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Frank C. Craighead: A Tribute

— by Richard Howard

Frank Cooper Craighead Jr. was born in Washington, D. C. on August 14, 1916 to Dr. Frank C. Craighead and Carolyn Craighead. Frank, Sr. was a forest entomologist for the Department of Agriculture and Carolyn was a biologist technician. Frank Jr. had a twin brother, John with whom he did just about everything together. Their family history is full of stories about their ability to finish sentences for each other, and come to each other's defense. Their younger sister, Jean, was born three years later and shared many of their adventures.

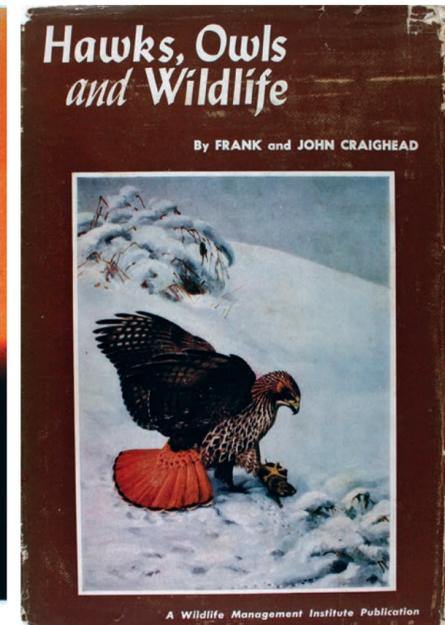
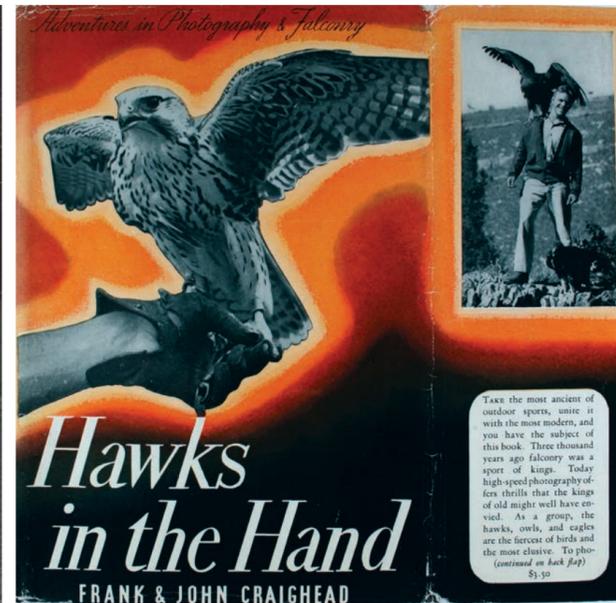
As teenagers, Frank and John were fascinated by raptors. After high school, Frank and John drove west in a 1934 Chevrolet, photographing and capturing hawks and falcons. During this trip they arrived in Jackson, Wyoming where they met arctic naturalists Olaus and Mardy Murie. Parts of this trip were described in their first magazine article, "Adventures with Birds of Prey", for the National Geographic Magazine in 1937. "Hawks in the Hand" was the first Book that Frank and John wrote in 1939. Frank and John graduated with A. B. degrees in Science in 1939 from Pennsylvania State University. They both went onto the University of Michigan for M.S. degrees in Ecology and Wildlife Management in 1940. World War II disrupted their studies but they returned to the University of Michigan after the war and completed their Ph.D. degrees in 1949. Their Ph.D. dissertations were published as a book, titled "Hawks, Owls, and Wildlife, a foundation study of two raptor populations, one in Michigan and the other near Moose, Wyoming.

