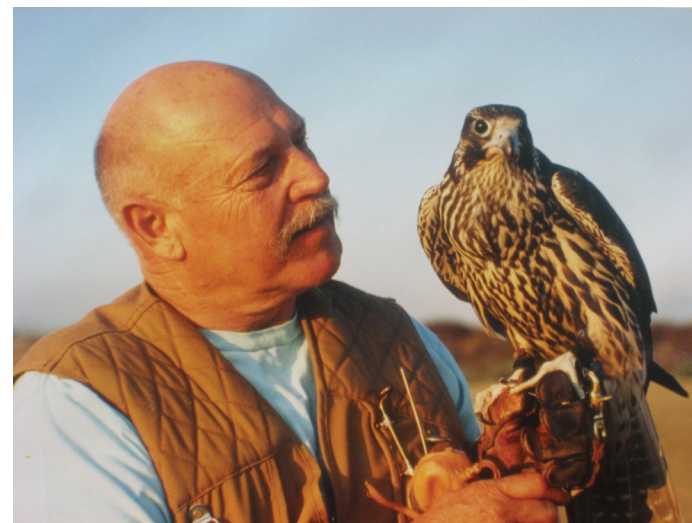




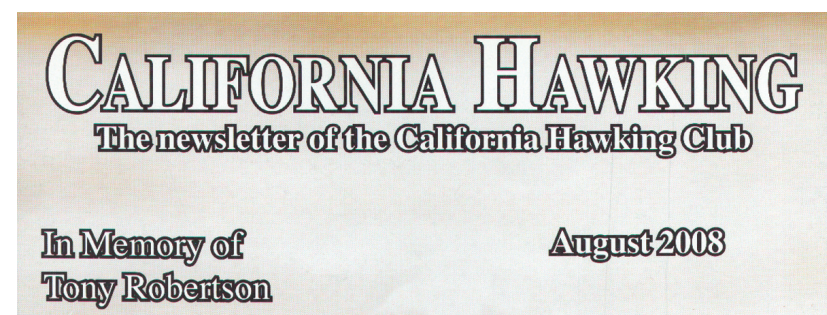
Tony with fish in Baja



Tony and Eddie Robertson ca. 1950s

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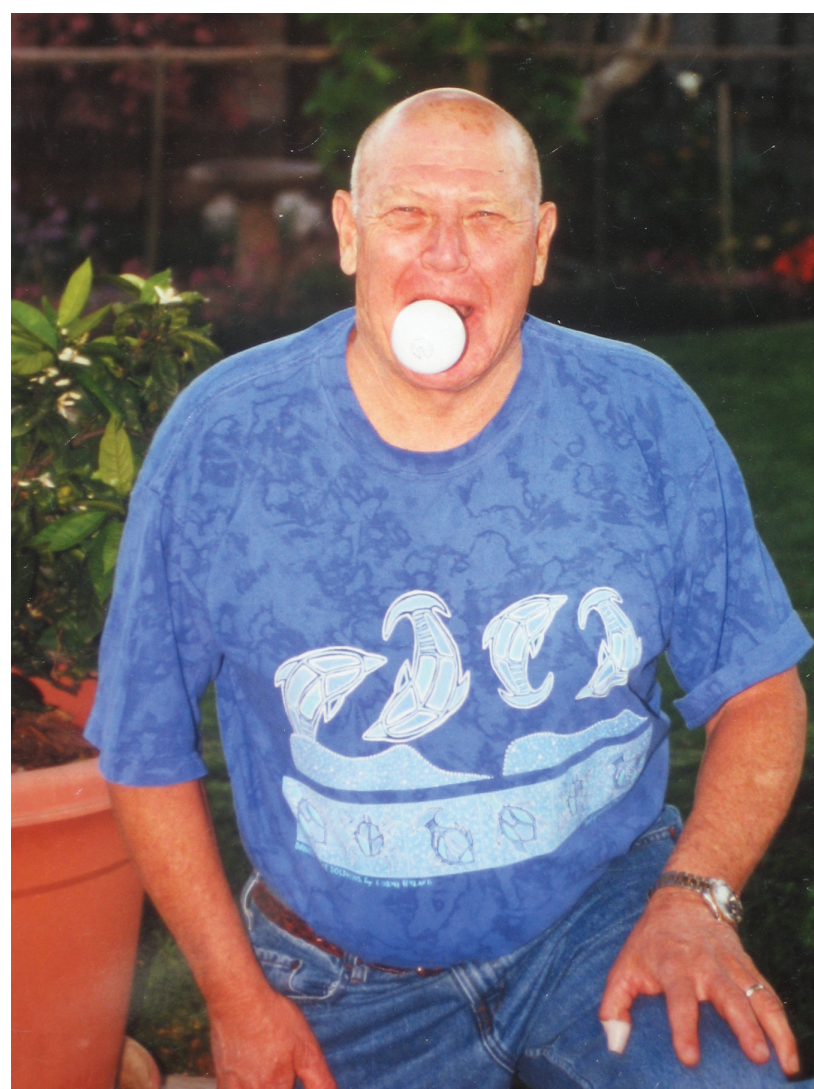
In Memory of Tony Robertson
 August 25th 1935 - May 25th 2008
 — by Bill Murphy

