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I don't recall when or where I met Lou—it was probably on Assateague Island or when I was visiting Corny McFadden—but sometime in the 1960s we became close friends after he moved his family to within a few miles of my home. We were both hustling the buck at the time, but we found time to innovate falconry issues like designing better fitting hoods, more effective trapping equipment, and telemetry in pursuit of our passion. Most important, we trapped and hawked together.

Our finest hours together were, of course, in the field, at a time when falconry was a rare anachronism without enabling legislation, and all raptors, with the exception of accipiters and hoot owls were protected and therefore a gray area in the law at best.

In 1963-64, the Maryland authorities were aware that some men from the Tri-state area were trapping peregrine falcons on Assateague Island, Maryland, each fall, but they were totally ignorant of how this was done. I recall an incident where Corny took the local warden out for a day on his sailboat, while Lou swept the beaches clean of falcons. Rumor has it that Dr. Squeaky Clean Bill Maddox was also involved in this charade. Some of us were forced to swim the channel with birds to avoid taking the ferry toward a possible confrontation, and on at least one occasion the warden had an untimely flat tire and was precluded from giving chase. All rumors, no doubt, but a sign of volatile times ahead.

When Corny and Lou arrived home that year, Pennsylvania wardens were waiting. They visited me as well but did not confiscate any birds. We were given six months to pass a law legalizing falconry. Lou and I mounted the usual letter-writing campaign and visited legislators. The opposition was unaware of our bill until it passed overwhelmingly in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Things changed. Both Audubon and the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association mounted aggressive campaign to kill our bill in the Senate.

We were outgunned and out manned! The day of the Senate vote, Lou and I entered the Senate chambers with a dog-tame eyas tiercel Peale's peregrine. We were immediately surrounded by senators asking questions, which we politely answered. Suddenly, one of the senators asked if Senator "so and so" could touch the bird, and I started to explain that birds were not like dogs, when another senator whispered in my ear that Senator "so and so" is blind. Immediately I asked the blind senator if he would like to hold the unhooded falcon on his fist? With a scowl he nodded "yes." After a few seconds a broad smile broke out over his face as he exclaimed, "ooooo prickly feet!" All the other senators smiled as well. We held our breath as the vote was cast. We needed 26 votes to win, and that was exactly what we got.

Lou and I had worked long and hard to make this happen, but it was the impression made by two clean-cut well-dressed young men and a bird that made it happen. Maryland also approved falconry as a field sport that year, among the forerunners of legalization. Maryland issued nonresident take permits for peregrines until the Federal Endangered Species Act shut down all trapping of the species in 1970.

Lou found it hard to adapt to life without beach peregrines; trapping a new bird or two each year had been a major part of his falconry. Lou's mentor, Corny McFadden, succumbed to an untimely death during this period, which was a blow to all who knew him. Lou also had domestic problems at home and was soon divorced.

Lou and I saw each other socially, and I am pleased to recall that Lou met Sandy Malek Benjamin at a party at my home many years ago, and it was love at first sight for both of them. They have been inseparable ever since. Since moving to Wyoming in 1978, I only saw Lou at the few falconry meets I attended. Old friends are good friends, and our infrequent meetings were joyous reunions. Lou's memory will always be a part of me! — **by Bob Berry** NAFA JOURNAL 2009, Vol. 48



Excerpts from Tributes to Lou Woyce from the NAFA Journal 2009

Lou Woyce passed away on May 24, 2009 near his home outside Berlin, MD at the age of 81. Lou had been ill with various ailments for some time and, according to his wife Sandy, died peacefully and willingly.

Lou should certainly have had no regrets. He had moved in 1990 to a house near Assateague Island beach, where he was able to live a retirement life of flying favorite falcons and seeing the annual autumn passage of his beloved peregrines. Through last fall he rode the beach to band peregrines with Mike Yates and Bill Seegar.

I met Lou in the late part of 1949 when a small group of us went out to "Widener's" near Philadelphia to watch Carl Schreiber fly his passage peregrine. Less than a year later Lou was drafted into the U.S. Army and spent time in Korea as a recon leader.

Louis Charles Woyce, Jr. was born in the Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia on March 27, 1928. His family was half Polish and half Irish. He was one of four kids, and attended LaSalle Prep School where he was City champ in the long jump. He attended LaSalle College where he was on the swim team and starred on the track team; he was Middle Atlantic Conference champion in the long jump.

After his stint in the Army, Lou worked for IBM and in 1962 joined West Virginia Pulp & Paper Corporation. He always flew falcons, never shortwings. After protection of the endangered peregrine he flew a saker, prairie falcons, and various hybrids.