In 1940, an Indian Prince named K. S. "Bapa" Dharmakumarsinjhi read their 1937 falconry article published in National Geographic. He invited Frank and John to visit him in India. The National Geographic Society underwrote their trip to India for a nine month stay with Bapa. The Craighead's

wrote an article titled "Life With an Indian Prince." These were the last days of the rule of Maharajahs in India, and the last days of Indian falconry on a grand scale. These were remarkable times for the Craigheads. On September 6th, 1940 they embarked on the "S.S. President Cleveland" from San Francisco accompanied by a Chesapeake Bay puppy that was to be a present to Bapa. They arrived in Bombay on October 21st, 1940 after a storm-filled crossing of the Pacific. Unfortunately the puppy, "Bomby" died two days before reaching Bombay, a victim of the long stormy boat trip.

Bapa met Frank and John at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay where they stayed until they could re-settle in a hotel at Bhavnagar, a city several hundred miles from Bombay. Here they stayed for the duration of their time in India, making frequent trips with Bapa to nearby fields and longer sojourns to forests, lakes and plains for hunting with trained Shahins, Luggars, Peregrines and Saker falcons. Coturnix quail, partridge, common heron, and Pariah kites made up the majority of quarry that was hunted. Another extraordinary hunting event the Craigheads witnessed and filmed were Cheetahs that were trained to hunt Blackbuck. One of the other highlights of their trip just before leaving India was a train trip to Darjeeling where they observed the sunrise over Mt. Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world (28,169 ft.). This was a most extraordinary adventure for the Craigheads and from this seven month experience, they recorded falconry techniques and terms that are still used today in modern falconry.

Their visit was cut short by World War II, and they caught passage home on a freighter in 1941. The United States' entry into the war interrupted Frank's education in wildlife. He and his brother attempted to join the 10th Mountain Division but were called by the U.S. Navy to set up a survival training program and wrote a manual titled "How to survive on Land and Sea" which is now in its fourth revised



edition (1984) and is still used by the armed services. Toward the end of the war, Frank and John trained agents of the Office of Strategic Services - later to become the CIA, in survival tactics. They were scheduled to be dropped into areas behind Russian lines when the war fortunately came to end. In middle of the all this Frank married Ester Stevens on November of 1943, while he was on furlough.

After World War II, Frank and Ester returned to Wyoming where he and his brother bought 14 acres of land on Antelope Flats, near Moose, Wyoming which is located about 16 miles north of Jackson Hole.. Both Frank and his brother built cabins on this land. Frank called this place home base for the next fifty six years. His brother moved to Missoula, Montana where he became U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Coop Leader.

In 1950, both brothers were called back to service as consultants to the Strategic Air Command, and in 1951 organized survival training schools for the U. S. Air Force at Mountain Home Air Force Base and McCall, Idaho. Frank managed the Desert Game Range outside of Las Vegas for two years (1955-57) for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He then took a job in Washington D.C. in charge of Forest Recreation Research but resigned in 1959 since his superiors refused to let him transfer back out west.

