

On a camping trip with friends in September 1990, I met my future husband while fishing on the Klamath River. This was when our adventure through life began. When I met him, he had a Cooper's Hawk that he was flying. I had heard of falconry but didn't really know all that much about it. A few years later, he acquired a female Harris's Hawk and I started going out with him on occasion to hunt her. I decided after a time that this was something that I would like to do and went through the process of becoming a falconer.

Our life was full of adventures, whether it was falconry, fishing, wine tasting or enjoying friends and family. Craig never met a stranger and was always willing to help someone wherever he could. He went through life with curiosity, humor, and could be quite mischievous at times. Life with him was never dull. He was my biggest adventure...
—beloved wife, friend, and falconry partner, Kim Olson

Craig Golden

October 12, 1958–November 13, 2025

Craig Golden: Falconer, Photographer, Fisherman, Friend
By Jennifer and Tom Coulson

Craig Golden was a larger than life kind of guy with a magnetic personality. An outdoorsman in the extreme, he arranged his life to maximize time spent in the field, whether hawking, fishing or photographing wildlife. Always self-employed, he could adjust his schedule to make time for hunting and fishing. After working for many years as a house painter, he created Safari Depredation Company and entered into abatement work. By 2017 he was working three California landfills using 21 depredation raptors.

Craig grew up camping, fishing and looking for herps. One of his favorite playgrounds as a kid was exploring the Mojave Desert on family day trips. It's a wonder he survived his plethora of harebrained ideas. In 1968, he, his older brother Bob, cousin Tom, and friend D.T., built a flying machine. Craig, the test pilot, flew briefly before the hang glider collapsed around him, sending him and the glider tumbling down the hillside. Super excited about catching and milking rattlesnakes, Craig knew way too much about when a rattler was most likely to be loaded with venom. His book, *Adventures of the World's Dumbest Kid* is quite entertaining, hilarious at times, and captures his youthful spirit.



Craig Golden and freshly trapped passage Harris's Hawk
Photo by Craig Golden

Craig met the love of his life, fellow falconer, fisher and photographer, Kim Olson, whom he affectionately referred to as “Kimo”, on Labor Day weekend in 1990. Kim’s father, Gordie, introduced Kim as his girlfriend, and Craig’s fishing buddies, pranksters themselves, left it at that. Craig was mystified as to how this fifty-something-year-old could land such a catch.

Craig soon discovered the whole truth, and he and Kim hit it off immediately, spending the weekend fishing on the Klamath River. Married in 2000, Craig took Kim on a two-part honeymoon: a cruise on the Mexican Riviera followed by a trip to Alaska where they fished the Kenai River.

Craig and Kim were two of the few falconers to hunt with a cooperative group of Harris’s Hawks. When we first met them they were hunting with a group of four passage hawks. Craig also bred Harris’s Hawks. In 1999, he was one of three falconers permitted to take a Peregrine Falcon, the first wild harvest in over three decades, taking a tiercel from an eyrie in Arizona. Raptors he flew included: Cooper’s Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Harris’s Hawks, Peregrine Falcon, Gyr X Peregrine hybrids, Saker Falcon and Saker hybrids.

Two of his falconry idols were Arizona falconers Harry McElroy and Roger Claude. Craig made a point of checking in with them regularly and visiting Harry often. Craig produced a gorgeously filmed video tribute to Harry McElroy. He introduced us to Roger Claude in 2009.

An artful wildlife photographer, Craig generously shared his time and talent. He did several photoshoots for us and allowed us free rein of his photographs for inclusion in our book, *The Harris’s Hawk Revolution*. He also provided many of the photographs in Harry McElroy’s *Desert Hawking IV: Quail*.

While he died too young, having just turned 67, Craig lived life to the fullest and left few dreams unfulfilled. In 1996, he and Kim traveled to Zimbabwe to hunt with Andre Groenewald and Andre’s imprint, female African Crowned Eagle, named Lundi. Over several hunts, Lundi pursued vervet monkeys and guineafowl and captured hares and springhare. On that same trip, Craig also hunted with Andrew Barnes and his Black Sparrowhawk, in pursuit of guineafowl. He and Andrew became close friends, and the Black Sparrowhawk became one of Craig’s favorite falconry raptors. Craig and Kim returned to Zimbabwe in 1997 to witness Lundi capturing a vervet monkey.

