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## Remembering Monte

by Bruce Haak

*Monte Neil Kirven, born August 5, 1936, perished in the wildfires that consumed the forested hills near Santa Rosa, CA, in October of 2017.*

Monte's love of nature and the outdoors was an integral part of his life. In time, his interest in fishing and hunting were nurtured into consuming passions that became lifelong pursuits. He graduated from Coronado High School in Coronado, CA, in 1955, and attended the University of Mississippi where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology in 1960. He was in the Army ROTC program and commissioned as an officer after graduation. In 1964, he was trained in Military Intelligence at Fort Ord, CA.

Returning to California, he worked at Scripps Institute of Oceanography before becoming Chair of the Environmental Education Department at the San Diego Museum of Natural History. During his tenure there, he earned a Master of Science degree at San Diego State University studying Caspian and elegant terns.

Between 1966 and 1971, Monte studied the health and productivity of peregrine falcons nesting in Baja, California and the Gulf of California, Mexico. Fluency in Spanish aided his research endeavors.

In 1977, Monte earned a Ph.D. in Biology at University of Colorado studying bat falcons in Venezuela. Returning to California, he taught courses in biology and ecology at both Sonoma State University and Santa Rosa Junior College. During this period, he collaborated with Robert Riseborough, Geoff Monk, D.A. "Sandy" Boyce, Brian Walton, and others to determine the pesticide contamination levels

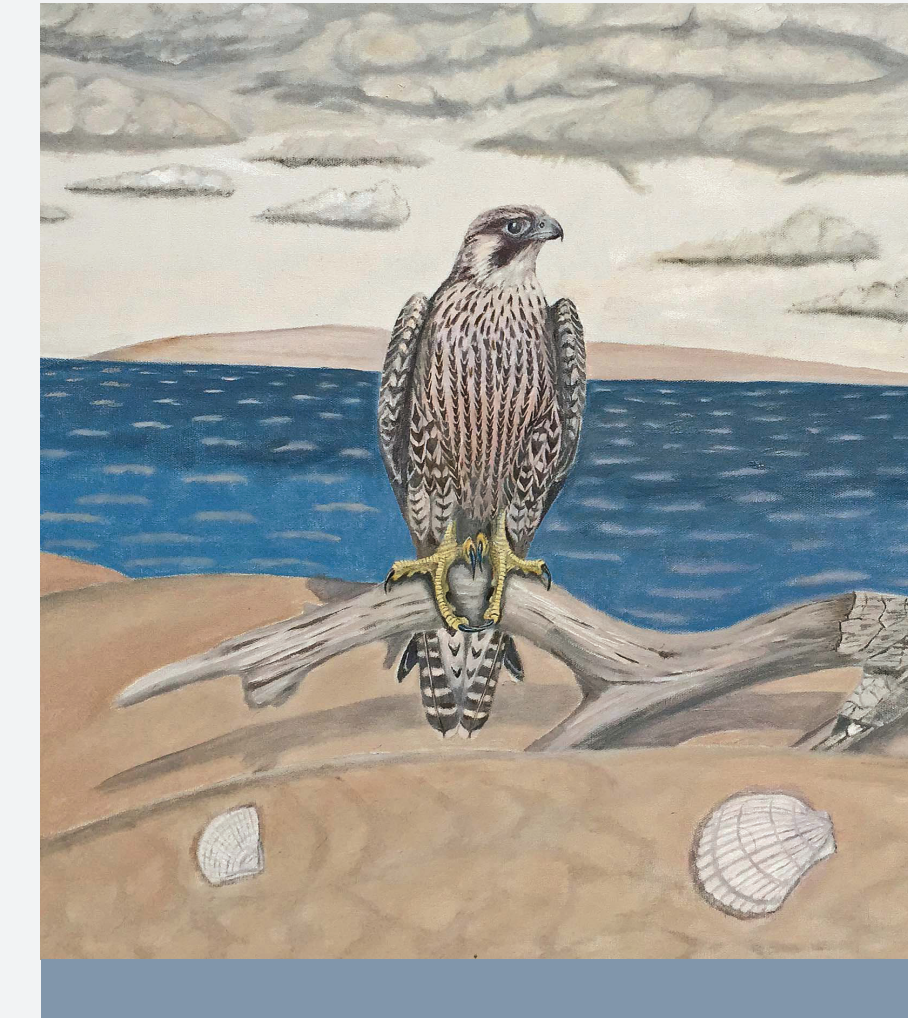


in peregrine prey species; studied the foraging behavior of nesting peregrines in a geothermal development area via radio-telemetry with Dr. James Enderson; and was employed by the Ukiah District of the Bureau of Land Management to conduct a decade-long survey of nesting peregrines in northern California. He is credited with helping to show eggshell thinning in endangered peregrine falcons that led to the banning of DDT for agricultural use in 1972.

