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From his wife Sharon:

Floyd was passionate about his interests. Each interest occupied and defined seasons of his life. I was proud to be his wife and partner through many of those seasons and I will miss him forever.

Memories from friends

Floyd caught many things in his life but I count myself as one of his greatest catches.

Little did I know, as a young falconry apprentice awakening at 4:00 AM to make the long, dark drive to Frostburg, Maryland to meet Floyd at daybreak in the hopes of trapping my first bird on Big Savage Mountain, that it would be I who would be ensnared by his friendship and faith.

I will forever be thankful to Floyd for being an intrepid guide on the slopes of my life's mountain. I will do my best to keep the trails marked for the next generation and maybe, just maybe, by his example, I will blaze a few of my own. I'll see you again on the mountain shortly, my good friend.

Matt Frey

My first times with him were on the ridge trapping. My father and I would listen to him expound upon his knowledge informed by years of experience. He could tell the weight of a bird simply by holding it. He was amazing! Often we would pass the prime-time trapping hours well into the evening, just talking in his blind. We became friends. He mentored me in so many ways.

Recently, I had the occasion to instruct a group of Eagle Scouts who had visited to see my birds and learn about falconry. After a couple of hours of bird talk, one parent asked, "where did you learn all of this?" I pointed to Floyd's picture on the wall and said, "from the master."

He is now with his master in Heaven. And I long for the day when I will see him again.

Jason Caldwell



FLOYD E. PRESLEY, JR.

December 19, 1937 – January 2, 2016

By Jason Caldwell and Matthew Frey

Floyd Presley lived a life outside the safe hedges and soft comfort of convention. It would take a weighty volume written by adventure novelists like London or Stevenson to chronicle its gritty richness and raw vigor.

Floyd's persona and life were consistent with that of the archetypal heroes in those masculine fables. He grew up rough and tough, who, out of necessity, learned to use his fists to defend himself—quite adroitly—when called to do so. He found employment for those skills as a motorcycle gang enforcer and, more gainfully, in the Army National Guard. Despite the his surounds, out of concern for maintaining his wits and composure, and as a natural athlete, he eschewed tobacco and alcohol, earning the moniker "Straight Arrow."

Floyd was an avid hunter. Many hunters know their way around the woods but few are true woodsmen. Floyd was the latter. He was an accomplished marksman. After rabbit hunting with a shotgun became too easy, he began hunting with a pistol. He would point-shoot the rabbits on the flush, often with a head-shot. Floyd always used dogs, obedient to voice commands. He bred and trained beagles, black and tan coonhounds, Chesapeake Bay retrievers, dachshunds, and Jack Russell terriers.

In 1963, Floyd found and embraced falconry as the arena in which to exercise his adventurous spirit. Floyd and his brother, Jimmy, along with good friend, George Bittrolff, became entranced by falconry. Soon, Floyd's other brother Hank, became similarly enthralled. Getting started was not easy for them; they didn't know any falconers. They had as a resource only an old English falconry book. They were determined to become falconers even if it meant weathering the difficult learning curve by trial-and-error. They began road trapping red-tails and, after developing a successful training regime, taking squirrels, the area's most abundant quarry. By late 1964, they flew their red-tails in casts of two or three. At the time, there simply wasn't a rule that stated unequivocally that it couldn't be done. They didn't use scales but rather judged a hawk's readiness by her response and the feel of her keel.

Floyd trained many species: American kestrels, a broad-winged hawk, Cooper's hawks, goshawks, a great horned owl, a merlin, a sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawks and many Harris hawks. Floyd successfully flew a peregrine x prairie hybrid, a Harris x Ferruginous hybrid and a Harris x Cooper's hybrid named Mulder (after the X-Files character). Harris and Cooper's were Floyd's favorites.

As a falconer for over fifty years, Floyd caught many kinds of quarry: grey squirrels, cottontail and jackrabbits (both in great numbers), ducks, quail, pheasants, woodcock, ruffed grouse and dove.

In the 1970s, Floyd began breeding Harris's hawks. His birds were renowned for being talented game-catchers. His best-known bird, Elvis, caught over 1200 rabbits in his lifetime. Floyd produced over 300 Harris's hawks. He also bred golden eagles and European sparrowhawks.

In 1978, Floyd became a federal raptor bander. He was a master raptor trapper, banding well over 4,000. Many falconers learned how to trap birds from his mentorship.

Floyd also rehabbed raptors and performed raptor education programs for state parks, schools, camp programs, and, in recent years, for Bible schools,

church groups, and Bible camps. He was also an amateur herpetologist focusing on rat, corn, and king snakes.

Floyd was a proud leader of the Potomac Falconer's Association. He was an active member of the North American Falconer's Association and its southeast director in the early 90s. Floyd also maintained an active membership in the NRA.

Additionally, Floyd loved to read and write. He authored two books, *Savage Early Maryland*, Books I & II that drew upon his intense interest in American history, particularly his fascination with native cultures in colonial Maryland.

Without doubt, within the paradigm of falconry, such was his experience, creativity, and willingness to teach that there are few practitioners today that have not been touched by Floyd's contributions to our comprehension and practice of catching game with a raptor.

As impressive as Floyd's falconry resume might be, he ultimately recognized that his legacy would not reside within his achievements in the sport. Somewhere along the way, Floyd realized something profound and this memorial would not be in keeping with his wishes were it not mentioned that, at some point, perhaps in a quiet moment reflecting on the day's flights, Floyd came to a recognition that, as magnificent and beautiful as the birds to which he had devoted his life were, how much more glorious is the Creator who fashioned them.

In lieu of that recognition, Floyd progressively turned his life over to God, accepting Christ as his Savior and finding new purpose in serving him and showing God's love to those who weren't familiar with it. Those that knew him witnessed the change in his life. A man who was once hard as nails would tenderly weep when he pondered how God could accept him despite his flaws, mis-steps, and failings.

Despite his new calling, Floyd's previous exploits in the sport were not lost to vanity. His credentials and the respect that he had earned in falconry circles imparted to him a platform that allowed him to share his faith with people who otherwise would dismiss any attempt at conveying the Gospel. For many, if Floyd spoke, you listened.

