

Mind of a hunter

Raptors own the air like no other birds. They are flying predators. A raptor can scoop its dinner right out of the sky with its strong talons and diving skills.

Why was I drawn to falconry? I am not absolutely certain about the process. It just happened as though an inner voice or director contacted me and put me there. One day I turned to my five-year-old grandson and said, “you know what I want to do, Derek. I want to get one of those big birds and fly him on my arm.”

The rest is history. All that happened has given me a marvelous decade of pleasure, travel, people and attention to my own wild spirit.

Something within, quite mysterious, made the decision to “birth” me as a falconer. This mystery thing had a need that it decided would be met at that time.

I believe I can understand some of the roots. I was raised very near the Atlantic amid farmland and profound nature, during a simpler time. That landscape formed me, probably more than my immediate family did. It’s what I grew up in and formed an identity with.

By the time falconry came to me, I had strayed far from this initial identity. I was constantly being disturbed by people who saw nature as power, rather than something for which they were to care.

When I made that sudden declaration to my grandson I was involved with some family matters that sought to limit me as a person. More and more I was being pigeonholed until I felt like a pinned butterfly specimen. I was not being permitted to love freely and recognized an instinct to plot a course suitable for my personality and being.

My wise soul decided I would become a falconer. Far-fetched yet perfect for a spirit that would not be tamed. I had done lots of sailing and always loved that arrangement of congruency between man, technology and nature. Everything was where it needed to be. No one thing hogged the energy of life. It was appropriate that I was harnessing the wind to move my boat uniquely

designed for that purpose. I have sought that congruency again and again and love old technologies that remain because someone got it true in the beginning.

It is a big part of who I am. A friend recently noted, "You have the mind of a hunter, not a farmer." That's probably true. I enjoy managing a financial portfolio to support myself. Journalism has always been a part of my life. These pursuits require a natural sense of looking ahead; of finding the story soon enough to allow time to write it...before the general public is aware it exists. Managing a portfolio demands many of these skills. You must stay on top of what's going on and see ahead. You must also have the courage to make investments.

Again the mind of the hunter: Looking for tracks, anticipating an animal's whereabouts, respecting it's terrain and life style but being unafraid to enter into it. The hunter isn't always there to kill or capture the animal. It's just a way of thinking available to some of us. That's how we get those gorgeous documentaries about animals on TV. The people who bring them to us have hunter's minds as well as being artists.

The same quality came out scuba diving. I loved being in that environment and respected that I was only a visitor allowed to explore and learn.

This holds true for falconry. One doesn't have a warm cozy relationship with a bird of prey. One respects that bird is always its very own wild self. It requires work and dedication to earn the privilege of taking a wild bird to do what it does naturally, which is to hunt and kill its prey. In doing so I experience unparalleled beauty of the creature and nature. Again, I am in the appropriate spot. I bring the animal to hunt. I have the mind of the hunter to present the situation but it is not I who does the hunting.

In the process of becoming licensed, I attended a Hunter's Education Class on Staten Island. I was the only falconer there amid bow hunters, taxidermists and gun people. I explained to the instructor that logically it was my bird that should be attending his course since he was the one who does the hunting and I am merely a facilitator. We laughed of course on the well-known illogic of bureaucracy.

I guess I also have falcon blood in me in that I am very much what and who I am and I simply won't be tamed!