jersey



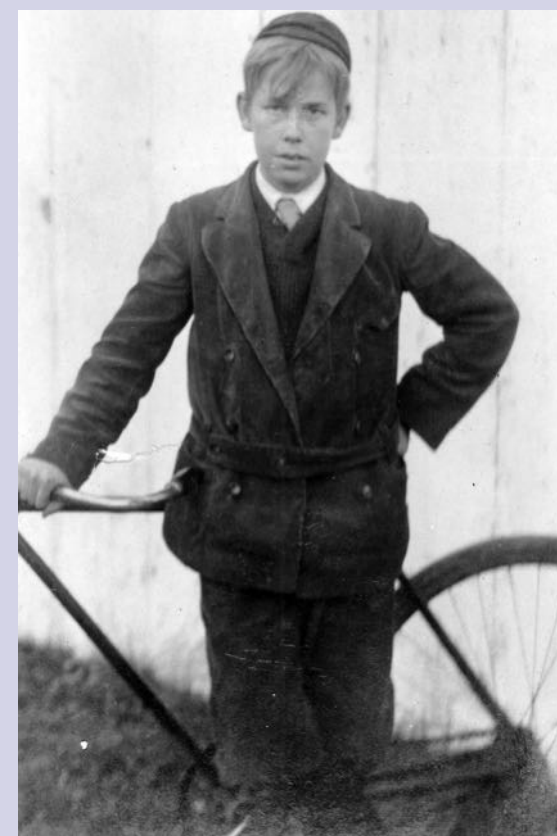
Painting by Renz Waller at the Archives of Falconry and published in Hugo Richter's biography of Waller



Col. R. L. Meredith, considered the father of falconry in this country, here poses with his white Greenland gyrfalcon Chris.



1941 Beach Trapping



Young Meredith (1904)



Jan. 1954 Meredith with Greenland Gyr Chris