Lou was an intense, dedicated falconer, a leader of the so-called Corny's Army, trapping with McFadden on the beach and flying at Widener's. When Corny conned young falconry neophytes to undertake various chores around his place, I don't think Lou was taken in too badly. He taught himself to make hoods, using blocks and patterns of his friend Bob Widmeier. Lou was always innovating; he is, with Widmeier, credited with the "smiley face" beak opening of the Dutch hood he made with unusual skill. Lou also made fine blocks. He was known for his high-flying falcons. Lou had unusually keen eyesight, was an athletic man, strong, personable, and loyal.

I corresponded with Lou for years, especially when I lived overseas. I learned most about Lou's activities from Corny McFadden, who had an old portable typewriter on which he cranked out letters to falconers from USA to Holland, Belgium, and the UK.

Lou's service in the Army in Korea prevented him from going to Greenland with Corny in 1951. But you would think that he'd been there because he knew all the stories front to back! And he savored the times flying the prized white gyr with Corny, who was so casual about everything that it drove Lou up the wall! That casualness finally lost a good white hawk.

A good, strong man's-man has left us. Falconry benefited in untold ways from this craftsman falconer.

— **by Bill Mattox**

Lou was the real thing. An Army combat veteran of the Korean War, he was earlier a lifeguard at Ocean City, NJ. He briefly dated Grace Kelly before the world became her stage. A 1964 Saturday Evening Post article by Bob Berry featured a full-color photo of Lou in a mid-air dive to secure a noosed peregrine on Assateague Island. I met Lou over four decades ago at joint gatherings we D.C. area and Pennsylvania falconers held. I also encountered him during trapping expeditions at Assateague. I didn't get to know him well then, but was always grateful that men like Woyce, Berry, Rice, Nye, McDonald and Gatti took the time to eventually befriend punk kids like me. Through the fog of time I remember that Lou's birds often flew the highest and the best during falconry gatherings. He was also one of the premier beach trappers, and I wanted desperately to emulate all his attributes.

Lou and Sandy bought land in the 1980s on the mainland looking across the bay to Assateague and built their retirement home. They moved there upon Lou's 1990 retirement and he soon began to fly falcons again. We renewed and expanded our acquaintance, and he became a fixture in my truck during the autumn surveys whenever he wished (which was often). We became fast friends, and through our long talks I learned of the qualities that made him such a success as a falconer and a man. He was steadfast, resolute, thoughtful, giving, humorous and self-deprecating. Lou was not, however, all sweetness and light. He had an acute BS detector, no respect for those who did not properly care for their birds, and no tolerance for fools or braggarts. To my knowledge, he excelled at every endeavor to which he applied his considerable talents and energies. Lou had few peers as an equipment maker, and was constantly surprising me with gifts of his latest gear. It might be a beautiful hood that fit my hybrid perfectly, a leash or swivel, or even a falcon block he crafted from washed-up timbers we had collected on Assateague during breaks in trapping. He sold that gear, but it was never about the money. Lou's satisfaction came from having his creations in the hands of those who could truly appreciate them and would use them to elevate the quality of their falconry.

His stories were captivating and, if you missed some details in any one you could count on hearing it again before too long. I enjoyed the early beach trapping tales and those of flights with some of his favorite falcons, such as the saker "Kismet" and the first-year haggard beach bird "Rags". Many of Lou's tales involved Corny McFadden, whom he idolized. I knew Corny as well, and he was an imposing and iconic figure in early American falconry. But while Lou knew he was a much more proficient falconer, he probably never came to understand that his own accomplishments and lasting influence on our culture far exceeded those of his mentor. Some of my favorite stories were those where Lou enjoyed and provided a good laugh at his own expense. One of those involved the perfumed letter he received after publication of the Saturday Evening Post photo, and his smiling anticipation as he read the fawning words of admiration and attraction from the writer. The revelation that the signature read "John" never failed to elicit a hearty laugh from all present.

In February the time had come for me to take custody of Lou's beloved 13-year-old hybrid tiercel "Arrow" as I had promised a couple of years back. Lou honored me by entrusting Arrow to my care. I flew east to see Lou two weeks before he passed away, and his clarity of mind belied the ravages his body had undergone. I showed him photos of trapping peregrines in Texas, Greenland, Alaska and Russia. He proudly presented me with one of his beautiful and innovative "Khan" hoods. We talked of September on Assateague and plans for trapping together once more. Instead, we will be scattering his ashes there where mine will ultimately reside. I see Lou every day in Arrow when I visit his chamber, and can't wait to put him in the air this fall and thus continue my bond with his partner. What is it about falconry that attracts the best of men and women? There may be no real answer to that question, but I do know that Lou was among the best of men and that we were all fortunate to have him in our ranks and in our lives.

