



photo by Nancy Vigran

*Yellow Show Racer, breeder/owner, Bill Rice*

## Presentation to American Pigeon Fanciers' Council

*by Dr. Richard E. Baer*

*Editor's Note: The following address was delivered by President Baer to the American Pigeon Fancier's Council at their annual meeting in July of 1979. In this talk, Dr. Baer states with great clarity just what the A.F.A. is all about, some things it has done, and some things it hopes to do. It is a message of enthusiasm and affirmation and we can all use a little of that.*

I thank the Council so much for inviting me to speak to you on behalf of the American Federation of Aviculture, of which I am President and to tell you why I am so enthusiastic in promoting its cause.

Let me state that I feel somewhat at a disadvantage talking with you because I am a stranger to all of you and I am not a pigeon fancier. But, I am a bird breeder — and, to me, there is a common bond between all bird breeders.

As a stranger, let me establish my seriousness of purpose through the logic of a few questions which you may each ask of yourselves: First, "Why has this

man taken of his time and expense to come to St. Louis to talk with us?" "Has he anything personally to gain?"

I am a retired veterinarian, a hobbyist who enjoys his birds. If I had to gain a livelihood from my aviary, I can assure you, I would have been bankrupt the first year. I have nothing to sell. Why then am I here? I am here because I want our children and our children's children to enjoy birds in their day just as you and I enjoy ours in our day. I believe in the right of everyone to have any kind of legal bird he chooses and I am convinced that the American Federation of Aviculture is the

strongest organization we have today to protect that right.

What is the American Federation of Aviculture? First, let me tell you what A.F.A. is not: It is not an association nor a club. It is not dominated by any one group or clique. The dictionary defines FEDERATION as a union or league. The A.F.A. is a union of some seventy avicultural organizations, associations, and clubs, plus thousands of independent members. This league of some seventy affiliates, together with its many thousand independent members, consists of fanciers who vary from canary breeders to game

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bird breeders; they range from owners of a single bird to owners of hundreds; and include commercial establishments and zoological gardens.

The Federation is a non-profit organization. It is governed by delegate representation from each of its affiliates and only they decide on actions and policies. Majority rules. All Board meetings are open to the general membership.

The A.F.A. is dedicated to the conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public. In the pursuit of the conservation of birds through captive breeding, A.F.A. has been in the forefront in the protection of our bird populations. It actively defends the rights of all of us to own and keep any birds of our choosing within the limits of the law.

Exotic animals, including birds imported into this country, have not always been properly cared for, either in shipment or at their final destination. Some domestically bred birds and household pets have also lacked proper treatment either through ignorance or neglect. Legislation has been proposed by conservationists, ecology groups, humane societies and legislators, who feel there is a need for laws to protect wildlife and domestic stock. The A.F.A. recognizes those needs and disagrees only with poorly written or discriminatory legislation. This it actively opposes. The A.F.A. is against any regulations or unjust zoning laws that would take away or limit our right to own, breed, and enjoy birds.

The Federation has a code of ethics in which it explicitly states its policy against those who would violate Federal and State laws or be inhumane in the treatment of birds. It is the official policy of the A.F.A., as stated in its code of ethics, to disqualify or expel from membership or ban from advertising in its publication, THE WATCHBIRD, any applicant, member, or advertiser, who has been convicted of violation of any Federal or State law concerning the importation, interstate shipment, possession or inhumane treatment of any avian species. Our organization does not hesitate to impose its censures for violations of its code of ethics.

Your publicity director, in a recent letter to me, described A.P.F.C.'s function as a kind of "umbrella" for the benefit of all kinds of pigeon people. The A.F.A. endeavors to serve as an even larger "umbrella" to serve the interests and defend the rights of all ethical and legal bird keepers. The successful defense of these rights requires the active cooperation of all of us bird keepers.

It has been alleged that A.F.A. does not serve all bird interests; that it is orientated towards the cage and exotic bird breeder. Let me correct this allegation by acknowledging that the Federation does receive its greatest support at this time from the cage and exotic bird breeder, but its intent and orientation still is towards involvement of all aviculturists.