We hit it off instantly with Kim and Craig because we shared so much in common: hawking hard, hunting with a group of Harris’s Hawks, doing the best by our birds, and loving wildlife and the outdoors. We are forever grateful to Craig for introducing us to California falconer, Bob Armbruster at the 2000 NAFA meet in Amarillo, Texas. We enjoyed many trips together with Craig, whether hawking out west or fishing in Louisiana. In 2009 we joined Craig on an epic expedition to the foothills of the Catalina Mountains hunting the Antelope Jackrabbit.

You wanted Craig at your party. He could really bring a story to life, and he had plenty of stories to tell. Craig’s fine wines only added to a room roaring with laughter. An amateur sommelier of sorts, Craig purchased the best California wines when young, by the case and at a discount. He then aged them under his house in Torrance. He was incredibly liberal with the fruits of his labor, so the party often followed him. Together with Craig, we enjoyed many falconry parties hosted by Harry and Beth McElroy, Greg and Jamaica Smith, Charlie Kaiser and Pam Hesse and others.



Kim Olson and Craig Golden hawking desert cottontails with Harris’s Hawks
Photo by Craig Golden



Craig liked to give back to the falconry community. He was active in the California Hawking Club, serving for a time as Newsletter Editor and Journal Editor. Craig also contributed many falconry articles and photographs to the CHC Newsletter and Journal, the *North American Falconers Association Journal* and *Hawk Chalk* and *American Falconry* magazine, among others. He also was a presenter at CHC and Arizona Falconers Association meets. Tom and I remember well his slideshow of stunning photographs depicting adventures in Africa and Alaska and hawking with friends which he presented at the 42nd CHC Field Meet in Bakersfield. The banquet entertainment included Craig’s video honoring Harry McElroy and his falconry.

He also enjoyed giving raptor education presentations to the public. For example, he gave talks using his Safari Depredation raptors at the Vandenberg Air Force Base on Earth Day.

We could sing his praises for a long time, but in the end, we really just miss our friend.

Craig Golden and Tom and Jennifer Coulson hunting antelope jackrabbits
Foothills of the Catalina Mountains, Arizona
Photograph taken on January 13, 2009
Photo by Craig Golden



Kim Olson and Craig Golden hawking black-tailed jackrabbits with Harris's Hawks Photo by Craig Golden



Craig hunting black-tailed jackrabbits Photo by Craig Golden



Craig Golden and Kim Olson trapping Harris's Hawks Photo by Craig Golden

By Ron Brown

I first met Craig Golden in 1995 when I was putting on my first California Hawking Club field meet. I had heard he was coming and that he was a master falconer who flew Harris's Hawks. Frankly, I was a bit nervous to meet Craig as I was just learning to work with Harris's Hawks myself. I had an old Suburban that I had turned into my hawking vehicle.

Craig met me at my truck and was looking over my setup, checking out all the things I had going on. That was when I pointed at the license plate, which read JST4HKN. He looked at it, got the biggest smile, and said, "OK, I get it now." From that point on, we had a connection. We enjoyed many, many hawking and trapping trips together from then on.

Craig Golden was a talented, self-taught man who could take on almost any challenge put before him. He became an expert—and a perfectionist—in all aspects of his life: falconry, breeding, writing, photography, house painting. He could construct almost any structure. He created the first full-color California Hawking Club newsletter. In recent years he became a sharp shooter and an expert reloader of the ammo he used for his beloved, first-class collection of rifles and pistols.

Born with no sense of smell, he had a great sense of taste for the wines he loved to drink. His lack of smell was, shall we say, a curse to others around him (you can guess the meaning). His parents learned of his lack of smell at a young age when Craig

brought home some baby skunks. That same lack of smell turned out to be a huge benefit in his bird abatement business at the dumps that he and his lovely, talented wife Kim serviced.

Craig loved his life adventures—whether it was a long drive to see a friend, a falconry hunt, fishing in Alaska, doing photography in Africa, or camping out and telling stories until the wee hours of the morning. Some of my most beloved memories of Craig revolved around those falconry trips when we camped out together. My son Michael was very young and learned a lot about life at those late-night campfires. Michael ended up getting an A in Sex Ed in school. I don't think I ever called and thanked Craig for that. At those campfires, my son's name was changed by Craig to "Da Boy." My son is now over 40, and when we last saw Craig, he was still calling him "Boy."

Craig was gifted with boyish charm and could get away with a lot in his sayings and doings that others could not. He was filled with intelligence, strong opinions, firm boundaries on what he felt was right and wrong, great common sense, and an ability to see what could happen before it did. He appreciated his friends to the fullest and would be there in the blink of an eye if you really needed him. He enjoyed being surrounded by friends, family, and nature. He loved having those family and friend get-togethers to share the bounty of fish he caught, share the wines he collected, and—again—to tell stories.

