Dear Editor:
Please help me and other breeders of canaries. I feel there are some bird shops and private individuals that need educating for the sake of the canary if nothing else.

After selling thirty canaries at a quantity discount to a bird shop, I received a call six days later that one of my canaries had gone light and died. Knowing that my canaries were healthy when sold but wanting to keep good public relations, I took a canary to the shop to replace the dead canary.

At that time I talked to the shop owner, who was also the buyer, about the cages some of my canaries had been put into. One in particular was 23” wide x 23” wide x 33” tall. All of this type of cage that had canaries in them had two perches that were located within the top 12” of the cage. No lower perches at all. The food and water was on the floor of the cage. This is not the type of cage for canaries, for they are a bird that flies across, not straight up and down. Even the shop owner said, “canaries are not helicopters” and he knows that they need length, not height.

The particular cage that my canary died in was this type cage. Fifteen of my canaries had been put into this cage with other canaries, finch and a pair of Bourke’s parakeets. One of the canaries already in the cage was picking a finch bald. The finch just sat on the perch and let him do it. The canary just stayed on the perch also. I was told the canary “had a broken leg or something.”

The seed in the cages with this mixture of birds was mostly millet and finch mix. I asked the owner about the seed and was told this is the way the seed comes as a mix for finch and canaries in one bag. I suggested the shop put a good roller mix in the cage for the canaries and was told that it was very expensive. These seed dishes are about six inches across and one inch deep. The exact same type dish is used for water. There were between 30 and 40 birds in these cages by the time my birds were added to them.

Thirteen days after the sale of my birds to the shop I got another call. One of my birds had again died from going light. In order to keep good public relations I again took a replacement bird to this shop. I know these were my birds and got the body back each time. The canaries were still in the same cages with the same birds except for the finch that was being feather picked and the canary that had “a broken leg or something.” They had been removed. Same food mix (finch with millet). Same two perches in the same location. Again I spoke with the owner about the cages and food mix.

This time I had taken my record book with me in order to show the owner that my first canary egg hatched on 1-3-86; the last one hatched on 6-3-86. I keep accurate records of my birds. My records show parents and both band numbers, date egg was laid, date egg hatched, babies’ band numbers, sex or if un-sexed and which way sold, color, type, if died, date died, if known what it died from. In the space of time from 1-3-86 till the date this shop called I had a mortality rate of eight birds out of 143 hatched. The last one died on a night when we had several earthquakes in this area. These two birds that I replaced for this shop are also recorded in my books bringing the total to ten deaths.

During breeding season my nestling food only cost me $5.14 every 29 days. I feed one of two of the top roller mixes on the market along with other canary products on the market. My birds are paired in individual breeding cages, with very controlled, selective breeding. Due to the care, time and type of food fed to my birds I feel that if my birds were sick and going light that I would have a larger mortality rate than what I have had. Also, it is my estimation that, if a canary does not get the proper food and enough of it and proper flight space, this is a cause for them to go light and die in a matter of just a very few days.

This same shop owner asked me if I feed my canaries safflower seed. When I said no, he informed me that they love it and really like it to feed to their babies. He was talking about seed that is still in the shell. Now I know why he did not have good luck in breeding his canaries. I do toss a couple sunflower and/or safflower seeds in the dish to give the birds something to play with so that I do not have them fighting and pulling each other’s feathers so much. But I have never had a canary crack a safflower seed. Most canaries cannot even crack hemp seed without it being soaked first.

I went back to this bird shop 16 days after they bought my birds. Yes, you guessed it, not one thing had changed. The same birds in the same cages. The same cages being used with the same perches in the same location in the cages and the same seed dishes with the same type seed in the dishes.

I feel if bird shops do not take common sense advice from the breeder and the birds die, the breeder should not be held responsible and be expected to replace birds that die past a 72 hour period from the time of sale. Name and location withheld by request.
Dear Sir:

Your magazine is prized by me and I was told by a friend that you carried an article about what veggies and fruits to feed tropical birds and in the list appeared jalapeno peppers and other hot peppers — is this true?

My concern is that peppers are listed as a carcinogenic (causing cancer) for humans. Please reply.

