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### **An Afternoon with Ed Ng — by Pam Hessey**

(Editor's note: This past spring (2004), a few of us went to visit Ed Ng, who was battling cancer. Ed, his wife Cheryl, Frank and Linda Ely, Jim DeRoque, Pam Hessey, and I (Charlie Kaiser) had the pleasure of an afternoon sitting and talking about falconry with a tape recorder going. I'd like to thank Lisa Snowden for her transcription of the recording.)

Pam Hessey: I was one of Ed's apprentices. He gave freely of his time and knowledge; that is invaluable to me. We spent hours talking about my bird's progress, my handling techniques, and Raptor psychology. However, we never got around to how Ed got started in falconry. Ed said he had been inspired by two movies he had seen...



**Cheryl, Tracy, and Ed Ng**

Ed Ng died May 27, 2004 at the age of 66. He was born and raised in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, lived in the Bay Area most of his life, settling in Concord 28 years ago.

He was a graduate of Francisco Junior HS, Washington HS and Heald's Business College, in SF. After high school, Ed joined the Navy and served on the USS Midway. He started his career in the early stages of the computer industry, but changed direction to join his brothers in the family business of Taylor and Ng, Inc. for many years. He also operated other small businesses in between.

Ed was the beloved husband for 27 years of Cheryl Wong-Ng, devoted father of Tracy Ng, and caring relative of an extended family. His three passions in life were family and friends; the sport of falconry; and support for the good works at the SF Chinatown YMCA.

Ed: "The first one was Marco Polo with Gary Cooper. And I think they had playing opposite of Gary Cooper a girl named Lana Turner. That one didn't have much of a falconry scene.

And then there was another one; it might have been called the Golden Horde with Genghis Khan. There was one scene that really turned me on — a princess that was trapped, held prisoner, and she's releasing a messenger pigeon. So, these guys released the hawks, and they flew after the pigeon. In the next scene, the bad guys got the message, and the hawk was eating the pigeon. That left a very lasting impression in my mind."

I then asked Ed what his very first bird was...

Ed: "The very first bird .. the first bird was a Kestrel, the second one was a Kestrel, the third one came from St. Helena, the winery - and I thought it was maybe a Goshawk, so I jumped at the chance of getting this bird from a friend of mine, a non-falconer. So, when I brought it home, I told my sponsor, Ken Gammon, to come down. And he came down, took one look, and he started laughing. And I said, "What the hell you laughing about?" He said it's not - he was slobbering, and he was stuttering. And he was laughing. He said, "It's a red shoulder, Ed."

When did you have your first long wing?

Ed: "Ken was getting me different long-wings - not different long-wings; always prairies. In those days, say around 1960-ish, very few people had access to Peregrines. The person with the Peregrine was really top dog. The people I flew with in the sixties were big names, they were Louis Davis, he's very well-known, you know, back in those days especially. I think he was also one of the very first Peregrine breeders. And he didn't do A.I.; he went natural. A guy named Steve Herman. Ed Cummings was around, Hans Peeters, Jimmy Adamson, Sterling Bunnell. This was the big group that - I was a breaking in.

And then I think the next few birds, I had were Goshawks. That was when I flew Shadow... I didn't have a bird then. It might have been Kevin

Condin that gave me the bird. The first season Shadow flew with another owner, caught some rabbits, broke a leg - healed, and that was when I picked up the bird. The leg - the left leg - was already healed. She had a little crooked spot on it, and I had her for all these seasons. She was a good bird, not a big bird, something like 28, 29 ounces. I think every time somebody wore a scarf or a hat, the bird never flew well out in the field. The bird didn't hood well, but she stayed on the fist well enough, long enough for game. And that bird - I kept records on that bird and head count, and the average that she's taken is something like 60 head a season times 11 seasons. That's 600-something heads. That can range anything from a mouse to a pheasant, but mostly it's jackrabbits, a couple of pheasants, and one blue-winged teal and squirrels; that's about it."