— by Mike Yates

I think most falconers can look back at their early years and identify one or two individuals who were very influential to them. For me it was Vic Hardaswick and Lou Woyce. Vic found me at Michigan State University. I was drowning in a sea of ignorance and inexperience. It was 1960, I was 19 and had spent the last ten years without every meeting an "Honest to God Falconer". Vic was light years ahead of me in experience. He knew all of these wonderful falconers with names like Meng, Rice, McFadden, Berry and Woyce, to name a few.

I had seen Lou's picture in the *Saturday Evening Post*.



They were doing an article on trapping peregrines on Assateague Island and wanted an action shot, so Lou complied. The picture has Lou stretched full out, in midair, diving on a harnessed peregrine. Lou told me later that he would never approach a trapped bird that way but it did make a very dramatic photo. At Christmas break Vic invited me to visit him in Connecticut. We headed to New Jersey to see Lou, and he could not have been more gracious and giving. He immediately started showing us how he made his beautiful dutch hoods, and we left with blocks and matching patterns. That's how Lou was... so giving and with no big ego to get in the way of being a genuinely nice guy. The next day Lou, Vic and I headed for Philly to see Corny McFadden and Bob Berry. As we raced down the turnpike with Lou driving, he kept pointing out distant raptors. Some were so far away that I couldn't see the tree, let alone the bird. He had phenomenal eyes for spotting hawks. That afternoon we went out with Corny to fly his birds. He had a cast of beach birds that were all over the sky. He kept asking Lou where were they, and were they coming back? Lou was so patient with him, and you could tell that they were very close friends.

In the fall of 1965 I met up with Vic and Lou to trap Assateague. This turned out to be one of the greatest trips of my life. We headquartered in an attic of a house that had succumbed to a hurricane. The room was filled with screen perches loaded with fresh-caught tundra birds. It was really something to behold. That night Corny invited all of us over for a steak dinner. The wind was blowing the sand around so hard we couldn't keep it out of the meat. No matter, as Corny was relating how he had

gone AWOL from the Army during WWII to look up George Lodge, the famous British painter who was so renowned for his works on falconry. Corny obtained several of Lodge's original paintings. They adorned his home in Philly and were fabulous. Eventually we trapped three birds, thanks to Lou's expertise and great eyes. He was very disciplined in his approach to trapping. He always kept at least two or three lure birds harnessed at all times. He demanded that we be on the beach before any sign of light was in the eastern sky. I thought he was crazy when we set out to run the beach with the headlights on. Sure enough, we found a peregrine on a flicker it had just killed. It was totally dark! He taught me the do's and don'ts of trapping...to respect the nooses and how to maintain them. Over the years Lou sent me some wonderful birds, never asking for anything back. He truly did make wonderful hoods.

Eventually I sort of lost contact with Lou. I had moved from Michigan to Washington so we were a continent apart, but I have never forgotten the kindness of this most gracious man. Lou Woyce was a prince! If any of you has occasion to be on Assateague Island the last week of September or the first few weeks of October, keep a close lookout for a phantom jeep being driven by a tall, lean, handsome individual whose passenger is a hulk of a man with bushy eyebrows and flowing white hair. I am sure it will only be a quick glimpse as they disappear over a distant dune. Odds are it is Lou and Corny, together again and going like hell to get ahead of just one more beach bird. Thank you Lou, for being you! I am sure that God has blessed your soul.

— by Mike Perry

Some time in the early Sixties I had the good fortune to meet Lou Woyce at Heinz Meng's in N.Y. A fellow falconer, H.B. Risley and I had traveled to Heinz's to watch him fly his passage peregrine. Lou happened to stop by and, having heard of his falconry exploits over the years, I was honored to actually meet the man.

A long friendship of nearly fifty years developed from that chance meeting in New Paltz. When Lou came to our wedding in '62, true to form, we were handling a bird and Lou got footed in the chest. A bit messy, but the ceremony went on as planned.

A few years later Lou invited me to spend a week or two trapping on the coastal barrier beaches. These trips spanned about ten years and to say Lou and I had a great time is an understatement. From eating freshly dug clams and enjoying soft shell crabs, bargaining with the local fishermen for fresh-caught fish and bathing in the surf, Lou was full of life and fun to be with. I still chuckle at the photo of him skinny dipping one afternoon on the outer banks of North Carolina.

Lou was a great friend who is sorely missed by me as well as the falconry community. He leaves a great void and his memory will always be held in the highest esteem by all who knew him.

— by Vic Hardaswick