I was finishing college in 1970 when I was introduced to Tony Robertson by mutual friends Jorg and Allison Meyer. I was living in Costa Mesa then, and he had just moved there from Reno. At the time he had a full head of hair, a beautiful wife named Eddie, and a young son, Mark. Over the years, his son grew into a fine man, his hair disappeared, and his wife retained her charm and beauty. While the covering on Tony's head changed with time, the passion and energy that burned within him did not. I learned more about Harris' hawks in that first meeting than I have learned in any single day since then. Because he was more experienced in falconry and seemed to know what he was talking about, I tried to soak in every word. In the 38 years that passed since that first meeting, I never stopped listening to and learning from Tony. He was a gem of a human being. Those who attended the early CHC meets in Los Banos will remember the Robertson family flying their Harms' hawks in a cast. Rabbit populations were never the same in fields they passed through.

Tony and Mark also had great success with prairie falcons. Implementation of Tony's formula for imprinting an eyass falcon meant the difference between a screaming maniac and a successful game hawk. I still apply what I have learned from him to this day. Their technique for training passage falcons was equally as innovative and effective. Mark's passage prairie Muffet remains

one of the finest flying hunting falcons I have ever seen. Tony helped me get my Cisco, my first Harris' hawk in 1974. With his guidance, I found more success game hawking than I could have imagined. This bird took thousands of head of game, fathered over 80 babies, and lived to be 28. Until the day Cisco died, he was still breeding, copulating five or six times a day. I remember phoning Tony after Cisco died and we joked about wanting to see our lives end in a similar fashion. Tony also helped me get my first large falcon in 1976, an imprint female prairie named Chelsea. Again with his help and advice, I was able to fly my first duck hawk. In those days, falcons were rare and ducks were common, so I was relatively successful because of Tony and in spite of myself.

