

BILL GIRDEN, A REMEMBRANCE

1957 - May 24, 1994

— By Meg Robinson, DVM

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Bill Girden. Bill died on May 24th, a week after undergoing emergency surgery for an aneurysm. Bill was a long-time NAFA member and a perfectionist in our sport. He was a contributing author to NAFA's *A Bond With The Wild*. You could say that he was also a purist. He flew Cooper's hawks with perfect manners and plumage. He always said that falcons don't break feathers, falconers do.

Bill was a person who approached life with humor. He was so good at one-liners that we would call his quips "Billism's". His humor was a real weapon and spontaneous. He always said that people can't hit you if they are laughing at you.

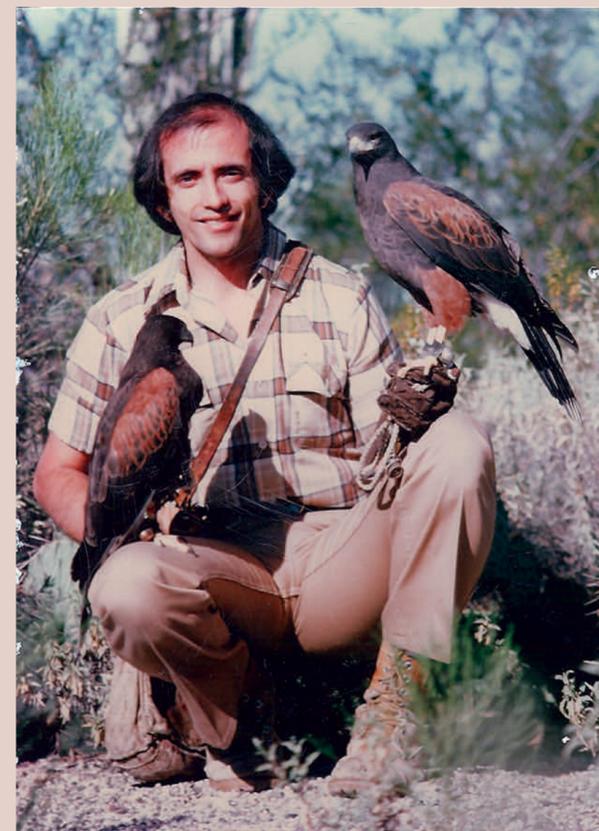
Bill had a talent for thinking like his Cooper's. In fact we often told him that he was an accipiter. His birds never mantled, grabbed, screamed or went for his face. The most natural place for them to eat was on his fist, so after the excitement of the hunt was over, they came to the glove with the kill.

I knew Bill for the last 20 years. I met him in 1974 in Yankton, South Dakota. I was flying "Tess", my first redtail, and he was flying a female Harris'. We will miss his genuine love and warmth. So as Bill would say, "Duck, smile, and keep on dancing."



Donors

Julia Girden, Marcia Lincoln, John & Vicki Swift



July 13, 1990

WildBird

Dear Mr. Girden:

Congratulations! Your photograph of Red-tailed Hawks was awarded **First Place** in the FLIGHT category in *WildBird's* second annual photo contest. The photo contest winners will be announced and your photo published in the October 1990 issue.

We thank you for participating.

The Arizona Daily Star

Tucson, Tuesday, May 24, 1994

W.M. Girden dies; photographer of birds of prey

William Murray Girden, an award-winning photographer of birds of prey, died yesterday after a brief illness. Girden, 37, who worked with Arizona Game and Fish as a caretaker and rehabilitation expert for hawks, once told Arizona Daily Star outdoor writer Tom Foust: "There's one thing I would like to make very clear, people who are looking for a pet can forget falconry. Hawks definitely are not pets and we are not pet keepers."

A member of the North American Falconers Association, Girden was a regular contributor to that organization's journal, "Hawk Chalk." His interest in raptors began when he was in high school at Canyon del Oro. His specialty was Harris and Cooper hawks.

As a photographer of birds of prey, Girden taught classes on the subject, and his photographs have been reproduced in the publications of the Sierra Club and the Smithsonian Institution.

He was born Feb. 28, 1957, in New York City and came to Arizona with his family in 1964. Girden is preceded in death by his mother and father, Julia A. and William Morris Girden. He is survived by his sister, Julia, and his companion, Marcia Lincoln.

Funeral services will be private, and his ashes will be scattered "in some place that would be significant to him," according to his family.

