

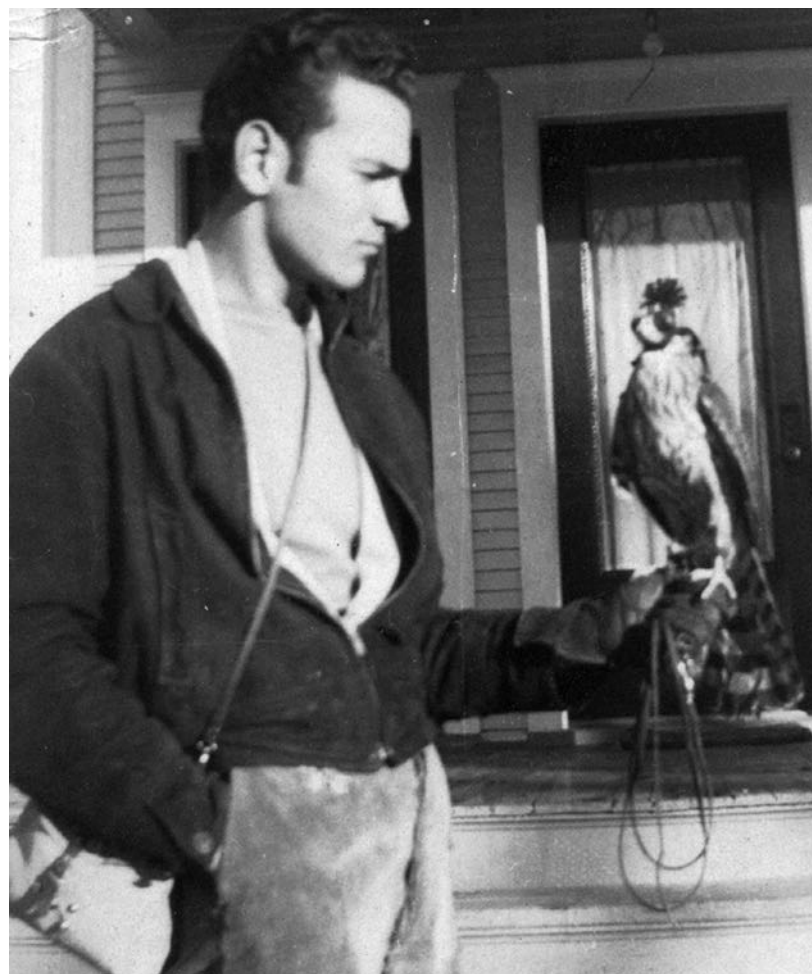
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Minnesota Falconers Association

Robert A. Widmeier 1923 -1979

An old friend of American falconry is gone — Bob Widmeier. At least in part we all owe Bob a “Thank You.” He was one of the older falconers here in the U.S.A., one of us that struggled to learn falconry from books, because there was no one to observe first hand. And believe me that’s the hard way. Many of the old books may have been written by master falconers, but few, if any, could express themselves well. It took a lot of trial and error to work things out.

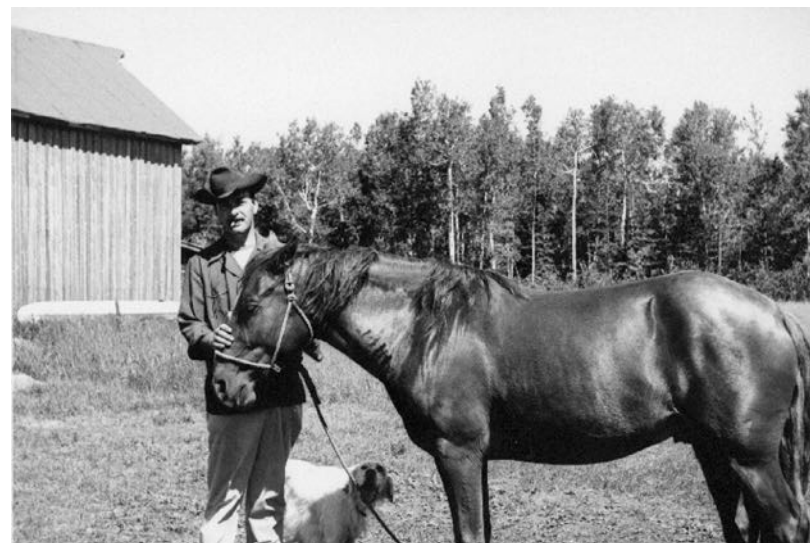
Can you imagine as a young falconer being able to visit Mohamed Din’s hawk market and take your pick from rows of hawks and falcons! Bob did just that. He was lucky enough to be stationed in India during part of World War II. And to put the frosting on the cake he was assigned to public relations, so he chose to relate by flying hawks and falcons with the Maharajahs.



