

# OPINIONS

## Notes from a "stuffy" bird breeder and a "too-serious pet owner"

Just a few lines about Robbie Harris' review of the movie "Paulie" in the May/June 1998 *Watchbird*.

In May this year, Kaytee sent me several passes to the opening screening of "Paulie" in Las Vegas, Nevada. I felt it was important enough for the Las Vegas Bird Club's board to screen the movie, that I invited them and their spouses to attend. As we left the theater there wasn't a dry eye among us. We all thought it was a well done movie, entertaining to both young and old alike.

However, there were a few things about the movie that makes one shudder when considering the general public, most of whom are uneducated regarding proper bird care and diet. Yet many of them will have an urge to run out and buy a "Paulie" of their own.

First, the giving of a very young, not fully feathered baby to an equally young girl is not the smartest thing to do. The baby Paulie was given formula but it wasn't heated or wasn't *shown* to be heated and the bird was offered candy and salted nuts. The bird was not kept in a cage of any kind, except when it was being punished. And, perhaps worst of all, wing clipping was shown as cruel and diabolical and flying was fun and okay and the bird always came back to you. This will certainly give the wrong impression to everyone about this basic and necessary part of bird care.

Now I certainly know it was "just a movie" and that movies take artistic license from reality. I am sure there were dog breeders who said the same thing about the movie "101 Dalmations." And those breeders certainly reaped a wind-fall profit when

practically every kid who saw the movie wanted a Dalmatian and mom and pop ran out and got them one. Most never did their homework and didn't find out until too late that Dalmations are high strung and have cataract problems — either of which makes a Dalmatian a difficult dog to work with and definitely not a family pet. There are now thousands of abandoned Dalmations in pet sanctuaries and who knows how many put to death in dog pounds.

Because of this misinformation portrayed in "Paulie," I am afraid similar things will happen to parrots bought on the spur of the moment. How many burned or sour crops? How

many birds flying away with unclipped wings, how many birds not kept in proper cages chewing through electrical wiring, flying into hot pots of water or open toilets will it take for people to realize it isn't "just a movie"? How many parrots not living up to "Paulie's" standards will start the long trip to home after home of uneducated owners. A note of warning from the makers of the movie would have corrected much of the misinformation — perhaps "Paulie" himself noting some things about proper bird care.

Anyway, when this "stuffy bird breeder" sells a parrot to anyone they get several hours verbal information and a handful of information to read. And this "too-serious bird owner" makes sure his pets have their wings clipped, an adequate and proper cage, and that they get a proper and healthful diet.

Oh yes! They get plenty of loving also.

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