Respectfully,

W. Douglass Rowell
Houston, Texas

Dear Mr. Rowell,

I'm very glad that you like the Watchbird. It is also encouraging that you are concerned with your bird's diet.

Indeed, your friend told you the truth. In an excellent article by Lisa D. McDaniel, U.C. Davis (Watchbird, April/May '82, page 36), hot peppers were listed as an ingredient much favored by Amazon parrots. The article focuses on Amazons, not all tropical birds.

The subject of nutrition is not very well understood — for humans, much less for birds. Parrots do like peppers, as McDaniel points out. There does not seem to be any hard data to suggest that parrots who eat peppers are more subject to cancer than those who don't. Who knows?

My feeling, based on many years' experience with parrots, is that very few seem to expire due to cancer. In fact, I'm very partial to peppers myself and I've passed the half century mark having consumed a few tons of jalapenos. Many ethnic diets all over the world (Mexico, India, Indonesia, China, etc.) depend heavily on peppers for flavor.

It would be very nice to know exactly what to eat and what to feed our birds but, alas, I fear that sure knowledge will never be known. Use common sense, judgement and experience.

There are many articles on nutrition in the pages of back issues of Watchbird. I recommend getting the AFA Watchbird Index and asking the home office for copies of the articles that are pertinent to your situation. Ed.

---

Dear Mr. Dingle,

I am writing to your reference to an "in house" publication and your statement that it is of the utmost importance that we members let our interests be known.

Baloney! I consider the Watchbird under your editorship to be an "out house" publication used to promote the interests of you and your friends, particularly your "good friend Richard Topper."

You used our publication to give him free publicity, and when I let my interest in Mr. Topper's research be known, you and Topper both lied to the entire membership of the AFA, using a masterpiece of subterfuge to cover up the facts. I think you know and I am sure Mr. Topper knows that he never sent me any of his research papers. I don't believe he ever did or is capable of doing any research before putting his feed or feed-hype on the market. And you compounded the farce by stating in the Watchbird that Topper sent his research papers directly to me.

Although this all happened seven years ago I have never had any faith in...
you or an organization which allows you to be its official spokesman. I still get calls about this matter and I still tell all callers that you and Topper lied to us all.

I recently got a notice to renew my membership in the AFA. I intend to renew it outright — just as soon as you publish an expose stating that you and Topper are unethical, that you used the Watchbird to promote his product, and that you are sorry that you and Topper lied to the membership about his research papers. Have a nice day,

Luther Dean

Dripping Springs, Texas

My Dear Mr. Dean,

Many, many thanks, dear friend, for your expressive letter. For, lo, those seven, long years I've stood the lonely vigil, my eyes on the horizon, waiting, waiting for your long expected paeans of praise, your ode to joy, as it were. And at last — it came.

You restore my faith in humanity. Once or twice some. poor soul expressed some small faith in me and even, God forbid, in my truthfulness and ethical behavior. I was beginning to sweat.

But you, dear sir, have, to my untold relief, reestablished the normal, tried-and-true relationship between civilized human beings. My undying gratitude, sir. Bless you.

There are, however, thousands of AFA members who were not privy to the editorial responses of seven years ago so I feel a general recapitulation is needful. I'll give chapter and verse for those who have the '80 and '81 Watchbirds available.

Your original letter (June/July 1980, page 44) boils down to a challenge to me to come up with the complete report of Topper's nutritional research. Naturally, I agreed with you that sunflower seeds contain no cholesterol (seconded by Dr. Tkachuck). I also, in keeping with my over-optimistic personality, agreed to get Topper's data and publish it. I also asked for input from all interested and learned readers.

True to form, nothing arrived in time for the following issue of the magazine. I did, however, receive a letter and a full length cassette tape from Topper. In the Aug/Sept 1980 Watchbird, page 45. I alluded to Topper's letter in which he said he sent the printed data directly to you. I only now, seven years later, learn that you did not receive the data. On the same page I alluded to a plethora of material (Topper's tape) and said we'd prepare it as an article. Unknown to you, Dr. Tkachuck and I examined the tape from every conceivable angle and found it inconclusive — there was no hard, publishable data.

