

## Donors

John and Vicki Swift

*Hawk Chalk* Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, April 1989

**Peter J. Asborno**  
Ye Olde Bellmaker 1912-1989

Peter J. Asborno died on March 15, the week after celebrating his 77th birthday. Pete was a premier craftsman and artisan who perfected 3 different designs for falconry bells. Through his bell business, Pete carried on a vast correspondence and was a friend to many falconers.

Pete's interest in birds started with homing pigeons, and he won many trophies and ribbons in competitions. After World War II, Pete teamed up with the late Dr. William F. Russell for his first efforts in falconry. He flew tundra peregrines, and there was never a better duck hawk.

Prior to his death, Pete made arrangements for his bell business to go to a pupil (also a falconer and hood maker), Ricardo Velarde. Ricardo spent considerable time working with Pete, and he is taking over his backlog of orders. It will take time for him to get caught up with all the back orders, but all orders accepted by Pete will be shipped.

— Information provided by Hal Webster



Pete's bell shop

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## ABOUT BELLS

By Ye Olde Bellmaker — Pete Asborno

Since I wrote an article about a year ago on annealing bells for longevity, I've had some inquiries on the procedure. I have been asked if the annealing could be done with a propane torch, and, indeed it can. Heat only to a dull red. The bells can be quenched in water, but I prefer to allow them to cool normally.

My comments and suggestions have also caused many to examine their bells, more carefully. I have been asked by several falconers why I do not drill the hole (which is, in fact, a hinge) in the area of overlapped metals in the top and bottom bell halves of my Acorn bells, so that there will be two thicknesses of metal surrounding the hole -- a good question. The reason that I do not is that stiffening the hole area has the same effect as using a heavier bell metal. It causes a higher vibratory rate, resulting in higher pitch and less volume and range. I do not sacrifice tone, volume and range for longevity. You will note that all Indian bells are stiffened by a pulled-in, silver-soldered waist at the equator, but the hole is drilled below this area.

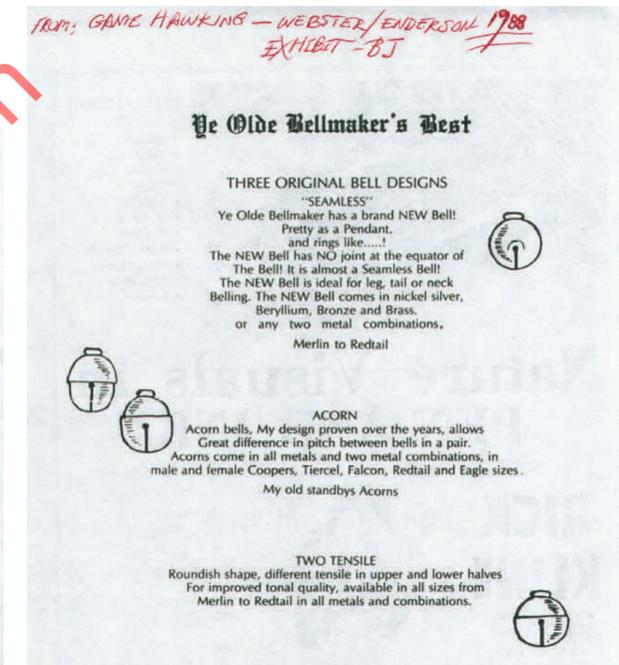
I have noted in recent years a marked trend toward the use of smaller bells. This is understandable since a great number of birds are carrying telemetry gear also. In fact, many falconers use only one small bell with telemetry. The smaller the bell, the more it is affected by stiffening the hole area. As a matter of fact, with too much rigidity in that area a small bell becomes little more than a rattle. I have been making a group of small bells to meet this trend to smaller, lighter bells. These small bells are my two-tensile, two-metal, roundish shaped bells of silver (nickle silver) and beryllium, for kestrel, merlin, sharpshin, and Cooper's. They range in size from 3/32" smaller in diameter than a dime to 1/16" smaller than a penny. These small bells have excellent tone, volume, and range, and their weight is held to an absolute minimum.



— Extracted from "The Bells of Peter J. Asborno" by Tom Gossard for The Archives of Falconry.

Peter J. Asborno was born in Denver, Colorado on March 6, 1912. He graduated from North Denver High School and worked as a tool and die maker for the Burlington Railroad. He later became a master machinist for Coors Brewery and Dow Chemical. He later formed his own business in the construction supply industry.

After meeting Dr. William F. Russell and reading his *FALCONRY – A HUNTER'S HANDBOOK* (1940), Pete began a lifelong love affair with falconry. He flew with his good friend Hal Webster, William Russell, Willard Johnson, Larry Zuk, and others in the Denver area. Pete was one of the original members of NAFA (1961) (Mountain Director 1962-1964), the Colorado Hawking Club and the falconry Club of America (1954).



Pete was known for gamehawking with Tundra Peregrines. His success with these birds was a conversation topic for decades.

As successful a falconer as he was, Pete was better known as the best bell-maker in the world. In the early 1940s, Hal showed Pete his first falconry bell, an Indian bell hand-made by Muhammed Din (Lahore, Pakistan). Because of his mechanical experience, Pete knew he could make a better bell. Pete made his first bell before he obtained his first large falcon! Since then, a good part of his life was devoted to falconry and bell making.



Pete and Hal Webster, with just trapped tiercel prairie falcon. Colorado, 1949

1938 Luscombe, the plane in which Pete learned to fly. July, 1967



1942 Bellanca which Pete flew for 2 years



Pete with the Cessna 140 he flew for 4 years. Dec. 1968.



Pete and friends



Pete and passage Peregrine. 1941 Chevy (new).



Pete with the 1946 Ercoupe bought in 1969. "Love her!"



Pete's "little bird." Recovered, repainted. 0-200 engine in 1974.



Above: Pete and his falcon with magpie. Spring 1950. Below: Larry Zuk and Pete with falcons, an afternoon's catch (left) and trophies (right). Broomfield, Colorado. Photos by Larry Zuk

