It's fitting that Pampered Parrot Haven, Inc. be situated in the Town of Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York. That's where Teddy Roosevelt called home. Teddy was a sincerely dedicated wildlife and environmental conservationist. The Teddy Roosevelt bird sanctuary, located near the Roosevelt home, is a tribute to Teddy's early conservation efforts. Today, a man named Paul Gildersleeve, a life-long Oyster Bay resident, is following in Teddy's footsteps with the opening of a special kind of aviary.

The concept of this new endeavor is quite interesting, as Paul explains, "Pampered Parrot Haven is essentially an experiment. While business must make a profit to survive, we want to prove that it is possible to make a profit breeding birds without compromising the birds in any way. Profits should not be made at the birds' expense." Based upon this credo, Paul is offering, at wholesale prices, birds that are given super premium care and attention. The motivation behind this endeavor stems mainly from a sincere desire to assist birds and nature. "I've always loved wildlife and the outdoors," explains Paul. "Our tropical rain forests are being destroyed at the rate of 53 acres per minute. Birds, once free, must now be confined in cages. If that's the way it has to be, then it's time people learned how to coexist with birds and other creatures in a way that is mutually beneficial." Paul continues to explain that, in his opinion, there are practices employed by a few breeders that are giving the industry a bad name. Some quarantine stations and jobbers, he believes, knowingly ship sick birds just to get rid of the burden of caring for them. Usually, the birds die in shipment (or shortly thereafter) and the breeder collects insurance money from either his own insurance company or the carrier's. He further speculates that some quarantine stations and jobbers may even ship dead birds (kept frozen until needed) to collect the insurance, thereby compensating for previous expenses.

But these are extreme instances of improper care. Paul cites other, more
common practices that he feels compromises the health and well-being of birds. For example, there's the practice of tube feeding instead of hand feeding. According to Paul Gildersleeve, many breeders tend to tube feed their birds. It's fast and easy so the breeder saves time and money. But Paul feels that hand feeding is unquestionably better because it allows the breeder to interact with the bird, encouraging solid development. What's more, by spending time with each bird during the hand feeding process, breeders get to know their special needs. "We always hand feed our birds at Pampered Parrot Haven," says Paul. "Right now, we're caring for 12 babies. If we tube feed them, it would take us about 15 minutes. Hand feeding these babies takes over an hour. But, in the long run, we believe it's worth it. The birds are apt to be more sociable, interacting better with their new owners and environments.

For Paul, Pampered Parrot Haven is the culmination of years of interest and involvement with aviculture. His interest in birds started as a hobby and soon blossomed into a part-time occupation. After joining the National Audubon Society and spending vacations on bird watching expositions in remote locations for weeks at a time, Paul began to breed and sell birds on a small, part-time basis. During this time, he managed to build close relationships with professionals at the New York Bronx Zoo and the San Diego Zoo. By working with these professionals and combining this experience with his insatiable quest for information through empirical research, Paul soon earned a well-deserved reputation as a knowledgeable aviculturist. Continuing to build upon his credentials, Paul volunteered whatever spare time he had to various bird organizations. Today, Paul is New York State Coordinator for the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA), a member of the Long Island Parrot Society (LIPS), and a referral for the National Audubon Society in New York. He also picks up unwanted birds and tries to either place them with new owners or breed them.

In October of 1986, with a small amount of part-time business experience under his belt, Paul decided to expand his endeavor into a full-time occupation. "The initial transformation to a full-time business, even though I planned it carefully, was quite a jolt," exclaims Paul. "The reality of being your own boss and giving up a steady weekly salary was both exciting and stressing. But I'm glad I did it. I feel I'm helping the birds while making people happy, too.''

Considering that his aviary consists of over 200 birds, including Amazons, cockatoos, finches, cockatiels, canaries, African grays and pionus, Paul's method of care is quite extraordinary. The first chore of the day is to wash each baby and hand feed them. Each different formula is constantly checked for proper temperature and consistency. Babies are fed and cleaned every four hours. Weaned birds are fed special mixes based upon individual requirements. "Our research, based upon empirical studies and collabora-

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**Hands at Pampered Parrot Haven are band fed. This, the owner believes, will help the birds become better adapted to their new owners and environments.**
tion with avian experts, has shown a
definite link between longevity and
diet," adds Paul. "Many commercial
seed mixes contain mostly sunflower
seed. Our mixes contain 25 to 30 per-
cent sunflower seed maximum. Our
mixes are also served with various
fruits and vegetables. This is something
many breeders don't bother to provide
in any quantity. Here again, our
emphasis is on the bird's health, not
the breeder's convenience. We also
rely upon and act as resellers for cer-
tain commercial avian products such as
Roudybush, Nekton, Vitalite, and
VetRx. We have found these companies
to be responsive, reputable, and willing
to support their customers.'