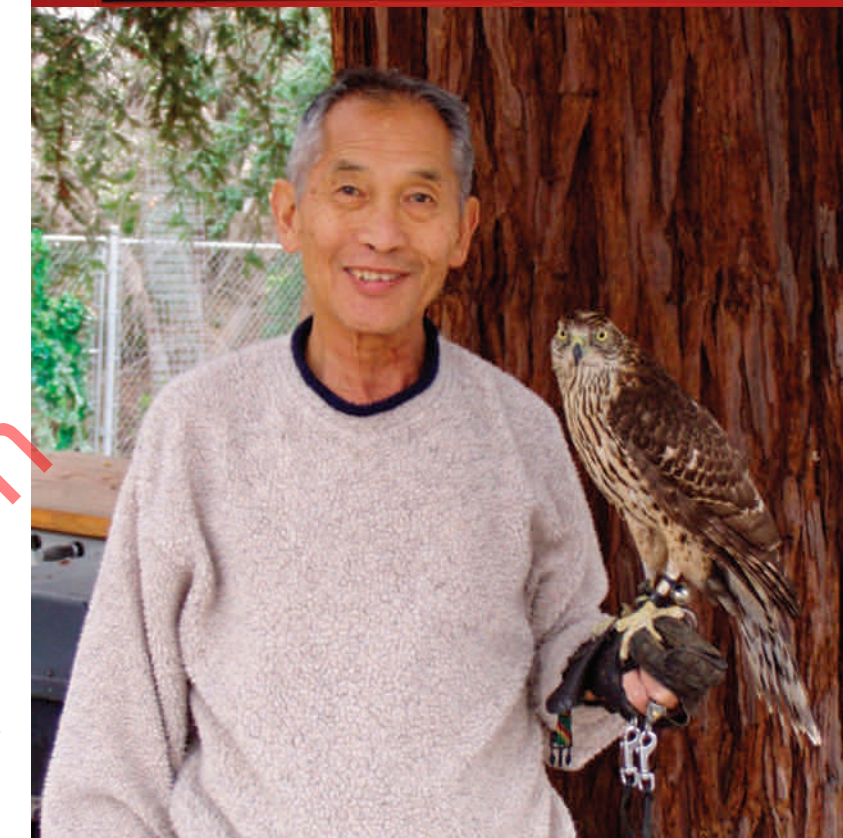
"I flew Goshawks, Coopers, Sharpshins, Merlins. Nothing unusual. Just - those are all the basic birds that I went through in my - let's call it 44 seasons.

Jim DeRoque asked Ed who he had hawked with in the seventies:

Ed: There was a guy named Wes Stetson, Dick Warbridge. Both these guys have pretty much dropped out of falconry. Mike Coins, Bob Sobee, Oh, yeah, John Pappas. That group. Les Winkler, Ed Lynch, Lopez; quite a variety. Well, the trade-off, you know, looking back then to now, today we have telemetry, we have the balloon method; we have better advanced medicine. Even the so-called "giant hood," that's something new. They didn't have giant hood boxes in my day. I eventually did one, but I'm sure I copied it from somebody."

Ed: The Goshawk I had this season chased. But they were never close slips. I saw him chasing something, and I know it's got to be a bunny by the way he moved. You know, Goshawks, they move differently than a Harris' Hawk or a Red-tail. It's a little bit quicker on the turn, more erratic. Didn't catch anything."

