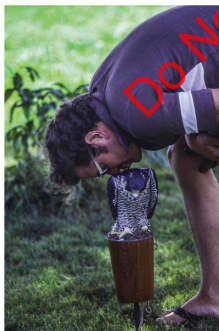




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Charles H. Schwartz

(1944 to 2016) by Bruce Haak

On March 9, 2016, Charles H. Schwartz, age 71, lost his battle with cancer.

For four decades, he was married to Martha Browne, who shared his passions for falconry, captive breeding, fishing, and travel. He is also survived by his son Alan and daughter Greta from his first marriage. A lifelong outdoorsman, passionate reader, and consummate falconer, he led a unique life and left friends and admirers throughout the worldwide falconry community.

Charles grew up in Ohio. He earned a degree in zoology with a minor in chemistry from Ohio State University, where he also played in the marching band. He was a game warden in Ohio before moving to Idaho to pursue his Master's degree in science at Idaho State University. When I first met Charles in 1980, he worked as a chemist for the State of Idaho. Later, he managed a research department at the Amplot Corporation in Pocatello.

His father was a butcher and an NRA gun safety instructor. No doubt, the man was instrumental in instilling Charles with a love of sport hunting. Each interest that Charles pursued became a discipline to be researched and mastered. These included: photography, scuba diving, writing, upland game and waterfowl shooting and big game hunting. During spring and summer, he preferred fly fishing from his drift boat. One of his great joys was floating rivers in Alaska to fish with his friends while experiencing the pristine wilderness environment.

As a pioneer raptor-breeder, Charles left an indelible mark on the sport of falconry. He was proficient at artificial insemination techniques, producing the first tri-bred falcon (merlin/prairie/peregrine) and the first merlin/gyrfalcon hybrid. Because of this special skill set, he was hired to breed and train falcons for the Royal Family

in Bahrain for five years. Later in life, he successfully bred and flew gyrfalcons.

A gifted trainer of imprinted falcons, Charles flew one of the first prairie/peregrine hybrids produced by Les Boyd with great success. He was also one of the first falconers to successfully hawk sage grouse in Idaho in the 1970s. Chasing sage grouse with large falcons was his preferred method of hunting, and this ultimately became his consuming passion for 40 years. He freely shared his knowledge of grouse biology and their winter ecology with the researchers studying sage grouse in eastern Idaho.

Member of the North American Falconers Association since 1971, he served as Secretary in 1978, and Mountain Director in 1989. He was also a founding member of the Idaho Falconers Association (IFA), holding several offices including president. Charles was the principal author of the IFA constitution. In addition, he contributed articles and photographs on falconry and hunting dogs to NAFA, the IFA, International Falconer, The Pointing Dog Journal, and Dog World.

I met Charles while on a hawking trip in September of 1980. He and Marty opened their Pingree home to me, and showed me aspects of falconry that I had yet to witness. This was the first of many educational experiences that I would glean from their company.

Sage grouse hawking was Charles' passion. His intermewed Peale's falcon, Gemini, was a seasoned veteran and his English pointer knew her job well. On my first drive out to the Big Desert, we stopped the vehicle to let a flock of maybe 200 pheasants leisurely cross the dirt road. That was more pheasants than I'd seen in western Oregon in the past ten years. I remember asking: "Why don't we chase those?" Charles replied in a most patient tone: "No, no, we're going grouse hawking." The first time I saw Gemini

punch a big grouse down into the sage, I knew what all the fuss was about. This was next-level falconry: big country, big-running dogs, tough grouse, and high-flying falcons. These were all the ingredients needed to fuel a full-time addiction.

Committed to honing his raptor-breeding skills, he and Marty showed me a young merlin hybrid they had produced. A few years later, after my wife and I had moved from Oregon to the Boise area, Charles convinced me to build a barn and pursue raising peregrines. With his help and advice, I did this for 20 years.

While in Bahrain, Charles sent home red-naped shabheens and Barbary falcons that formed much of the U.S. breeding stock we have today. In addition, he sent me a passage red-naped shabheen to fly that I named Jasmine. A combination of pupil and teacher, she would show me what greatness is in a game hawk. Ultimately, Charles' gift became a life-changing experience for me.

In many respects, Charles was a Renaissance man: well-rounded, smart, and technically skilled, yet patient with those of lesser intellect and knowledge. He was a natural teacher, an aspect of his personality that attracted individuals from various disciplines and interests into his multiple orbits.

However, my most vivid recollections are of hawking sage grouse with Charles in the dead of winter; bitter cold, eerie blue skies on the verge of cracking, and English pointers leaving contrails of snow far into the distance. The tense anticipation of falcons leaving the glove to mount into the ethers, the white-vapor breath of a motionless dog locked on point, the explosion of grouse flushing from cover, and the lethal collision of a stooping falcon on its quarry; all blend in my mind as the ultimate memories of a friend who generously shared his world with me.



Lasting Friendship

By John McIlTrot

Charles Schwartz would be eulogized best by his dogs. They knew him better. All of us, his friends, sought out his companionship and wisdom, and enjoyed good times with him in the field and around his kitchen table. But Charles and his dogs simply shared each other's enthusiasm for life and the hunt, and they brought great joy to each other.

I have a heart full of memories of Charles; twenty years' worth. Memories of fishing and hunting, of falconry, cooking, and whisky, but my favorites are dog memories. One stands out. It was after dark, winter, driving across the snowy desert after hawking. Mac, the black-headed pointer, slept on the front seat between us. We had been driving in silence for a long while. Charles put his hand on Mac's head and told me, "You haven't been loved until you've been loved by a bird dog." I didn't know it at the time, but he was right.

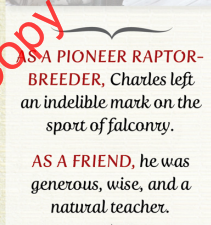
He was always right. He was right about how and when to enter a young hawk to game (soon), he was right about how long to leave the venison roast in the oven (not very), he was right about how to write (brevity and clarity), he was right about leaving my old life in Florida and moving to Montana in order to fly gyrfalcons and train bird dogs.

But I hope he was right about one of the last things he told me, not long after his diagnosis. We were on the phone and he was telling me what the doctors were telling him – and suddenly there were hundreds of questions I needed to ask him, and hundreds more things I needed to say, but the tightness in my throat wouldn't let anything out.

He didn't let me struggle with it for long. "You can do this, John," he told me.

So a few months have gone by. Most days I think of something that Charles probably would have said if he were here with me—always something that makes me smile although it's usually a smile that ends up tasting salty. I still have lots of questions only he can answer. And every day I see things that he would have savored – a sharp-tailed grouse silhouetted against the mountains to the north, or the way the late afternoon sun can draw out the gentle curves of the prairie around my home.

Charles made the world a better place. He showed me the vast openness of the heart. We were all fortunate to have him as a friend.



AS A PIONEER RAPTOR-BREEDER, Charles left an indelible mark on the sport of falconry.

AS A FRIEND, he was generous, wise, and a natural teacher.



Photo by Howard Huff