

# INSIGHTS

Montgomery College Alumni and Friends Magazine • Spring 2004

## SKYFISHING MIKE DUPUY '81





# SKY FISHING

BY DIANE BOSSER

---

**"I heard a cry in the sky.  
I looked up. Swinging  
down the valley on  
long, pointed wings  
was a large bird. I was  
struck by the ease and  
swiftness of its flight."**

**JEAN CRAIGHEAD GEORGE**  
*My Side of the Mountain*

**I**magine driving 90 miles per hour across the Texas plains, chased by local law enforcement, trying to catch a hawk. Master falconer and MC alumnus Mike Dupuy '81 calls it "sky fishing," where the blue sky is like water, and the red-tailed hawk, a big game fish riding the currents above, not below. He throws the bait through the sunroof of his car, not boat, and ultimately relies on a few thin tethers to ensnare the hawk's talons. With luck, he might catch up with one of these masterful birds of prey.

Dupuy recounts his adventures for the unusually attentive Cub Scouts assembled in the Ten Oaks Ballroom in Clarksville, Md., for their annual Blue and Gold banquet. Part stand-up comedian, part storyteller, part social activist, Dupuy puts on an energetic and informative presentation called "Hawk Talk," where he touches on raptor identification, captive reproduction, hunting before bow or gun, trapping methods, and raptor conservation, all with a stunning visual aid, a Harris Hawk named Copper.

The moment he releases Copper from its "giant hood," the fidgety scouts freeze, riveted as they are brought eyeball to eyeball with one of the world's great hunters. Copper beats the air with its striped wingtips fanning out overhead. Dupuy waits under its shifting talons before soliciting questions. It's only a moment before the scouts eagerly oblige him: "What does he like to eat?" "Where did you get it?" and "How did you get into falconry?" Parents are straining to see across the room, readying cameras. Dupuy is happy to respond to them all.

After more than 15 years as a professional public speaker, he hopes to become the premier educator of birds of prey and man's 4,000-year relationship with them through national media. Dupuy's birds have been featured in *National Geographic Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, and numerous D.C. area publications. His clients include the Red Cross, Georgetown University, Audubon Society, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Isaac Walton League, Wild Bird Centers

Inc., Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts, Youth Leadership International, Montgomery College, public and private schools, and ornithological societies.

Inspired by Jean Craighead George's novel, *My Side of the Mountain*, Dupuy discovered he wanted to be a falconer at age 10. "I read the book 13 times, fascinated by the idea of someone hunting food with a bird of prey.... Reading it changed my life." And, while circulating around the banquet tables with Copper, he urges the kids, "If you like something—whatever it is—read about it!"

Licensed by state and federal agencies, Dupuy traps his own animals, trains them, feeds them, and provides veterinary care himself when needed. After a successful hunt, he feeds the catch to the bird. It takes him just two to three weeks to train a wild bird to hunt with him.... "It's a lot like dating. You have to find out whether [it] will come back to you—but you have to have confidence,

and you have to let it go. There's no keeping it on a string."

Originally from Haiti, Dupuy came to New York City in 1966 at age six, as the son of an ambassador during Aristide's first term as the first democratically elected president. Because of his parent's political exile during "Papa Doc" Duvalier's reign, their multiple relocations, and their subsequent divorce, he attended 13 different schools by high school, four different high schools, and at age 16, he got a job, moved into a group house, and lived on his own. He supported himself by working at McDonalds and, later, at a Safeway supermarket.

But checking groceries day after day wasn't satisfying: "I thought that if I plotted my life on a graph, I would just see a continuous flat line here...I just knew I had to go forward with my education." At 18, Dupuy enrolled at Montgomery College for the same reasons many do—it was close to home, which allowed him to continue working, and it fit his budget.

"The best thing about Montgomery College was the people I met. The whole experience opened up so many doors for me." A general studies major, Dupuy preferred a broad spectrum of courses, rather than career training. With his inquisitive and outgoing personality, he formed fast friendships with instructors, counselors, and fellow students, calling them "a second family."

Dupuy successfully ran for student senate president at the Rockville Campus and served in that post from 1980–81. "As a student leader, I got to meet with deans, provosts, the college president...and the governor of Maryland.... Everything I've done—including running for public office (Dupuy has, in the past, campaigned for state and congressional posts), and public speaking—sprung from that exercise, of having to get up and speak out, often in front of people better educated than me."