Ed: "You know, one thing I want to enter into this get-together is my sponsor, Kenneth Gammon, he's not known, even my in my days, not that known. But there were two things that he did that I can always reflect back on. One of the things was that he said, "You guys should somehow, one



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of these days, breed birds." In those days, it was unheard of. A wild hawk, whatever hawk, it cannot be done. There was a group of us flying, and there was one woman falconer - she was a good falconer - and she had a Cooper's Hawk.. The Cooper's Hawk was a real good game hawk, but nobody within this whole macho group could figure out what sex the bird was. "It's either a small female or a large tiercel," that type of an answer. Ken went up to her and stuck his fingers up the bird's vent. And she never met the guy before, and she was totally freaked out. He said, "It's a female." And everyone walked away laughing, figuring, "What do you know?" In something, like, two or three seasons later - the bird laid eggs after eggs. So, everybody ate crow. So, he said breeding birds should be something you should do, and he did that. And then the last thing he did was he sold hawks. Everybody was really uptight over that, even I was, because it's a noble sport, and you should be trapping your own, right? But what he did was a little bit different, was that he was selling imported birds from Pakistan and India, you know, like Shaheens - or was it Red-headed Merlins? His approach was that for every bird that was sold would be one less bird taken from the wild; eyass or passage. That was his mentality. But he was still kind of blackballed then."

Ed then recalled having been given honors as a visitor at a European Falconry Meet. "What I did when I went to the falcon masters' competition in Europe... All the guy did was give me his bird, because he was busy emceeing the thing. I took the hood off; the bird took off and went the highest the fastest, and they gave me first prize. That's why I said, "Oh, God. This is like embarrassing giving me first prize." So, I think that... I suppose there's a lot of political stuff that we could do to improve our standing."



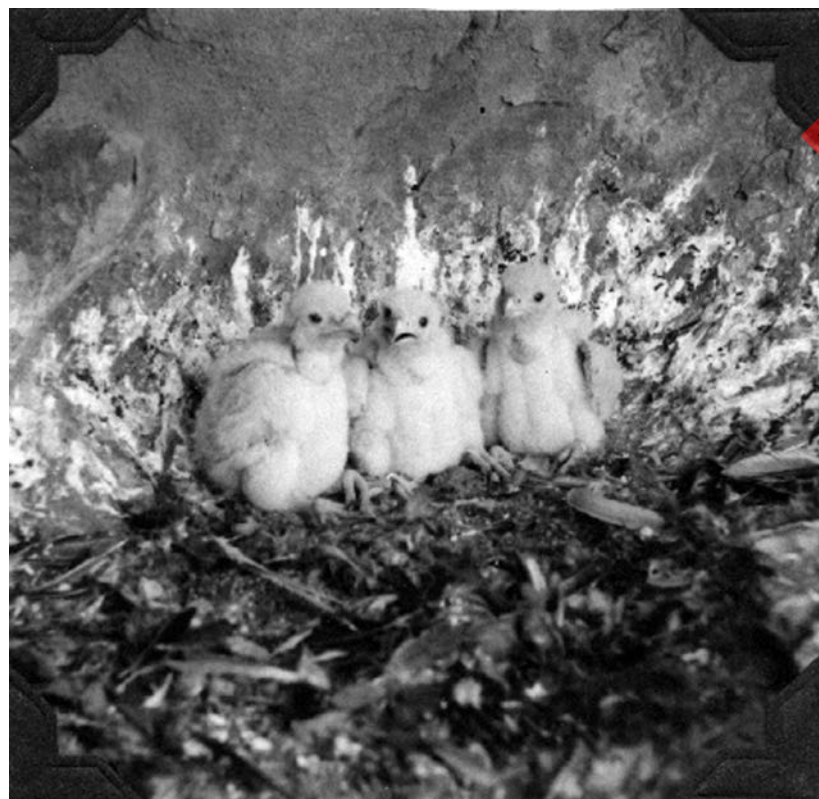


I asked Ed if he recalled any funny incidents that happened to him when he was flying...

Ed: "I did the typical rushing a duck pond with decoys in it... and I just had an e-mail from my friend Mike, Mike Crago. He said he flew his bird one time and knocked a pheasant into the bushes. Then, a couple of days later, he was flying the same field, and the bird came down and went into some bushes, and pulled out a frozen pheasant! What happened was that he knocked down a pheasant several days before and it ran into this same bush. It died in the bush, so the bird came out with this frozen pheasant. I think there's one or two stories that I always like to tell people, because I myself get a good laugh out of it.