Bob with passage female Coopers



Bob with North African Barbary falcons (male left, female right) at Falkenhof Farm. Photo by Cleo Sealing. July 1965.



Widmeier, Snitzel and stud hoss! On the “Lazy W Ranch”

Erich, Tom and I used to listen eagerly to his tales; he may have thrown in a little B.S., but who hasn’t? Here’s a small sample: “Saheeb, your shaheen is on the temple tower.” Bob says, “I’m finished with the hawk, you can have it.” Later the Indian returns with Bob’s jesses and bells. The Indian, only a casual acquaintance, had trapped the falcon, taken the hardware off and released it. This story suggests to me how life was in India before over-population made many people stoop to devious means to survive.

As far as I know, Bob was the first American to perfect the Dutch method of trapping falcons. I can remember very vividly when Erich and I stopped by Bob’s house on the way back from hawking in Canada and there were three nice passage peregrines in his backyard. One was very dark and red. I have never seen a prettier falcon.

Then there was the time we were all in Saskatchewan hawking (Tom Ennenga, Erich Awender, Bob and myself). Those were good days — lots of Chinese fire drills, but our few successes made it all worthwhile. After a hard day of hunting Erich and I would hit the sack, but not Tom and Bob! They were off to the local pub. After one of those nightly outings, they returned to wake me up and say that my favorite falcon had been stolen. I ran downstairs and there in the station wagon was a turkey. It turns out that Bob had won it in a raffle!

This wouldn’t be complete without mentioning Bob’s work. He was an artist and a good one. Many falconers have his paintings to prove it. I have one, of my Peale’s tiercel knocking down a sharp-tail. Bob was in Saskatchewan with us when the kill was made.

In his later years he had given up falconry and had become a student of the Old West. For many years now, most of his art work has depicted authentic old Western scenes as Bob thought they might have happened.

He died quickly of a heart attack, you and I should be so lucky!