Eye on the eagle



In mythology, a hero is someone who fights a multiple headed serpent, alters the course of a raging river with his bare hands, or plucks a magical broadsword out of a rock. In real life, heroes are considerably less conspicuous. Some, for example, do things like stare face to face at a rattlesnake, trek for miles through the woods in search of a rare owl, or stand up to their hips in a frozen stream. All for the sake of a photograph, so that others can witness the beauty of a Harris Hawk in flight.

Bill Girden is one such modern-day adventurer.

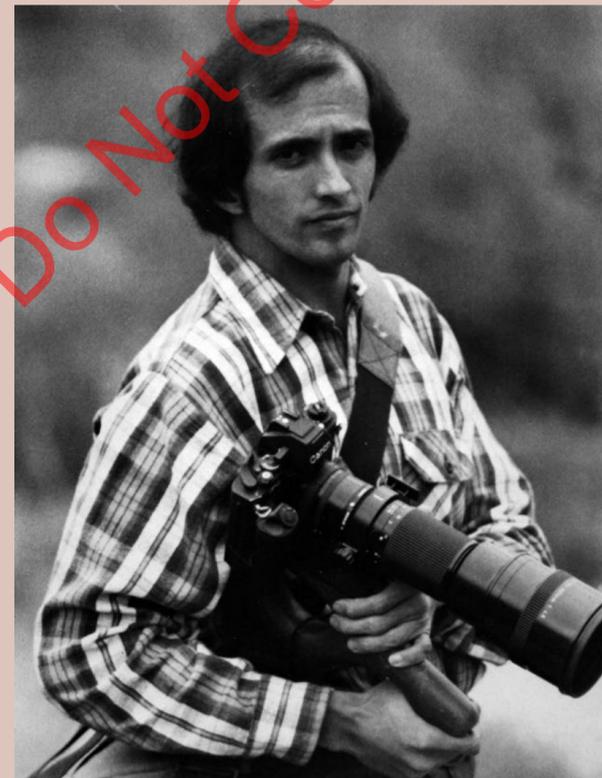
"I've been around photography all my life," he'll tell you in his casual, yet earnest manner. "My uncle on my father's side of the family helped Eddie Land invent the first Polaroid camera."

Bill is one of those individuals who was steeped in a photographic tradition, and one day realized that it was not to be just his heritage, but his future career as well. While attending Pima Community College in 1975, he happened to visit its film labs and decided that this was a subject in which he had a major interest. In a short while he was incurably hooked on the lure of the lens. "It was almost as if the cleaning staff would have to come in and dust me with the rest of the appliances, I was in there so often," he remembers with a smile.

Having graduated from the photographic department at Pima five years ago, and having been out in the field in search of nature's greatest mo-



Award-winning photo by Bill Girden



ments for a long stretch, success is beginning to knock on his door. He's had a photo published in the Smithsonian magazine, will be teaching a class through the University of Arizona in wildlife photography, has a highly dramatic photo in the Sierra Club's 1985 calendar, has the Game and Fish Department requesting stock photos from him, and has reached a point where he feels that "I pretty much know that I will make a sale, or at least get an award, from any contest I enter... slowly, it's coming together."

Of all the myriad subjects that one can photograph—from tomatoes on a kitchen counter to a child dripping ice cream on the leather upholstery of a Cadillac—why is Bill chasing hawks, snakes, and caterpillars?

"I had been doing a lot of wildlife rehabilitation with the Game and Fish Department for years. I've done a lot of volunteer work with the birds of prey at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. I've always been taking pictures. Once I got some better equipment, and better education, it began to merge more closely."

There are few among us who've not thrilled to an image, captured on film in a fraction of a second, of a gargantuan dragonfly who has settled on a flower, or been awed by the cool gaze of a mountain lion as seen through a 1600mm lens. Those of us with a certain artistic bent, and a shutter for an eye, have seen the work of men like Bill and felt the urge to chase nature with our own cameras.

Many times we've had to settle for a snapshot of Rover catching a battered football. It doesn't have to be that way, though. Anyone with a modicum of camera talent can easily begin to enjoy the thrill of photographing nature, Bill believes. Recommendations? "You can set up a bird feeder in front of your house," Bill suggests from personal knowledge, "shoot through a window, and get some marvelous photos. In this manner you can learn very quickly and easily."—Scott Barker