One was about this guy, his name is Rob Bell; he's a goshawk guy. He went fishing, and somewhere along the shore he saw this Goshawk eating a squirrel or something. And he chased the bird. The bird didn't carry the squirrel, so Rob figured, "What the hell, I'll just put a big noose around the squirrel and see what happens." And sure enough, the Goshawk came back, and he snagged him with a fishing pole. That's how he caught the Goshawk. The funny thing was when he was retrieving the bird - he wasn't pulling it in. He had to go toward the bird, but he had to go over branches and under stuff. And then he finally got to the Goshawk and grabbed him.

Another one was Ray Turner. He's a firefighter.



Ed's friends for perpetuity

He was out fighting a fire one evening - forest fire - and he looked up at the tree, and there was a young downy Cooper's up there. So, he put his hose up there, wetted him down, blasted him off the tree, took him home and had himself a Cooper's Hawk."

Ed: "People - falconers throw money away on falconry. Here's a good one about Jim deRoque. We went to Montana, and we had a duck flight. The duck landed up in the water; he wouldn't flush. The duck was in pretty much of a fairly frozen pond, and Jim was going in to try to flush it while the Peregrine's flying around. Jim was throwing pebbles at it at the beginning. Then pretty soon I see him flipping rocks. I said, "What are you doing?" Then there was all this loose change- he was throwing money at the duck to get him to fly. And I said, "Shit, this guy is really wanting to get that flight." The duck got hit, and it spun around. And every time the falcon comes in it'd hit that duck again and spin him around. And you can measure the puddles of blood from here to there. Eventually the duck flew, and Jim's bird caught him. It was a rat race, but that was a funny flight, because he was in ice water."

Jim deRoque: "On that same Montana trip - Cheryl just found out about this the other day - we were driving home. We were with Ed Cummings and Val Fairman. And they were in the car in front of us, and we were driving, and it was about 2:00 in the morning. And we pulled over and Ed and I switched. I said, "Are you okay to drive, Ed?" "Oh, yeah." He's wide awake. I looked at the clock, and it was, like, 2:05 am. And then we're driving along, and I wake up; it's 2:15. I look over at Ed, and Ed is like this (head back, mouth wide open), sound asleep! His arms were straight, but his head was back, and his mouth was open... I yelled at him. It was probably the worst thing I could have done."

I asked Ed what positions he has held in the past for CHC, and what he sees for the future of our club...

Ed: "I've been apprentice chair, director and director at large. That's about it, helped out on the raffle... a lot of stuff. I guess the old-timers, we all seem to see that there's a new wave of falconers coming in. It's a new wave, a new mentality, new spirit, new approach. So, it's not even just buying a bird, telemetry, Internet. I see the educational stuff. I see that through you guys, that kind of a promotion. A lot of old-timers say, "They're just like pet-keepers- a little bit more than pet-keepers. They like to go to these Scottish Game Fairs to promote falconry; they like to do other educational stuff, you know." Well, in a sense we did that too when we went to the Cow Palace, right? That was the beginning of it all, of all our meeting with the public. This was at the boat show, we'd get a booth. And there would be people with shotguns there, dogs there. That's what we're doing. From there it seems to have escalated more into the educational side.

I see a totally new group. They're not as - they're not like what we were. I guess nobody will ever be like us, so fanatical. Even if they don't have the opportunity to buy things on the Internet, some-

thing like that, it's still a new group."

Charlie Kaiser: "I think part of it is due to - you have to look at the sponsor as to how committed the apprentice is going to be. I feel if the sponsor is very committed to the sport and committed to the birds, then that attitude is going to transfer to the apprentice."

Ed: "You are what you teach. You are what your sponsor was or could be. You are what your sponsor is, in a sense."