As we talk, Paul frequently glances at
a television which displays two of the
many spacious avian living quarters in
the building. When asked about the
setup, Paul explained that he has four
cameras that constantly scan the major
living quarters. In this way, he can
easily check on the birds from his office, eliminating the need to physi-
cally watch over the birds. As he
explains further, "This frees up some
time, and I need all the spare time I can
find.'

If you think Paul is meticulous about
the care and feeding of his birds, wait
until you try to adopt one. First of all,
Pampered Parrot Haven does not con-
duct business with dealers or pet
stores. In fact, after careful evaluation,
Paul has so far identified only two pet
stores in New York state capable of pro-
viding the level of care he expects his
birds to have. Occasionally, when a
customer wants a bird not presently at
Pampered Parrot Haven, Paul will
attempt to obtain the bird from another
breeder. But so far, he has found only
four breeders that meet his minimum
care requirements; one in New York,
one in Arizona, and two in California.

To adopt a bird through Pampered
Parrot Haven, you must first undergo a
prescreening process. "Prescreening is
exremely critical," says Paul. "Thanks
to this process, we have not had a
single problem relating to a sale. The
owners are happy and the birds are
happy.' During the prescreening
process, Paul tests the prospect's
knowledge of birds, explores why the
prospect wants a bird, and evaluates
the environment the prospect plans to
provide. Paul also insists that each pro-
spect visit their bird at the aviary at last
three or four times prior to taking pos-
session. During these visits, the future
owner and the bird establish a relation-
ship and Paul evaluates the potential
success of the relationship as they
interact. He can also observe the care
and feeding techniques of the future
owner. Once Paul is satisfied that the
match is a good one, he'll complete the
sale. (Pampered Parrot Haven will not
release a bird for sale until the bird is
eating on its own for at least ten days
and holding its weight. Birds do not
start to be weaned until they are fully
feathered.) A contact sheet is supplied
with the bird during the transfer of
ownership. The contact sheet lists the
bird's birth place and date, weight,
diet, recommended veterinarians in
the owner's area, and other vital infor-
mation. Paul expects new owners to
call him frequently and provide status
reports concerning the progress of
each relationship. Furthermore, Paul
will not hesitate to drop in on new
owners from time to time and obtain a
first-hand view of the situation.

While commercial shipment of birds
from Pampered Parrot Haven is highly
disseminated, Paul will consider it on
occasion, as long as he feels that condi-
tions are adequate. "The decision of
not shipping birds severely limits our
business, but the safety of our birds
comes first. Despite this self-imposed
restriction we have had people visit us
from over 150 miles away to purchase
birds,' mentions Paul.

When asked about the business
status of Pampered Parrot Haven, Paul
responded as follows. "So far, the busi-
ess is holding its own. We've been in
business for over eight months now,
and we're keeping our heads above
water. Bird sales are basically covering
our operating expenses. Once we do
sell a bird, we hope the new owner
will support us further by purchasing
their supplies from us.'

If Pampered Parrot Haven proves
successful, everyone will emerge a
winner. Marginal undedicated breeders
will be forced out of the business due
to lower profit margins and increased
demand for higher quality. Breeders
that survive by providing this higher
quality will be rewarded by greater
sales and profits. The image of the
breeding industry will be bolstered due
to the higher standards. Customers will
benefit by obtaining a healthier, more
adaptable bird, and birds will benefit
from the increased attention and care.
At worst, if the experiment fails, others
may be able to learn from this experi-
ence and, someday, discover the
proper mix of ingredients to make this
concept a success. In any event, Pam-
pered Parrot Haven is presently making
many people and birds very happy.
More importantly, Paul's on-going
efforts are helping mankind realize the
importance of aviculture and the need
to save these rare and priceless gifts of
nature. In that regard, I'd be might proud.
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