



American falcon dealer Hari Har Singh Khalsa, the son of a prominent New England doctor: His first falcon deal, had it been completed, would have been a blockbuster

own. In the fall of 1981, the Yukon enforcement officers had played a distant role in the strange arrest of an American falcon dealer named Hari Har Singh Khalsa. The blond, blue-eyed son of a prominent New England doctor, Khalsa cuts an incongruous figure among most North American falconers, and he has a habit of turning up in improbable places with sponsors who range from Texas millionaires to Inuit politicians.

Khalsa converted to the Sikh religion after an odyssey to the Middle East when he was in his early twenties. He adopted traditional Sikh white robes, turban, jewelry, uncut hair and beard. Bright, cocky, very knowledgeable about falcons and Arabic culture and loyal only to himself and a silent partner in Texas who supplies him with startling amounts of cash, Khalsa is also widely disliked in the falconry world.

Other falconers, wildlife bureaucrats, respected ornithologists and wildlife enforcement agents — almost without exception — say Khalsa has a reputation for spreading treacherous rumors to anyone if it is to his advantage. Wildlife agents say they

have distrusted him since he arrived on the North American scene in 1981.

Khalsa's first falcon deal, if it had been completed, would have been a blockbuster. On Feb. 8, 1981, he met Jim Macdonald, former executive assistant to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, in a New York City apartment. Also in the room were Khalsa's silent partner and his lawyer. At the end of the meeting, Macdonald signed an extraordinary contract that required him to arrange the trapping of 50 gyrfalcons in the central Arctic between Aug. 16 and Oct. 1, 1981, and to obtain all necessary government trapping and export permits. Khalsa's company would provide the falcon trappers and market the birds in the Middle East. For this Khalsa would receive a sales commission of 10 per cent on birds that sold for up to \$24,999 and 15 per cent for birds that sold for more than \$24,999.

The contract set Macdonald's base purchase price per gyrfalcon at \$20,000. In other words, his private company, Nunavut Communications, stood to gross close to \$1 million if all 50 gyrfalcons were sold.

Macdonald returned to Ottawa and in the following months used his influence and his contacts in the Northwest Territories to help push through a pioneer legal gyrfalcon harvest program. Meanwhile, Khalsa lined up two B.C. falcon trappers. In September Macdonald and the two trappers spent 10 days on the frozen Boothia Peninsula near the Inuit village of Spence Bay hunting for gyrfalcons, with no success. Bad weather forced them to abandon

the expedition. The futile trip cost Macdonald about \$10,000, say the two trappers. Macdonald quickly dropped out of the falcon trade in disgust and turned his full attention to running his Ottawa company.

Khalsa, however, had already promised the delivery of gyrfalcons to a powerful Middle East sheik. Desperate, he arrived in the Yukon in October 1981 and bought two captive-bred gyrfalcons from Danny Nowlan. Export permits for the birds were signed by Dave Mossop, and news of Nowlan's sale to the white-robed Khalsa quickly spread through the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources.

When Khalsa boarded his Vancouver-bound plane in Whitehorse, with the crated gyrfalcons in the cargo hold, he was under surveillance. And when he arrived at Vancouver International Airport, he was promptly arrested by the RCMP.

The gyrfalcons were seized and placed in the city zoo. Khalsa was searched and ordered to remove his turban. Then he was led through the airport terminal in handcuffs, put in a waiting cruiser and taken to a nearby jail. The arrest, for an alleged Export and Import Act violation, took place at 4 p.m. Khalsa was allowed to make his first phone call at 11:49 that night, according to an RCMP report. He was released the next morning with profuse apologies after federal and Yukon authorities assured the RCMP that Khalsa's falcons had been legally obtained.

Nearly a year later, in September 1982, Khalsa

By: Bill Slambert MAGAZINE