Ed sponsored me in my falconry apprenticeship. I had asked several people, but Ed was the one stepped up and offered to take me on. He was always a generous man. We started out as pupil and teacher, but I learned so much more than the basics of falconry from Ed. He gently corrected my mistakes, and bestowed on me the infinite patience that characterized his life. Ed shared his home and his family with me, and especially his joy of little things. He helped me accept the crushing loss of my first bird, and was also there with me when, miracle of miracles, that same bird came back to me. He gave to me the feeling of magic, to be able to call a wild bird from the sky to be my partner. He also taught me to accept losing a partner with grace and honor. I am still struggling with this lesson...

To find such a mentor and friend has been a special gift in my life; to lose such a man has wrenched a terrible hole in my spirit. But his strength in accepting his lot in life, the joys, and the losses, remains with me. The fierce joy of calling a hawk to my fist, and the equally intense feeling when it again leaves. Fly high and free, Ed.



**A New Day for Ed  
— by Cheryl Ng**

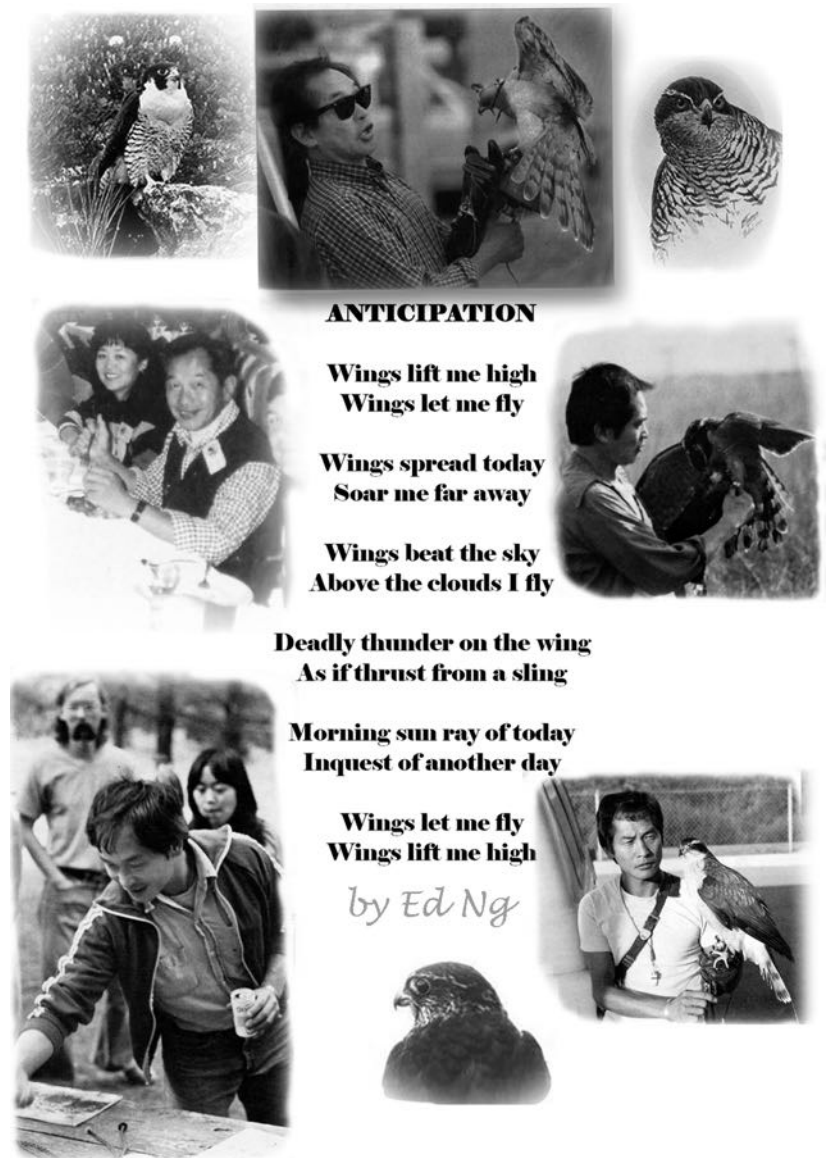
Early to rise  
Check the skies  
It looks like a great day for hawking.