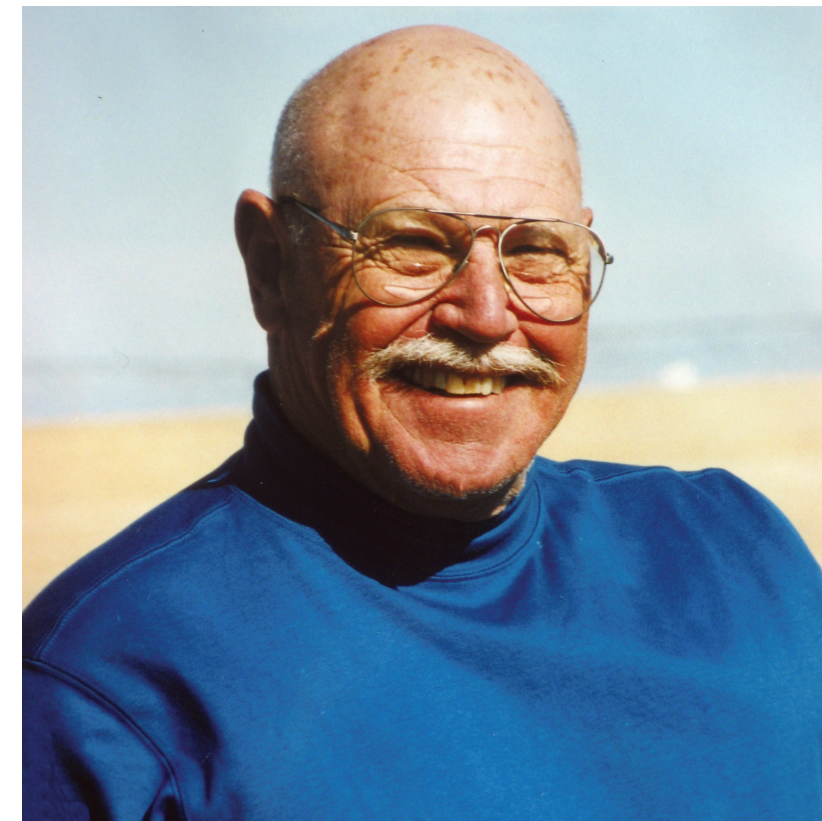
If I tried to record all the people Tony befriended and helped with falconry, I would omit important names and create a fragmented list at best. I can say this. This list would include everyone from outlaws to pillars of the community, and he welcomed this wide range of characters into his home. Although he could be a bit cantankerous at times, he had a heart of gold, the gift of gab and a willingness to help those who asked him. He also had the energy and drive to hunt with his birds all over the Western U.S. No one with him slept in when sunrise hawking was on his agenda. When he passed away in Reno, he was there to get a new bird. I spoke with him a few days before his trip and he burned with the enthusiasm of someone getting his first falcon. Tony and Eddie were instrumental in the formation of the California Hawking Club and worked tirelessly in getting it started. Last year, the CHC Board voted unanimously to award Tony a lifetime member award, something he richly deserved. Because he was unable to attend the Topaz Lake meet, it was decided to postpone the award to this year's meet in Bakersfield. It saddens me deeply that he will not be there to receive this honor. He was my mentor and he was my friend. I miss him greatly.



"Lit-up" Uncle Fester from the Addams Family



Tony and Jamey Eddy



Paula Eddy, Tony Robertson, Jamey Eddy, Gary Boberg, Mark Robertson



1968. Rock Climbing. Old Peregrine nest site. Photo by Tom Gossard



My Family and Harris' Hawks

by Tony Robertson

CHC Journal 1973



flew at 32 ounces. She had a great desire to fly jacks and it was with her that I realized how strong these birds really are. I was living in Reno, Nevada, at the time and was flying jacks in the waist high desert sage brush. She would bind with one foot to the rear of a jack and with the other foot grab the base of the closest bush. By the time I got to her she would be spread eagle. Never once, to my knowledge, did she lose one using this method.

We had a few pheasant there and one day I saw her bind to a large cock pheasant in the crop area. Lo and behold! Off flew the pheasant with my Harris' standing there holding a fist full of crop and feathers.

It was during this period that my son and I started flying our birds in a brace. Since his tiercel would not take jacks, we flew an area which we called "Bunny Mountain". It was really fun — on warm evenings the birds would catch updrafts and go three or four hundred feet above our heads and hang in the wind. We would run through the brush until we could break a rabbit. Down would come the birds, one after the other, each putting in a repeated stab until the rabbit was taken or made it to cover. Upon returning to California, both birds were released to the wild as we had no facility in our new home to keep them.