Finally, in the Oct/Nov '81 Watchbird, page 31, Cathy Sarmento wrote a letter addressing the sunflower issue. She gave three book references (printed in her letter for every reader's information) that seemed to indicate that sunflower seeds were not much different than safflower seeds.

On the same page I publicly indicated that Topper's "plethora of information" was inconclusive. I also said that we'd bypassed Dean and Topper and went directly to the University of California, Davis, Avian Sciences Department.

The main problem now was to learn whether or not sunflower seed contained papavarin, the "drug" Topper said it contained. If you'll read page 31, Oct/Nov '81 carefully you'll see that I explained how U.C. Davis sent normal sunflower seed and seed injected with papavarin to the California Dept. of Food and Agriculture for analysis. The laboratory, because of great technical difficulties, was unable to resolve the problem with finality.

This left us were we started.

I had hoped for a full-blown report from the state laboratory but as no conclusive results were found they opted not to waste time on a paper reporting nothing. The lab does have other things to worry about: fruit-flies of various sorts, pesticides in watermelons, listeria in cheese, etc.

Until your wonderous letter above, I've heard nothing more on the matter.

I haven't seen Topper for almost ten years. To my knowledge Watchbird has not given him any free publicity other than that initiated by you (in the warm glow of which I'm sure he is basking).

In closing, my dear sir, I feel bound to disabuse your mind regarding the most grievous error in your letter. I am not, and have never been, the official spokesman for the AFA. The various elected presidents of the AFA have always fulfilled that glorious position. I, alas, am merely a contract laborer but happily, due entirely to your impassioned and graphic references to my qualities, am elevated to the rank of human being which, regrettably, most editors never achieve.

I trust your renewal will be in the mail the instant you put down this magazine and may your springs ever continue to drip. Ed.
Massachusetts Cage Bird Association, Inc.
American Singer Canaries: Hank Mankin
Hookbills & Finches: Clarence Culdwell
Parrots & Related Birds: Larry Brandt
Cockatiels & Budgies: NCS Panel Judge
Finches & Hookbills: NFS & SPBE Panel

The Colorado Springs City Auditorium
2815 Beckon Dr., Edgewood, MD 21040
Tel: (316) 722-7934

The Kansas Avicultural Society's
Sixth Annual Caged Bird Show
will be held
October 9th & 10th, 1987
at the Canterbury Inn
5805 W. Kellogg, Wichita, Kansas
Judges:
Budgerigars: Russ Roberts
Canaries: David Guinn
Cockatiels: Keith Jennings
Hookbills & Finches: Clarence Cildwell
Lovebirds: David Arthur
For further information contact:
Agnes Geigenmiller
11424 W. First Court
Wichita, Kansas 67212
Tel: (316) 722-7934

Massachusetts Cage Bird Association, Inc.
71st Annual Show
October 17, 1987
Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School
Fitchburg Street, Marlboro, MA
Judges:
Finch & Cockatiels: Charles Anchor
Parrots & Related Birds: Larry Brandt
Budgerigars: Anthony Mancini
Borders, Yorkshires & Misc. Types:
Frank Paiva
Glosters: Joseph Marino
American Singers: George Landry
Color Bred Canaries: Daniel Kaye

Baltimore Bird fanciers
is proud to present their
47th Annual All Bird Show
October 17, 1987
Holiday Inn-Chesapeake
Just off Interstate 95, Exit 85, Rt. 22, Aberdeen
Judges:
Finches & Hookbills: NFS & SPBE Panel
Judge Bill Partee
Cockatiels & Budgies: NCS Panel Judge
Dick Sharp
American Singer Canaries: Hank Mankin
Type, Hartz & Color Bred Canaries:
Winfield Checkley
Judging will begin at 9 a.m.
Entries accepted 7 - 9 a.m.

