

# Top Falconer From N. D.

## --- Column Eight

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By **JERRY RUFF**

Staff Writer

Morland W. Nelson, a native of Munich, N. D., and a 1938 graduate of NDAC, is described in the July 27 issue of "Sports Illustrated" as probably the most skillful and dedicated falconer in the U.S.

Nelson, snow survey supervisor for Idaho and the Columbia Basin, is stationed in Boise, Idaho. He is the son of Norris Nelson who resides at the Hotel Graver in Fargo.

Falconry, the ancient "sport of kings," is the training of hawks for hunting.

Nelson takes the classical approach to the sport. Sports Illustrated quotes him as saying, "Since the days of Genghis Khan the sport of falconry has remained unchanged. Our techniques and terminology are virtually the same as they were centuries ago. The beauty and meaning of the sport — hunter and falconer working together in trust — is timeless."

The NDAC film library has a film made by Nelson on the sport. It is called "Modern Falconry." He is in the process of making a new film, "Bids of Prey."

Nelson takes his own movies and he had his camera with him in Alaska this summer taking shots of falcons and eagles for the new film.

His Alaska expedition, taken while on leave from his conservation job, was primarily for the purpose of gathering data on wild life as part of a team sponsored by the University of California.

The expedition, according to Nelson's father, concentrates on the northern reaches of Alaska, mainly from Howards Pass in the mountains (hundreds of miles northwest of Fairbanks) past Umiat to the Beaufort Sea and south to Fairbanks.

Nelson, who has just returned to Boise from Alaska, is scheduled to be in Rapid City, S. D., Aug. 25-29 to address the Convention of the Soil Conservation Society of America on snow surveys as applicable to water supplies in rivers.

Conservation and falconry have a natural tie-in for the studious naturalist. In an article he wrote for "Soil Conservation," a magazine published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Nelson pointed out that the Department of Agriculture 60 years ago recognized the useful role of raptorial birds. In a department bulletin, it was emphasized that with rare exception these birds should be protected as useful because of their rodent-killing values.

Nelson pointed out that soil conservation districts have become allies of hawks and eagles. Many of the supervisors and co-operators in the districts understand the role of raptors, he said.

"They also appreciate the aesthetic value of seeing them



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they may catch while hunting over an area.

Nelson now has three falcons, a goshawk and a magnificent Golden Eagle, Clyde.

Clyde has appeared in several Walt Disney nature films.

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Nelson first became interested in falconry when he was a boy on his father's farm. When he was in high school, a British lecturer visited the school with a motion picture on falconry. That kindled the fire.

Nelson sought advice on the proper use of hawks, and the Englishman gave the boy library references and advice. The boy began a serious study of the sport. The tribute paid him in Sports Illustrated is the culmination of that intense interest.

The magazine says that each bird, caught by Nelson as a fledgling, requires patient and exhaustive training because of the completely voluntary association between falconer and bird.

Nelson is quoted as saying, "The falconer has no reprimand. The bird must return of his own will to become again a part of the team in which man plays the minor role."

A captain in the ski troops in World War II, Nelson was the recipient of the bronze star, silver star and purple heart. His brother, Capt. Norman H. Nelson, a pilot, was killed in the European theater. He received a silver Oak Leaf Cluster posthumously.

Morlan Nelson is married to the former Betty Ann Ray of Oak Park, Ill. They have four children.