---

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



## SKYFISHING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Counselor Stu Brosseit, a 34-year veteran at the College, recalls, “Mike has a marvelous personality for meeting people. He is multifaceted, and has traits that I see in top leaders.”

During the early 1980s, Brosseit encouraged Dupuy toward a career in the emerging computer industry first, and enrollment in computer courses second. Brosseit’s ability to read not only the commercial market, but the student in his charge, proved to be right on the money.

Dupuy landed a sales job in a Fortune 500 computer manufacturing firm, and within two years was a regular in the firm’s top 10 percent of the sales force. While meeting multi-million dollar quotas, he attended the University of Maryland,

pursuing information systems management, and later, public policy at Georgetown University.

After 15 years in sales with a company car, and a house in the Maryland suburbs, Dupuy felt the familiar “flat line on the graph” feeling. Concerned for his two children, who like many of their peers, were playing electronic games and seeing movies with an unnatural amount of violence, he knew he could offer them all a better alternative through falconry and teaching.

“I can’t tell you what it’s like to be out in the woods after a fresh fallen snow beating the brush to flush out a rabbit, with a hawk following you 100 feet in the air... It’s not about catching the rabbit; it’s about being out there—witness to the

perfect intersection of time, hunger, and opportunity. And you just don’t get that sensation sitting on the couch pushing buttons.”

An active member of the North American Falconer Association, Dupuy travels around the country to hawk meets. He runs falconry camps for “ages 9 through 95,” writes about his experiences, and runs a successful hawk food company, Mike Dupuy Hawk Food. “I had trouble getting supplied, so I started a company, and now we sell a top-of-the-line product.” Obviously, Dupuy can’t resist a good opportunity—to feed hawks, or to feed the minds and hearts of his next audience.

**Learn more about falconry and Dupuy’s endeavors at [www.mikedupuyfalconry.com](http://www.mikedupuyfalconry.com).**

## MUSEUM QUALITY STUDENTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

as propulsion concepts, biospherics, and astronaut health and social parameters in endured, closed, and artificial environments....” She also provided research for curator presentations and talks on such topics as maglevs, space elevators, propulsion concepts for Mars missions, and closed biospherics.

> **Artem Gulish** Artem assists with Asian culture education events. He has helped parents and children print Tibetan prayer flags, showed children how to play Himalayan musical instruments, assisted children in filling out a guide book on ancient China, and assisted a Nepalese male dancer to dress in complex regalia for his performances. “...My goal was to learn far more

than teach. I’ve had a great chance to learn and grow.”

> **Cindy Montgomery** Cindy’s internship at the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service gave her a different perspective of the Museum. The Smithsonian creates exhibits that individual museums may contract for without having to bear the cost of curating the exhibit. Cindy’s responsibilities included marketing calls to museums that requested information. “The SITES internship has exposed me to the business side of museums including marketing, development, publications, and museum administration. It has given me a taste of the ‘business cultures’ at the Smithsonian...It was interesting for me to

hear Dr. Nunley comment at the interns reunion that it was an internship in a community college office that inspired her to build a career in community college administration.”

Perhaps the words of one MC student sums up the internship’s impact: “I immensely enjoyed working with the other interns, but most of all I enjoyed seeing artifacts which I had only read about...the internship provided me one of the most important career altering opportunities of a lifetime.”

**Visit [www.montgomerycollege.edu/Orgs/humanities/](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Orgs/humanities/) to learn more about Smithsonian and Library of Congress internships.**

## MCAD + MC = SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN AT MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

This fall, the Maryland College of Art and Design (MCAD) will join with Montgomery College’s arts programs to become the School of Art and Design at Montgomery College. MCAD, a private art college, has been in Silver Spring for 46 years. The union brings to MC the ability to offer two new associate of fine arts (A.F.A.) degrees, additional continuing education

offerings, and talented faculty and staff. The new School of Art and Design at Montgomery College increases MC’s art opportunities for local aspiring artists by providing an intensive art school experience at a community college price.

**For more information, call 301-649-4454 or visit [www.mcadmd.org](http://www.mcadmd.org).**