Eastern raffle:
Birds, cages, supplies and more
Cash prizes:
$300, $100, $100
No admission charge
For further information contact:
Karen Allen, Show Secretary
2815 Beckon Dr., Edgewood, MD 21040
Tel: (301) 679-2152

Colorado Cage Bird Association
presents its
Second Annual Bird Show
October 17, 1987
at The Colorado Springs City Auditorium
For more information contact:
Brian & Cindy Happ
5366 Descanso Circle E.,
Colorado Springs, CO 80918-3009
or call (303) 594-0003

Sun Coast Avian Society
presents 12th Annual Axotic & Pet Bird Show
October 17 & 18, 1987
Saint Petersburg Hilton & Towers
3333 First St. S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701
Reservations: (813) 894-5000
Categories & Judges:
ABS: Gil Barboza
ACS: Carter Atwood
NFS: Juanita McLain
ALBS: George Hilder
Psittacine/NCS: Harold Bowles
Type/Color Bred: Otto Manhne
American Singers: Allen Gibson

The Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club
will host its
Second Annual Judged Show
(with sale room)
October 24, 1987
at the Sheraton South Inn and Convention Center
1-65 South and Harding Place
Nashville, TN
Judges:
Harold Bowles, Ray Johnson &
Norman Beyer
Contact:
Ed Dittmar, Show Chairman
RT. 3, Box 469, Lovers Lane
Lebanon, TN 37087
Tel: (615) 444-4101

Rocky Mountain Society of Aviculture, Inc.
Annual Show
to be held
Saturday, October 31, 1987
Location to be announced.
For information contact
Terry Rune
6700 Van Gordon St.
Arvada, CO 80004
Tel: (303) 422-6529

Wisconsin Cage Bird Club
Tenth Annual Bird Show
September 30-31, 1987
Holiday Inn Onoksho, WI
9th & Highway 41
Judges:
Budgies: Crawford Maddox
Canaries: Harold Sodaman
Cockatiels: Nancy Reed
Hookbills & Finches: Ron Filip
Show Secretary: Alice Ann Wether
632 George St., Kaukauna, WI 54130
Tel: (414) 766-7455

Rocky Mountain Society of Aviculture, Inc.
Show Information update:
Saturday, November 1, 1987
Embassy Suites
7525 E. Hampden Avenue, Denver, CO
Contact Terry Rune
6700 Van Gordon St., Arvada, CO 80004
Tel: (303) 422-6529

Central California Cage Bird Club
All Bird Show
November 6, 7 & 8, 1987
at Turlock Fairgrounds
Turlock, CA (near Modesto)
Judges:
Budgies: Vic Devictoria
Hookbills: Mike Cunningham
Type Canaries: Leonard Quito
Red Factor Canaries: Mike Harbusha
Finches: Brian Mandarin
For information call:
Darlene Cortese, (408) 923-1178
San Jose, California

Avicultural Society of Tucson
presents its
Second Annual Bird Fair
November 8, 1987
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Thurber Hall, Pima County Fairgrounds
11300 S. Houghton Rd., off I-10
For information contact:
Doris Vant
4444 E. Benson Hwy., No. 71
Tucson, AZ 85706
Tel: (602) 574-9288

African Love Bird Society, San Diego Chapter
Hookbill Hobbyists of Southern California
North Country Aviculturalists
San Diego Bird Breeders
San Diego County Canary Club
San Diego Finch Society
Second San Diego Bird Show
November 13, 14, 15, 1987
Open to the public Saturday and Sunday
Del Mar Fairgrounds
Del Mar, California
Lower Clubhouse Building
Judges:
Exotics: Ray Johnson
Lovebirds: Janice Pritchard
Type Canaries: Robert Thompson
Red Factor Canaries: Albert Varda
Information:
Janice Pritchard
449 W. Douglas Ave., El Cajon, CA 92020
Tel: (619) 442-1164

Capital Area Avicultural Society
First Annual Bird Show
November 14, 1987
Holiday Inn Seigen Lant at I-10
Baton Rouge, LA
For show information contact:
Roxanne Corsaro
P.O. Box 14732
Baton Rouge, LA 70898
Tel: (504) 343-4647

Western New England Cage Bird Society
presents its
Fourth Annual All Bird Show
November 28, 1987
Ludlow Elks Club
Ludlow, MA
For information contact:
Show Committee Chairman
Lynn Oparowski
Tel: (413) 594-2371