



DONOR: Utah Falconers' and Raptor Breeders' Association

GERALD R. RICHARDS

By Jeff Broadbent on behalf of the Utah Falconers' and Raptor Breeders' Association
(excerpted from the 1995 NAFA Journal)

Eulogies. We have all read them in newspapers and seen them on television. Snapshots, statistics, and sound bites excerpted from a lifetime, neatly arranged to capture the essence of a lost relative, leader or friend. I never appreciated how woefully inadequate those excerpts can be.

Gerald Richards was one of the most interesting, colorful falconers I have ever known. Gerald became interested in falconry at age 8. He used that spark to light his life's path for the next 50 years. I first met him at a Utah meet in 1981. Two first impressions come to mind: an image of a distinguished man sporting a mischievous smile with a gleam in his eye, entertaining a crowd of falconers with animated stories and impressions, and, the respect and admiration for Gerald by his peers. People obviously thought highly of this funny, middle-aged man. Gerald's wit and stories are legendary. The word that best describes him is "teacher".

Gerald studied at Brigham Young University, the University of Utah, and the University of Wisconsin. After earning his M.S. in biology from BYU, he taught in Mexico and Wisconsin. In the late 1970s, he returned to Utah, married Lavon Young. Their marriage created an instant blended family with ten children. Shortly thereafter, Gerald developed a "Birds of Prey Show" and went on a lecture circuit. With his knowledge of biology, marvelous sense of humor, and the magic of free-flying birds, he taught thousands of youngsters to appreciate raptors and their important role in the natural order.

His leadership, courage, and initiative shaped falconry. A founding member of the Utah Falconers' and Raptor Breeders' Association, he served as club president for over a decade. He was a man who acted on his principles. Although he was not wealthy, he challenged the then prohibition on sale of captive bred raptors. He deliberately sold captive bred kestrels to USFWS agents in an effort to establish the right to sell captive bred raptors for falconry. His defense was expensive and, at the time, unsuccessful. Years later, the American falconry community benefited from his vision and initiative. His case served as an important precedent for those who were ultimately successful in the effort to legalize sale of captive bred raptors.

Gerald's more recognized contribution, is the creation of his dearly loved Sky Trials. He introduced the concept in 1976 and nurtured his creation. The Sky Trials provided a venue over the years where thousands can glimpse trained falcons in top form. Gerald was pleased to see similar events emerge throughout the world. At the event's 20th Anniversary, UFRBA named the trials the Gerald Richards Sky Trials in his honor.

Whenever I think of Gerald, I smile. Falconry has lost one of its most colorful character. We will greatly miss him. His stories and traditions will live on.

- Dave Jamieson

Gerald's death reminds us to appreciate the friendships and falconry experiences we share. I am grateful for the memories and will never forget Gerald.

- Ken Tuttle



Portrait of a Master by Hubert Quade given as a gift to Lavon Richards at the 1995 UFRBA BBQ.



Men like Gerald Richards come along once in a lifetime. Those of us fortunate to have known him are richer for the time we shared.

- Howard Brinkerhoff