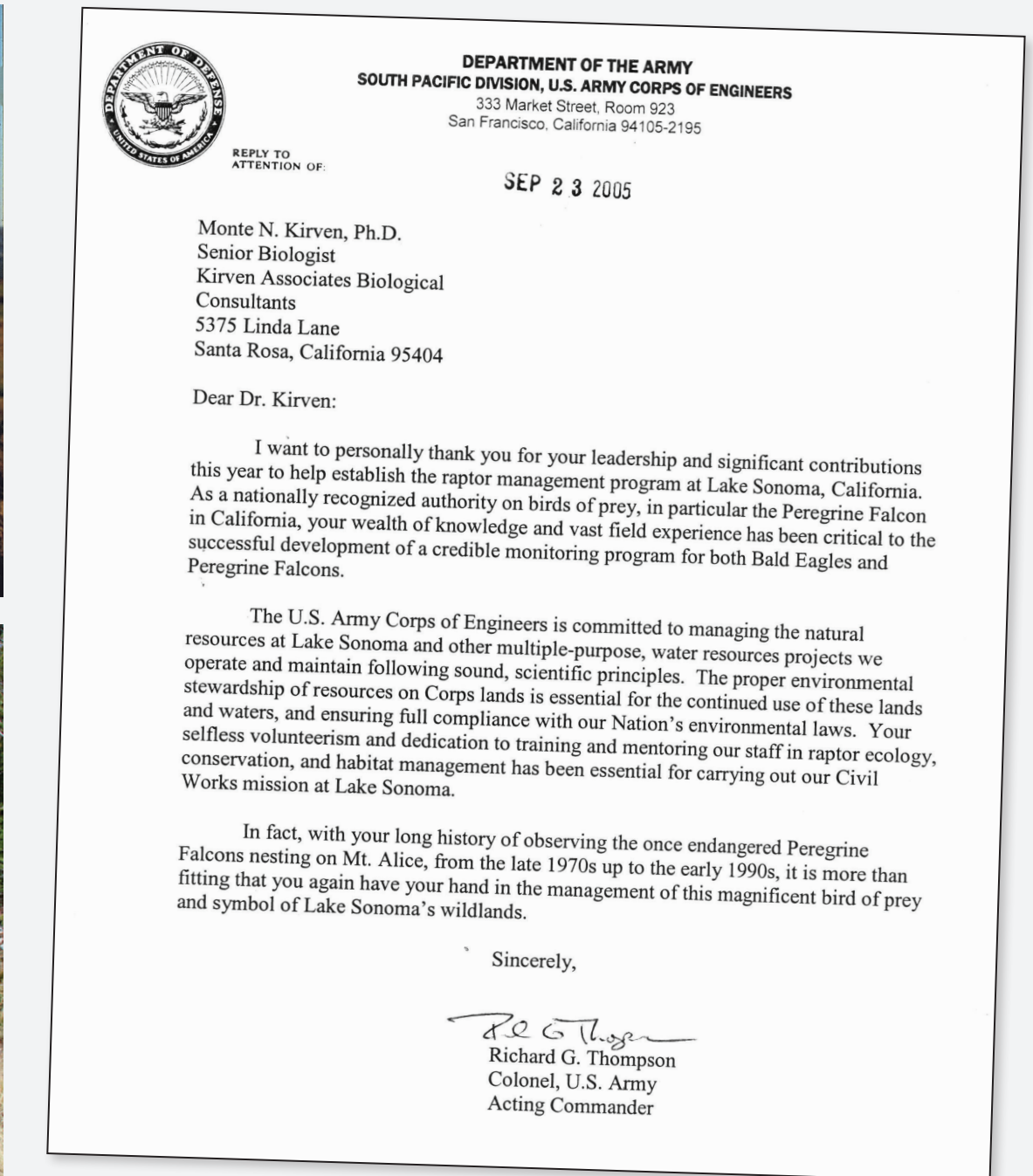
Monte was introduced to falconry in San Diego by Steve Baptiste, and was later mentored by Bob Winslow of Dana Point. He flew a Cooper's hawk and a prairie falcon early on, but became infatuated with tundra peregrines. He flew several passage tundras during the 1960s and was seldom without a peregrine for the rest of his life. The mid-1960s was a golden age for San Diego hawking as Mike Connolly, Mike Gordeau, Monte, and others were practicing duck hawking at a very high level.

In the late 1960s, Monte had a passage tiercel anatum peregrine named Vegas (Gus for short) that he flew for many seasons. Steve Herman loaned him an eyas female anatum, also in mature plumage, for an attempt at captive breeding. I helped Monte build a small chamber next to his garage in La Jolla, CA, and, to my knowledge, Monte was the first person in California to produce fertile peregrine eggs. Gus would later become part of the foundation stock for Dick Graham's captive breeding program in Colorado.

As an educator, raptor researcher, master falconer, and advocate for wildlife conservation, Monte left his mark for others to follow.



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