



The First Festival of Falconry - 2007

By Mike Dupuy

My friend and one of the corporate sponsors, Nick Havemann-Mart, sent me a copy of a photo-book documenting the 2007 Festival of Falconry. This was how the event was framed:

"Hosted by the Hawk Board on behalf of the British Falconers, the Festival of Falconry was a celebration of our Falconry Heritage from its beginnings sometime in pre-history to the present day.

Falconers from 36 countries attended in their national dress with their hawks, dogs, horses and even camels. Each national camp had its own foods, drink, music, and songs. For many, it was their first trip away from home. Welcoming hands stretched around the world and many new friendships were made."

Imagine a Star Trek or Star Wars group of aliens, but instead of being from other worlds, they are all falconers from 36 different countries.

I had been to three Falconry Fairs in the years before the 2007 Festival. The fairs are Falconry exhibitions in the tradition of British Game Fairs. They were about 20% Falconry exhibition, displays, artwork, book and equipment vendors and 80% of the same but for civilians (what I like to call non-falconers), you could buy a tea service, or a saddle, or clothing, or a portable chicken coop at the fairs. They had plenty of food and beer vendors, as well as tents representing the various falconers clubs of the U.K. My favorite was the Irish Falconers club tent that I staggered

If you missed the first Festival of Falconry held at the Englefield Estate, near Reading, in the United Kingdom (U.K.), on July 14 and 15, 2007, then you will not want to miss the second one held at the same place this July 11 and 12th 2009.

The Falconry Festival will be remembered as the first UN of falconry, by coming together we bring each other together, by coming together we bring the world together, by coming together we realize that we are all connected, we are all falconers, with a common human heritage, it is a Heritage we must honor and defend.

away from after two pints on Guinness. After the arena flights, by the likes of Jemima Parry Jones, Terry Large, and many others, the grand event had nothing to do with Falconry, but was a group of Helicopter skydivers. When the civilians left the grounds so did most of the falconers and the evening gatherings of falconers would occur in the local village, they might be staying in.

I came to the first fair at the suggestion of my friend Dr. Nick Fox whose acquaintance I first made at a field meet in Lamar, Colorado. I had just started my hawk food business, and he suggested I come over to the U.K., and go to school on their thriving raptor food Market. Nick Havemann-Mart was the owner of the Honeybrook Farms, and he and his brother shared some of their knowledge with me about their market in the UK. I was most impressed that they had refrigerated trucks to deliver the food – at that point my food was delivered fresh, that is hot and cooling. Ten thousand dead day old chicks in a Ford Taurus wagon – I knew if I got into an accident, I would make the news.

I also met the Kiezebrink brothers from

the Netherlands at this first falconry fair, who controlled the European Market for raptor food. Their food trucks with the company name, Kiezebrink's Kwaliteits Kuikens (and the acronym of the company name!), were parked at the fairgrounds during the festival. While at dinner with John and Vicky Swift, Kent Carnie, and Peter Devers, we ran into the Kiezebrink brothers and awkwardly joked about the public relations nightmare they would have if they used their company acronym in the U.S.

It was this backdrop of a game fair, called the Falconry Fair that had 20% falconry as its "focus" which prompted some falconers to start thinking about a Festival that was centered around Falconry. The public would be invited, but when they left, the falconers could remain and socialize. Beyond the Pageantry and the arena demonstrations, the international parade of falconry through the ages and the plethora of Falconry related vendors, it was the after hours that made the event truly electric.

My soon to be fellow, IAF, Mexican Delegate, Ron Carlos Rojo and I became





acquainted, and I also met another IAF, Delegate, Roy Beers, from El-Salvador. I was getting re-acquainted with falconers who had come to the U.S., for NAFA field meets, and met new falconers from around the world. John & Laila Green, NAFA's Foreign Liaisons, manned the U.S. tent along with several other volunteers. Peter Devers was instrumental at ensuring the U.S. falconry community was well represented.

Since I was filming much of the event I had been in virtually every tent by the end of the first day and met quite a few new people. One of the most interesting aspects was the variety of music: first a chorus of the Welsh Falconers club sang and played instruments, then an 82 year old falconer from Turkmenistan sang while a compatriot of his played a sitar like instrument. A female Falconer from China whom I had bought a piece of art work from her earlier in the day, got up and sang in a Chinese dialect acapella. This round robin of music went on while hundreds of falconers sat or stood in the shape of a horseshoe mesmerized. We were on the Star Ship Earth and falconers commanded this part of the ship.