One hawking season passed before we got our next birds. This time Mark and I trapped

Eddie, should join in our sport. I don't think she realized what fun awaited her. Before we knew it she had both feet into the sport and was taking head for head with Mark and me. By the time our rabbit season ended, she could handle the tiercel like an old seasoned pro with 52 cottontails to her bag list.

There was one flight we will always remember. The tiercel chased a bunny around and through some tumbleweeds and grabbed it just as it entered its hole. At the same time, out jumped a mouse from the hole. With one foot on the bunny, the tiercel



Jan. 1968. Palmdale, CA., taking 38 ozs. Red-tailed Hawk off of Bal Chatri. Photo by Tom Gossard

As I remember my Friend, Tony Robertson — by Tom C. Gossard

Tony and I met in the early 1960s. He was an engineer at the Rocketdyne Corp. located in the San Fernando Valley. During those far away days the local falconers would work their hawks and falcons at the Sepulveda Dam. It was a large tract of land in the middle of the Valley and had a variety of game. Sooner or later everyone ended up there. I was flying an eyass tiercel Prairie Falcon there one evening when Tony and his good friend, Ray Linder, came over and introduced themselves. They were just taking up falconry and wanted to learn more about the sport. Ray was a grassroots kind a guy, but Tony seemed a little stuffy. The more he came around to watch the hawks being flown the more I got to know him. I found Tony to be an entertaining person, well-spoken, educated, and with a fun sense of humor.

In 1967 Tony, Ray Linder and I attended the Colorado Hawking Club 1st annual meet in Sterling. Tony was flying his eyass Prairie Falcon, Ray an eyass female Coopers Hawk, and I took my intermewed eyass female Gos. Our good California friend, Dennis Grisco, was making a Disney movie in Utah and at the end of the week he drove down to fly his Harris' Hawk with us. We made a bunch of new friends and had a great time.

Mike Arnold, Bob Martin and I had been hawking the Mojave Desert irrigation ponds with our passage Peregrines with great success. After a few years Tony, Ray Linder and Mike Smith joined us with their fresh passage falcons. Often times there would be a caravan of 2 or 3 vehicles full of falconers and falcons going from pond to pond. I began to carry a "bota" full of wine so we could toast the successful hawkker with a duck kill. With a cheerful "falconer's heil" it passed from one falconer to the next. We had all been up way before dawn, so it sure cut the early morning mouth taste. We would work out a rotation so everyone had a flight at duck and with a little luck, perhaps two flights at one pond. But our strategy did not always go as planned. A well-situated pond was found with a goodly number of small ducks on it. It being Tony's turn, he walked away into an open area to release his falcon. At this point a small cottontail flushed at his feet and it was just too much for the falcon to ignore and after a short twisting flight she bound to it. I am not sure Tony was too happy, but we all had a great laugh and a toast. Of all our game hawking flights which captured a large variety of game, he was the only one of us to take a rabbit with a Peregrine. We had some wonderful game hawking — the things that make myths, legends and history which can never be repeated. Tony was there to help create the legend of the California Duck Hawkers.

Sometimes I would fly the cottontails and coots around the ponds. Tony started bringing his teenage son, Mark along. Soon Mark was flying his own Harris' Hawk and we watched as a proud father saw his boy take a cottontail, his first head of game.

Tony moved his family to the Orange County area of California and shifted his career to sales in the food industry. Then, it was at the California Hawking Club Meet that we would get together, be brought up to date and reminisce. We would talk on the phone occasionally and when his job took him back to the San Fernando Valley, we would get together for lunch. Here he would regale me with his skin-diving adventures in the seas off of Baja. I think he enjoyed diving as much as falconry. I still remember my friend Tony Robertson, and the great falconry we enjoyed. Rest in peace olde friend.

Tom C. Gossard



Dec. 1968. Lancaster, CA. Ray Linder, Tom Gossard, (kneeling) Tony Robertson, Mike Smith, George Koon. Photo by Mark Robertson



Tony taking his Peregrine off of a cottontail