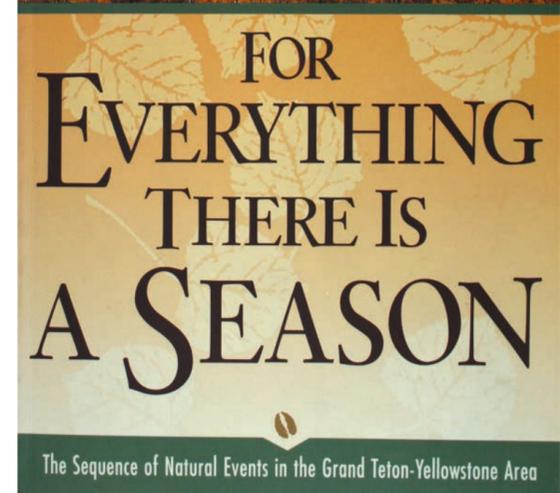
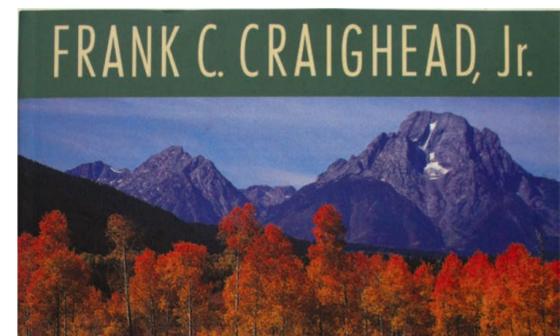
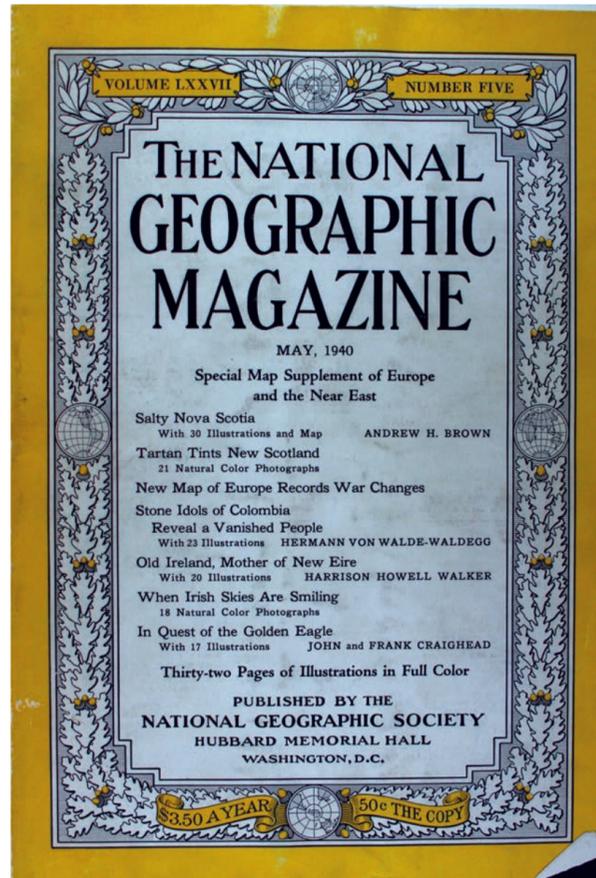
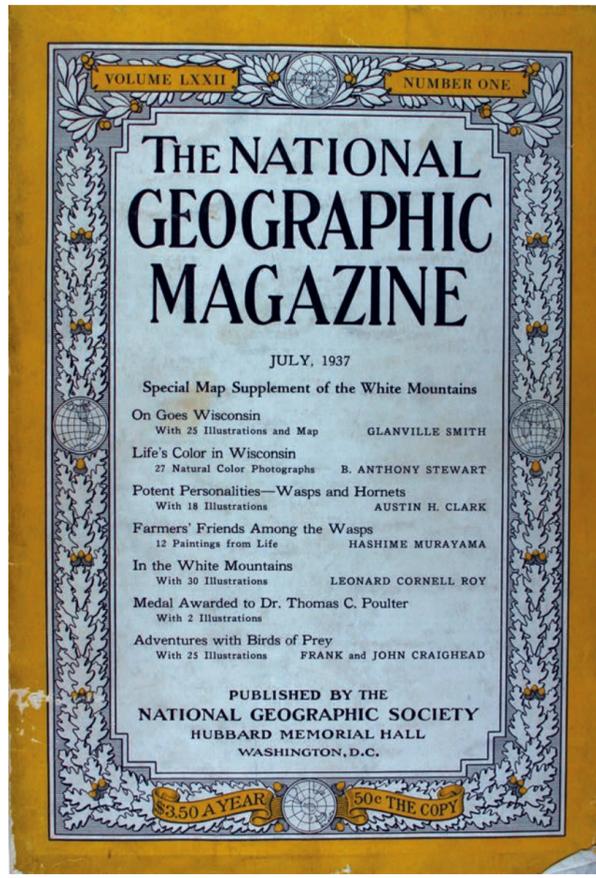
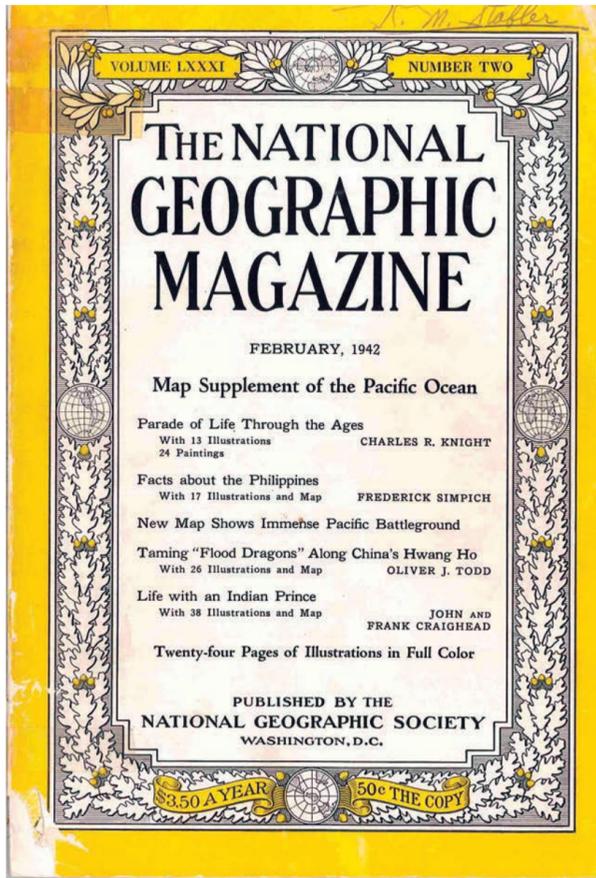
He moved his family back to Moose, Wyoming where he and his brother's career merged again. The National Park Service requested them to conduct a 12- year study on grizzly bears. This became another outstanding achievement for the Craigheads. It allowed Frank to organize the Craighead Environmental Research Institute in 1964. Frank's greatest contribution to the grizzly bear study, to the wildlife ecology, and indirectly to modern falconry was his leadership in developing and using radio transmitters. Along with