Craig understood the balance of nature and the importance of that balance with mankind.

Craig was one of the most genuine people I have ever known. He deeply loved life, adored his wife Kim, cherished the outdoors, his family, and his friends.

I miss him so much. However, I cannot be sad for the times we had together and the memories we made.



Craig Golden and his group of Harris's Hawks, 2013 Photo by Lauren Pond Sanders

© 2013 Lauren Sanders

A Tribute to Craig Golden

By Jamaica, Greg, and Kinsey Smith

Craig Golden didn't just live life to the fullest...he attacked it, with a vigorous enthusiasm I've rarely seen in anyone else. His close friend Harry McElroy affectionately referred to him as a "colorful character." Craig always took that as the ultimate compliment and wore the moniker as a badge of honor bestowed upon him by one of his heroes.

Craig was one of the first people in the falconry community to recognize the opportunity to employ raptors in pest abatement at landfills. After a successful career running his own house painting business, Craig moved into the abatement field and flew Harris's hawks and hybrids for the business he owned and operated with his amazing wife, Kim.

Craig became such a fixture in our lives that we struggle to remember when and how we first met him, but it was likely on one of his visits to Harry's house in Wilcox when we had the great fortune of visiting at the same time. That was the beginning of many years of friendship and great memories together. Up until the pandemic, we had the pleasure of visiting with him once or twice a year, either hawking in Kingman with Harry or beach days in Torrance at Craig and Kim's summer home.

Always generous with his time and expertise, Craig was often asked to share his incredible photo slide shows, which he set to music, which allowed him to share with the rest of us the incredible adventures that he and Kim had abroad in Africa, Alaska, and hawking the western United States. And after I expressed great admiration for one of their female Harris's hawks, he generously gifted me one of her babies the following summer. She went on to become one of my exceptional Harris's hawks both in the field and wowing the public for the Sky Island Falconry Experience.

Falconer party hosted by the McElroys, Kingman, Arizona
Back row: Harry and Beth McElroy, Bob Armbruster, Grey,
Paul Howe, Mary Armbruster, Tom Coulson, Greg Smith, Charlie Kaiser

Front row: Craig Golden, Loren Erman,
Jennifer Coulson, Kinsey Smith, Jamaica Smith, Pam Hesse

Photo taken on January 14, 2012

Photo by Jennifer Coulson



Craig Golden of Safari Depredation Company tells base leaders about how his falcon, Maverick, keeps gulls out of the landfill.

Photo courtesy of Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, U.S. Air Force Photograph taken on November 23, 2011 Photo by Staff Sgt. Levi Riendeau.



Craig often visited us around Super Bowl time, and he always got such a kick out of making dollar bets on the big game with young Kinsey and her best friend. They relished the opportunity to spar with him over which team was going to win. He clearly loved paying them their dollars when he lost the bets.

One summer when we arranged to visit for a few days in Torrance, we arrived to discover Craig with casts on BOTH arms. While attempting to recover a bird from the huge avocado tree in his backyard he had fallen over 30 feet to the ground and broken both arms. In spite of this significant handicap, Craig was nonplussed and insisted on going to the beach with us even though he couldn't get in the water. While walking back up to the parking lot, he spotted a gopher rummaging around in the landscape foliage and dove on it with both casts. Yes, he caught it, with his bare hands and two broken arms. Only Craig could have pulled off such an audacious stunt.

Craig happened to be visiting us in Kingman during the season I was flying my first rehab golden eagle, Spinner, and he took some amazing photographs of us together, and of Spinner hunting. It was truly an honor to have Craig in the field with me and Lauren McGough when Spinner, after almost a year of hard work, finally took his first jackrabbit. I have a short video clip of Spinner on his kill as I approached, marveling aloud at what truly felt like a miracle after so much effort to get there. Just before the video stops Craig can be heard declaring, "Imma tell you something...I'm a good luck charm!"

How right he was. For those of us who knew him and called him friend...we were the lucky ones.

Fly high and stay colorful, my friend! We will miss you forever.



Craig Golden and his group of Harris's Hawks, Santa Maria Wash, circa 2018–2020
Photo by Kim Olson



Craig Golden and his Harris's Hawk, 2013
Photo by Lauren Pond Sanders



Andrew Barnes, Craig Golden, Harry McElroy
and Tom Coulson in Willcox, Arizona
Photo taken on January 12, 2009
Photo by Jennifer Coulson