Bird on the fist  
Search through the mist  
Bushbeaters do the walking.

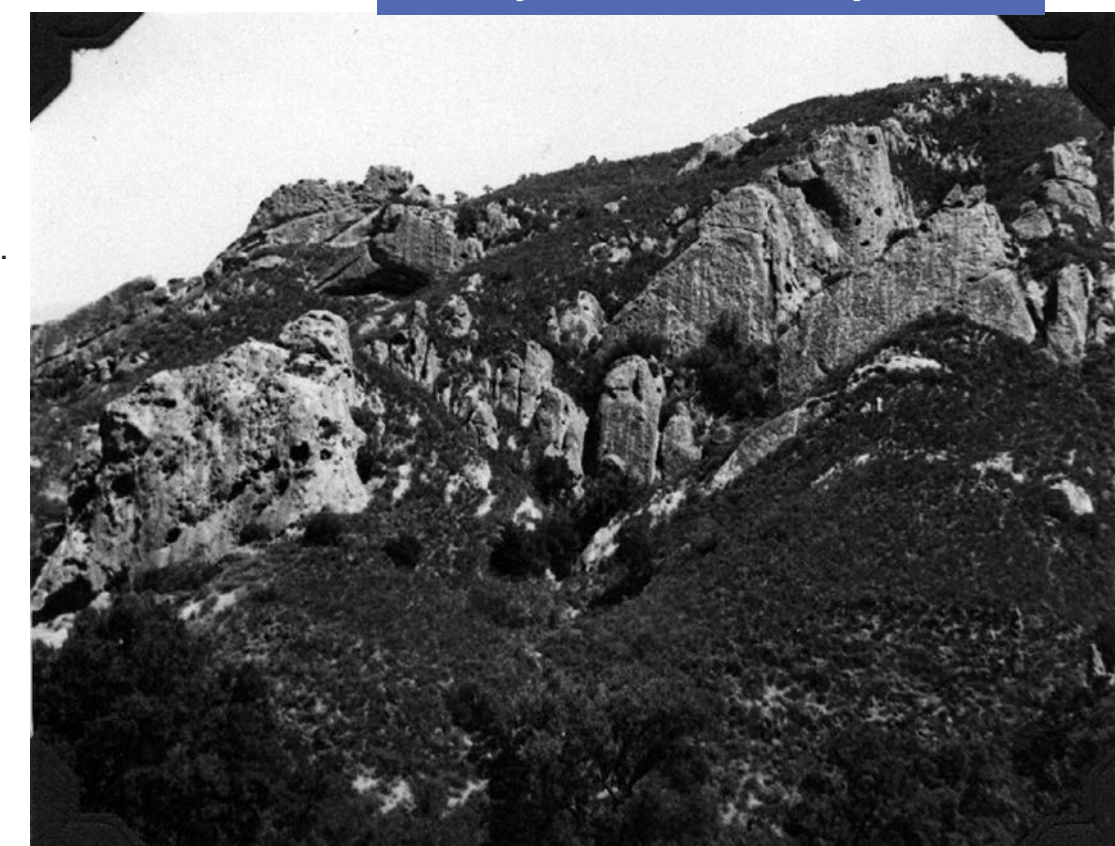
Bird on the wing  
Dives with a zing  
No hesitation or balking.

With perfect aim  
Bird takes the game  
No time for rest or talking.

Hunting was great  
But it's getting late  
It was a great day for hawking.



Cheryl and Ed with Wally Imfeld



Ed's close friends placed his ashes at this historic and now reoccupied Peregrine eyrie in central California.