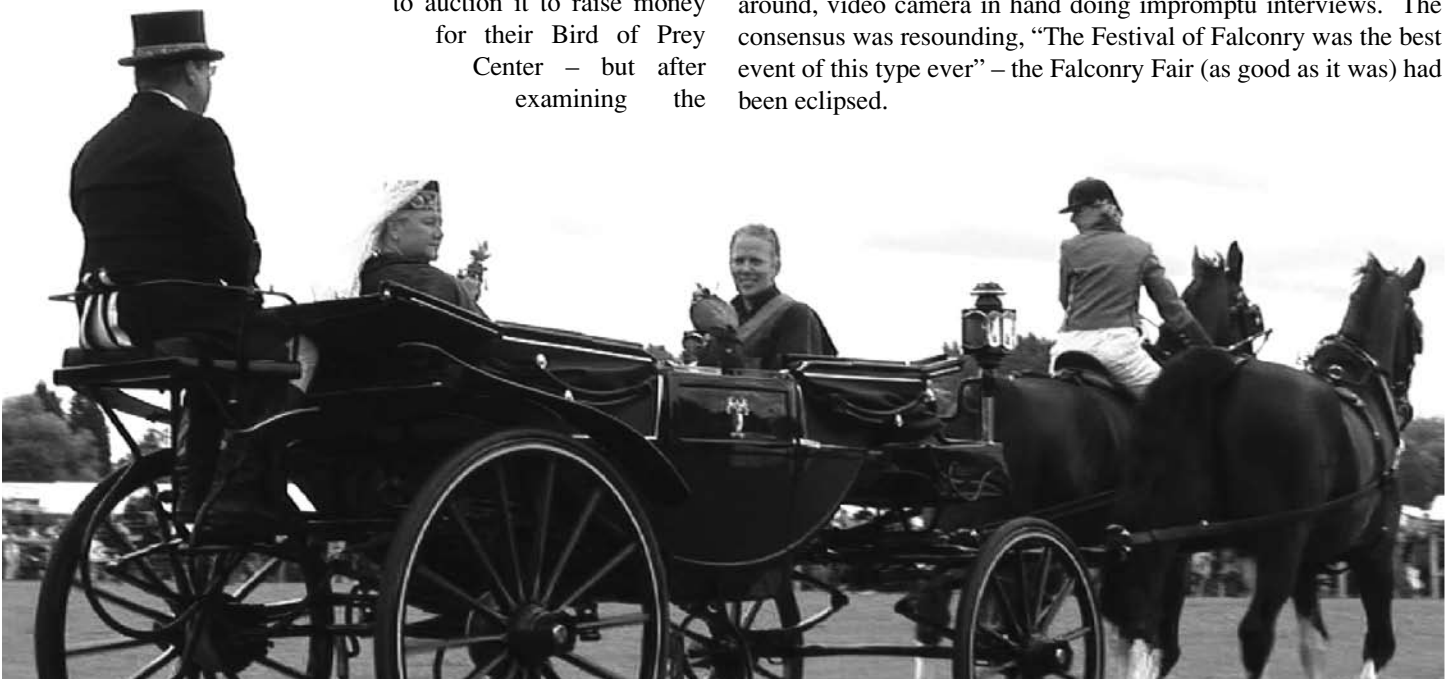
Debbie Stewart from New Zealand passed around a blank copy of "The Falconers Journal" and got people to autograph it as a keepsake (actually they were going to auction it to raise money for their Bird of Prey Center – but after examining the

range of people who had signed it and the written comments, I implored her not to sell it but to make it available to the Archives or the Heritage Trust to be kept in memorial to this momentous event, I was fortunate enough to be in the midst of. This is what I wrote in that book:

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- Mike Dupuy, Pennsylvania, USA

The venue was extremely beautiful, a twelve thousand acre, English Deer Park, with a castle as a backdrop. Falconers were galloping around the grounds with falcons, hawks and Eagles on fist. On the perimeter of the estate, were falconers camping with friends, family and fellow falconers. The variety of people and birds was most impressive. I did my usual thing and walked around, video camera in hand doing impromptu interviews. The consensus was resounding, "The Festival of Falconry was the best event of this type ever" – the Falconry Fair (as good as it was) had been eclipsed.



To my fellow North American's – especially the purist who may exclaim “What no actual hawking!?! Why should I bother to go?” I highly recommend you step out of that box. Take your falconry widow, significant other, or if you can the whole family – if they are not falconers they will gain a new understanding in how what you do is so universal. They will gain a breath and depth that our “New World” cannot offer them, and as a side benefit they will have fun while being with you.

You can comfort yourself in that the British speak English so you will not have a difficult time communicating. There are many things to do with your loved ones that you might also enjoy, such as spending a night in London, or just in the village where you are staying. The Falconry community is most gracious especially to those not of their land, so you will be surprised at the invitations you will receive to come travel to other nations and know you have a link to your past that will be awaiting your arrival in the future.

The International Association for Falconry and Bird of Prey Conservation (IAF) is holding its annual meeting in conjunction with the Festival of Falconry (www.i-a-f.org). Long before my election to the post of U.S. Delegate to the IAF, I had decided that I would be at the next Festival of Falconry, if fate allowed. And so again I urge you to get on the Internet and book your tickets now, while the airlines are starving for customers – that's right make this your world economic stimulus package, and earmark a trip you will not soon forget.

You can find out more about the Festival of Falconry by visiting: www.falconryfestival.com I will be making a short film on the first Festival and offering it for sale soon. I plan to donate 25% of the proceeds to the IAF and the Festival organizers, so if you cannot make it you can get an idea of what you missed. I Look for forward to seeing you in England in July, or hearing from you soon.

The Art of the Falconry Festival



The Faces of the Falconry Festival



Go to www.mikedupuyhawkfood.com/festival.html for more pictures and video clips