At one time A.P.F.C. was an affiliate of A.F.A., but, unfortunately, during its entire affiliation it sent a delegate to only one or two meetings and did not participate in any A.F.A. activities. Now, we, as bird breeders, all know that it is the chick that peeps the loudest that gets its crop filled. So it is in all organizations. If one does not take an active part and voice his problems, he is not likely to receive attention. The A.F.A. resolutely seeks allies among other avicultural groups. However, if such allies affiliate and do not take part, the affiliation is ineffectual and benefits neither the Federation nor the affiliate.

What are the accomplishments of A.F.A.?

At this point in time we are finalizing litigation against U.S.D.A. which has cost us \$40,000.00. We are securing an out-of-court settlement of the dispute and obtaining a Newcastle disease policy, in writing, which guarantees and protects the rights of every bird breeder in the country in the event of any future outbreak of V.V.N.D. This includes the pigeon breeder. How many individual organizations can afford to spend \$40,000.00 in government litigation?

From the Interior Department we are effecting the deregulation of captive-bred self-sustaining populations of endangered species. Cost to A.F.A.: Over \$6,000.00 in legal fees. The beneficiaries of this deregulation are the exotic and game bird breeders.

This past year we prevented U.S. Public Health Services from imposing a ban on the importation of psittacines. This saved the day for the psittacine breeder and the pet industry.

We, again, came to the aid of industry just recently in a successful, forceful, mailgram campaign to get the quarantine stations reopened. Industry graciously acknowledged A.F.A.'s impact in this instance in an article on the front page of THE PET BUSINESS, June 1979 issue.

Through the efforts of myself as President of A.F.A., a sub-committee on birds was established by the United States Animal Health Association — an achievement that must benefit all bird breeders.

The A.F.A. has also fought successfully this past year, restrictions and zoning regulations on the state level (Oregon),

county level (Anne Arrunle Co., Maryland) and municipal level (Los Angeles), just to mention one case in each category. Whenever a zoning regulation closes the door on my birds, it closes the door on your birds.

There are those who oppose united action and favor divisiveness; who do not want to join, but advocate non-alignment. Divisiveness assures defeat, affiliation makes common cause a possibility. Fellow bird fanciers, if the original thirteen colonies had not elected to join together despite their differences, we would not have had that independence which we commemorated earlier this month.

The American Federation is young, growing, changing and improving. By-laws are due for revision at next month's convention. I favor a more manageable executive board with representation on it by affiliated national organizations. It is not equitable for a minor club to have a delegate and a large national organization to be represented by only two on the general board.

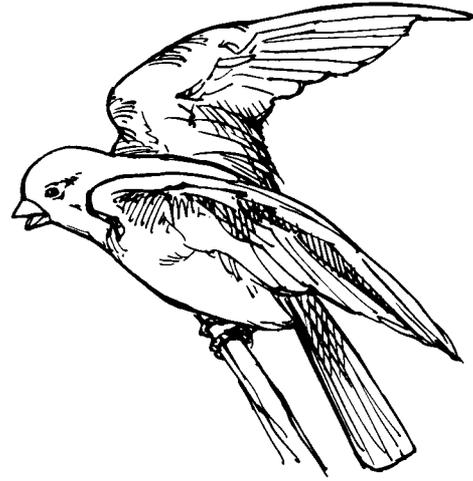
A.F.A. needs to improve public relations so that all bird breeders are aware of all that we are doing. We need a Tanner Chrisler, but haven't found one yet.

We are in search of contributing specialty editors for each of the fancies for our magazine. These are not gratuitous assignments, but carry honorariums. We wish to promote your fancy in THE WATCHBIRD. We need your help.

We aspire to serve all ethical and legal bird keepers. We are dedicated to working cooperatively with industry, government agents and all interested groups wherever we can to enhance the status of bird populations, captive or free. We propose, through the encouragement and promotion of captive breeding programs of the rare and endangered bird species, to save them from extinction. We publish information in our magazine on the successful breeding and care of these and other avian species. We hope to sponsor scientific research on the conservation and propagation of birds; and we endeavor to educate the public to the better care and treatment of all birds and to the enjoyment of keeping birds.

The above are all noble objectives, worthy of the cooperation of all bird keepers, whether we raise canaries, psittacines, pigeons, game birds or water fowl or just have a pet.

As the president of a large western game breeders association commented after that organization voted 100% to rejoin A.F.A.: "Isn't it like insurance? We hope we never need aid, but knowing that it is there when needed is what is important."



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