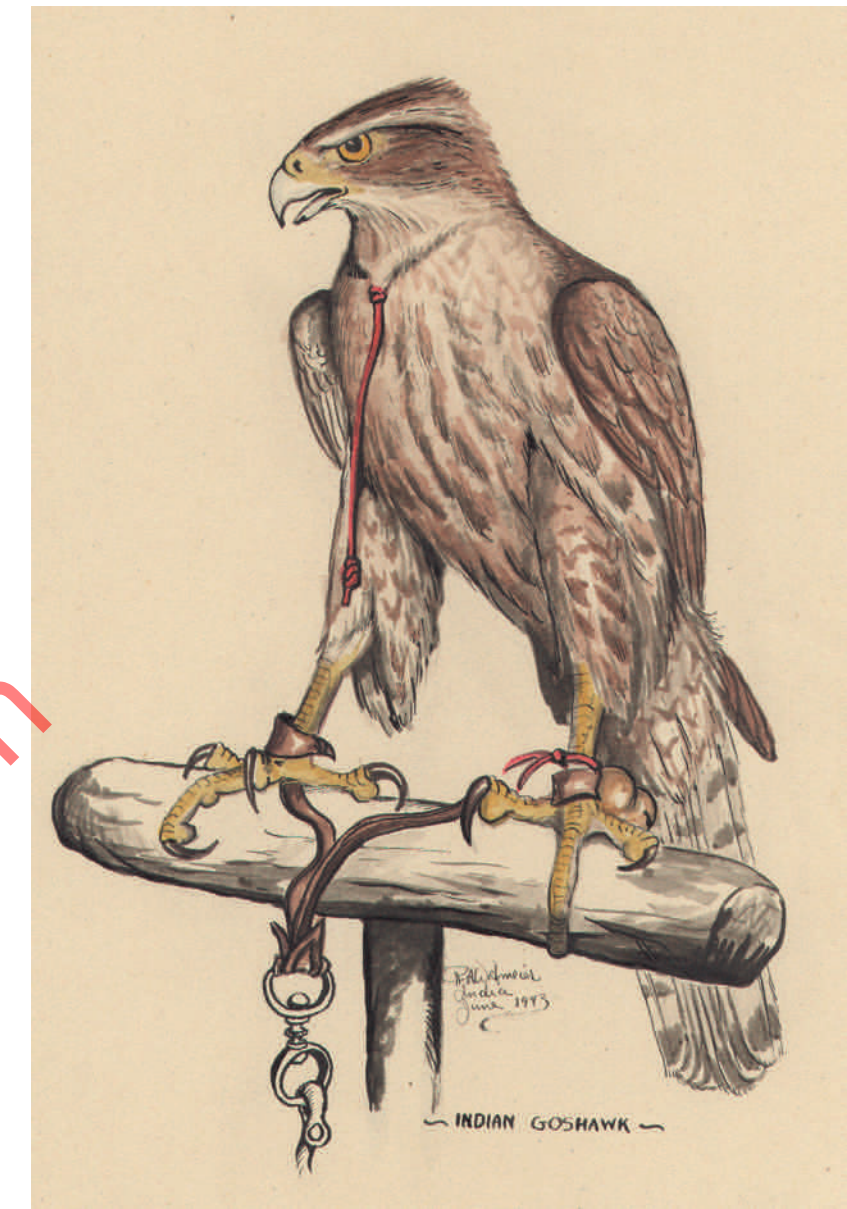
— Dan Cover

As one of three survivors of our foursome (Widmeier, Ennenga, Cover and Awender) I feel this is the right place to say “Good Bye” to one of my best friends. To me, Bob was first and foremost a falconer. He was a very gifted artist, indeed, but I think that many of his very best paintings only confirm his love and fascination with falconry. He was a complete falconer, too; he made his own falconry furniture to perfection, and carried on the tradition of hood making from the old French master, Ondet. He trapped Dutch-style or beach-style. He trained his own birds and hunted them; he painted them and spoiled them with kindness; he did the same with his dogs and horses. He walked tall among people and seemed to be reserved in his manners, but those who knew him around campfires and blinds never ceased to enjoy his company and hospitality. He was generous to a fault; my first hawk in this country came from Bob, a marvelous male Goshawk. In his search for happiness he travelled wide and far, and was married four times. His son, Kent, presented him with a granddaughter last year. I have seldom seen Bob more cheerful and pleased than when he came back from a shopping trip loaded with presents for little Janelle.

He was born in Minnesota and died in New Mexico. I know he loved the North country, and I believe that had he lived a little longer, he would have returned. He used to say it is a hard country and a hard life up North, but he was a hardy man, and he could take it. He is buried at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery. I’ll miss you Bob, Happy Hawking in the Wild Blue Yonder, and as we used to say to each other at the end of our hawking trips “A la Vol.”

— Erich Awender

He was a romanticist who could thrill to the dashing flight of a falcon or the unruly power of a wild horse. And, as an artist, he could depict these on canvas. Bob loved the mystery and romance of the primitive world the way God made it, even



the smell of it. And he could impart this through paint on canvas.