Hoke Franciscus and Joel Varney, Frank developed large-mammal radio collars. Several years later, with Joel's expertise, they modified U. S. Navy navigation buoys to develop the first animal satellite transmitters. In 1971, their studies came to an abrupt halt when they disagreed with the Yellowstone National Park's new superintendent about grizzly bear management. They were replaced by a group of government research biologists, the Inter-agency Grizzly Bear Study Team, who had an entirely different approach to grizzly bear management in the Park .

In an unfortunate setback, Frank's cabin in Moose, Wyoming burned to the ground in 1978. The fire was significant in that he lost most of his satellite designs, pictures, books and papers. He had been working on a pilot study to develop satellite transmitters for use on birds with a grant from NASA. Fortunately, the manuscript for "Track of the Grizzly" was already at the publishers.

Frank suffered another loss in 1980 when Esther pass away. In 1987 he married a wonderful Vermont school-teacher named Shirley Cocker. She helped Frank write his last book, "For Everything There is a Season." Shortly after marrying Shirley, Frank was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. This became his last challenge, and remained to the end an inquisitive biologist. He would sit on top of Blacktail Butte near his cabin and watch ravens and raptors fly overhead. He delighted in calling to ravens and during the last few months of his life visited Lamar Valley in Yellowstone to see grizzlies again and to hold a fly rod in his hands.

In addition to his wife Shirley Craighead, he is survived by his children Lance, Charlie and Jana, his brother John, who lives in Missoula, Montana; and his sister, Jean Craighead George, an author of children's books who lives in Chappaqua, New York.



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John J. Craighead
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