



In Memoriam

Benjamin H. Wilson

January 25, 1925

March 6, 1988

They came in the evening, then, and found Jonathan gliding peaceful and alone through his beloved sky. The two gulls that appeared at his wings were pure as starlight, and the glow from them was gentle and friendly in the high night air. But most lovely of all was the skill with which they flew, their wingtips moving a precise and constant inch from his own.

Without a word, Jonathan put them to his test, a test that no gull had ever passed. He twisted his wings, slowed to a single mile per hour above stall. The two radiant birds slowed with him, smoothly, locked in position. They knew about slow flying.

He folded his wings, rolled and dropped in a dive to a hundred ninety miles per hour. They dropped with him, streaking down in flawless formation.

At last he turned that speed straight up into a long vertical slow-roll. They rolled with him, smiling.

He recovered to level flight and was quiet for a time before he spoke. "Very well," he said, "who are you?"

"We're from your Flock, Jonathan. We are your brothers." The words were strong and calm. "We've come to take you higher, to take you home."

Home I have none. Flock I have none. I am Outcast. And we fly now at the peak of the Great Mountain Wing. Beyond a few hundred feet, I can lift this old body no higher."

"But you can, Jonathan. For you have learned. One school is finished, and the time has come for another to begin."

As it had shined across him all his life, so understanding lighted that moment for Jonathan Seagull. They were right, He could fly higher, and it was time to go home.

He gave one last look across the sky, across that magnificent silver land where he had learned so much.

"I'm ready," he said at last.

And Jonathan Livingston Seagull rose with the two star-bright gulls to disappear into a perfect dark sky.

So this is heaven,

he thought, and he had to smile at himself. It was hardly respectful to analyze heaven in the very moment that one flies up to enter it.

As he came from Earth now, above the clouds and in close formation with the two brilliant gulls, he saw that his own body was glowing as bright as theirs. True, the same young Jonathan Seagull was there that had always lived behind his golden eyes, but the outer form had changed.

It felt like a seagull body, but already it flew far better than his old one had ever flown. Why, with half the effort, he thought, I'll get twice the speed, twice the performance of my best days on Earth!

... Excerpted from

Jonathan Livingston Seagull

Order of Service

Preludes

276th Army Band Pennsylvania Army National
Guard "Adjutant General's Own"

Procession

Color Guard, Naval Air Station, Willow Grove

Invocation

The Reverend David Hoover, Chaplain of the House
of Representatives

Hymn

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God Warren

Reflections

The Honorable K. Leroy Irvis
Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Honorable Matthew J. Ryan
Republican Leader

The Honorable James L. Wright, Jr.
Member House of Representatives

The Reverend Glenn E. Schultz

The Honorable George M. Metzger

Hymn

God of Our Fathers National Hymn

Benediction

The Reverend David Hoover

Hymn

Eternal Father Strong to Save Navy Hymn