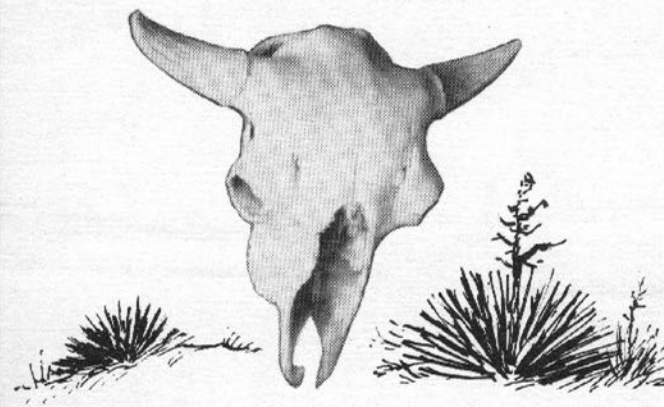
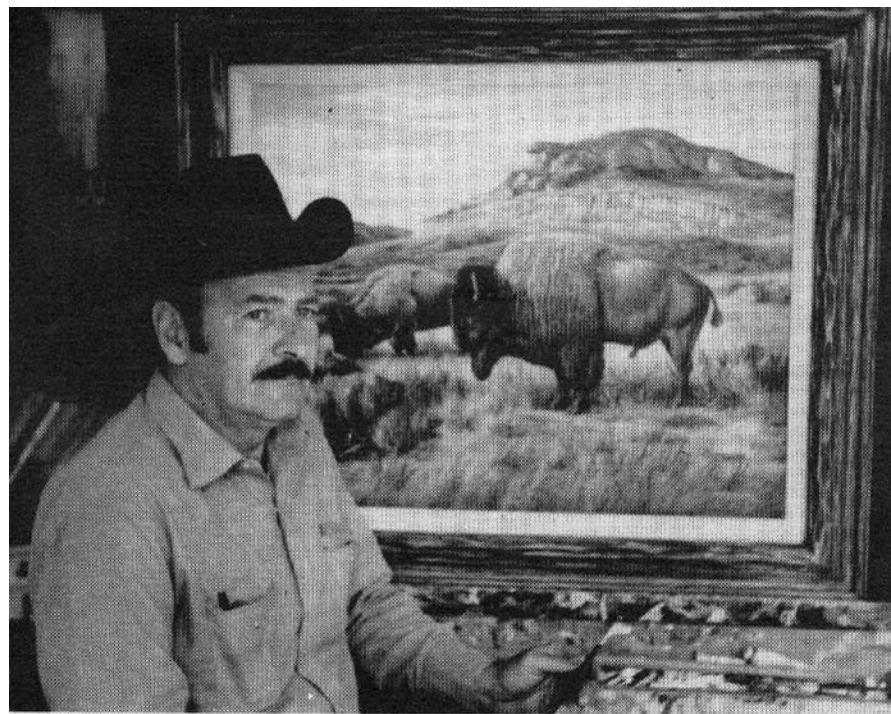
Bob was an excellent falconer, a student of the art. He flew many good ones. He was always a free spirit, perhaps “manned” but never tamed by our structured society. He always found a place for himself where he could fly in his own way. Now he’s departed on that last great flight and our world is poorer for it.

And so, friend Bob, until we meet again — “A la Vol.”

