

James J. Murphy

1944 - 1999

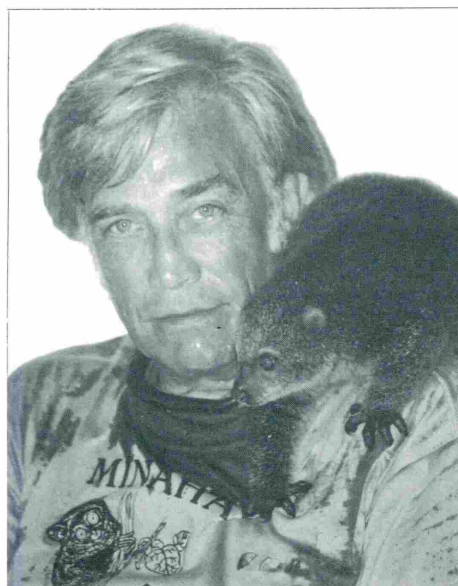
by Jan Roger van Oosten, Seattle, WA

Jim was born on October 10, 1944 in LaCross, Wisconsin and passed away on December 28, 1999 in Graham, Washington. He graduated from North Dakota University with a degree in biology. He served one hitch in the U.S. Army in Japan before coming to the State of Washington where he worked as a geologist for King County and also attended classes at Western Washington University and the University of Washington. He eventually changed jobs and spent 10 years working for Tacoma City Light as an avian biologist.

He began keeping parrots and in 1981 he left Tacoma City Light to spend full time building the White Mountain Bird Farm, his first love. Today it is one of the top breeding centers in the United States with youngsters being shipped around the world.

Besides his lifelong love of birds, especially parrots, he was a landscaper, horticulturist, koi breeder, and an avid collector of arrowheads and other Native American artifacts.

With his guidance "The Farm" was extremely successful with Amazons, macaws, cockatoos and African Greys. His breeding of Lilac-crowned Amazons, *Amazona finschi*, through the fifth generation is certainly a major achievement. Parent-reared Moluccan Cockatoos are rare in aviculture these



days but common at White Mountain.

Another of his great successes was the teaching of his first hand-reared Goffin's Cockatoo – Ivory – to be a free-flying stay at home pet bird. Jim's love for Ivory was a wonder to see and it was especially unique to see Ivory's return of that love. The tricks that this parrot learned on its own were amazing. She learned to ring the front doorbell when everyone was inside then peek around the window frame to see if Jim was coming to answer. If he was, she would fly off to watch him open the door.

Ivory also had a sincere dislike for crows and at the sight of one or a flock, she would take off to attack. For the opening of his small bird park Jim also had trained, using the same falconry techniques he used with Ivory, three Bare-eyed Cockatoos and was working with several Macaws.

Jim constantly read books dealing with nature in all its facets and especially aspects dealing with behavioral characteristics, not only concerning birds but mammals as well. From his reading and thinking he developed his theories for the selective breeding and domestication of "parrots for the habitat of your living room." It was his life-time project and he had perfected it by 1999 with living proof consisting of four youngsters that while being hand-reared began talking just 63 to 77 days after hatching. Think of that — producing pet parrots that were talking by the time they fledged.

In 1984 Jim and I founded "The Amazona Society" in order to promote that family of birds and to bring together all Amazon breeders and others with an interest in these wonderful parrots. Jim served as treasurer from the beginning and then took over the editorship of the society's periodical which he still held upon his death.

The last time I saw Jim was in Toronto at the Canadian Parrot Symposium. He was happy and we spoke about what was going on with my work in the Solomon Islands which he wanted to join next year to see the Ducorp's Cockatoo in the wild. He was really excited about the chance to see and work with these birds in the wild. Now, every time I see a Ducorp's Cockatoo in the wild I will think of Jim and our long friendship and what he has done for aviculture.

It is my fervent hope that some aviculturists continue his work and expand on his effort toward "breeding parrots for the habitat of the living room." No finer tribute could be paid to a wonderful individual, a truly great parrot breeder, and a loving family man and an outstanding aviculturist.

He is survived by his wonderful wife Susan, four grandchildren, four brothers, and two sisters. 🐦

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