— Thomas Ennenga

NAFA Journal, 1978

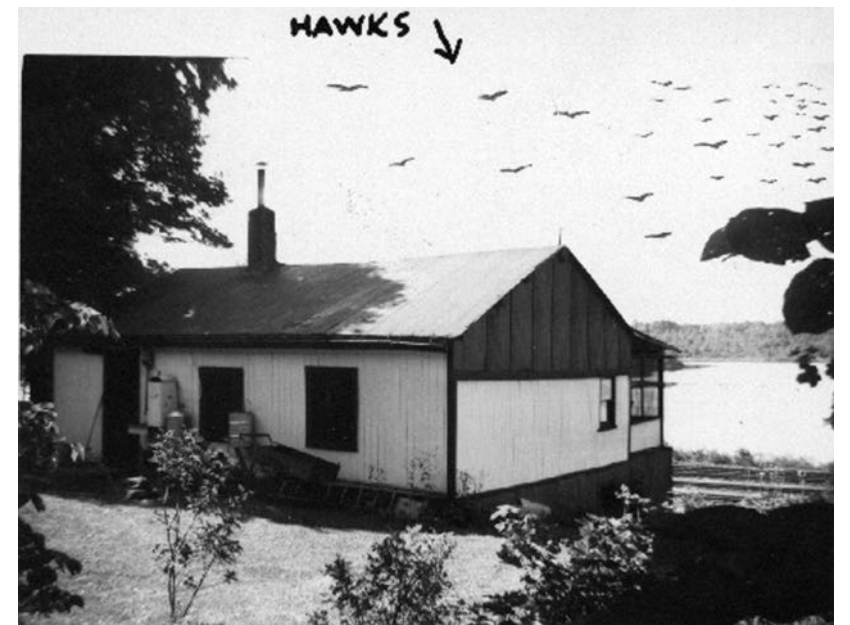




Introducing
BOB WIDMEIER
INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN
WESTERN AND WILDLIFE ARTIST



1975 oil painting in Archives collection



Spring and fall migrations passed over Widmeier home near Minneapolis

Bob Widmeier needs no introduction to those acquainted with calendar art. His calendar paintings have won high acclaim with both westerners and wildlife enthusiasts. Nine years in the calendar field show an increasing interest from those that seek his work through the prints off his calendars. A versatile artist who is at home working cattle on horse back, or in a blind hunting and observing wildlife.

Ranching background enables Widmeier to depict the west, and his

wildlife activities help add authenticity to his animal and bird paintings. Seldom does Widmeier have enough paintings to hang in galleries, his calendar subjects are bought immediately, and a long line of collectors await "first crack" on anything coming from his easel.

A background in commercial art, all forms of advertising, printing experience, Art Director, magazine and book illustrations have made Widmeier a well rounded out artist, capable of doing an abundance of subject matter with great

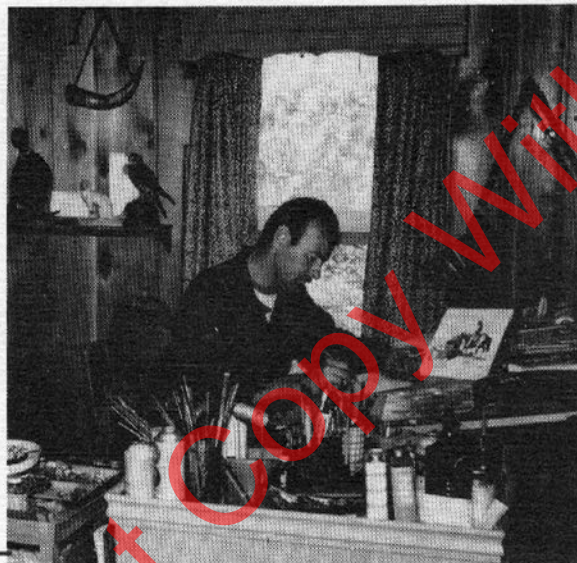
authenticity and detail. Widmeier paints three series of calendars per year. A six page western, big game and a bird series.

Widmeier maintains a small ranch in Northern Minnesota and used this habitat to tie in on his animal and bird paintings. Summers were spent in trips to friends ranches to help out where they were short handed, and to seek new background and ideas for paintings to be developed when the high snows engulfed the northern regions.

Widmeier now resides, till the traveling bug moves him, in Ft. Sumner, New Mexico, where he maintains a gallery and studio. Frequent visitors at his studio, and the request for "old calendar prints" have prompted a potential re-run on past dated reproductions of his paintings, if demands for his output are a sign of success then Widmeier is highly successful. He produces a volume of work during the year and seldom has time to saddle a horse just for a pleasure ride. The demand for his paintings has forced Widmeier to let his falcons and his sport of falconry take a back seat so this time could be spent at the easel producing work for his clients to enjoy.



Bob Widmeier presents an original oil to Harold Shafer, owner of the Medora Gallery. Mr. Shafer is on the Board of Directors of The Cowboy Hall of Fame, and a owner of one of Widmeier's paintings.



Bob Widmeier works on a sketch at his Ranch Studio in Northern Minnesota preliminary to starting an oil painting. Widmeier uses oil for most of his work, and is well known for his ability to handle this medium.



Hawking chukar in Kashmir



Old Wid on his bike

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