

Bernard Roer

1916 - 1999

by Jim Hawley, Jr., Queen Creek, AZ

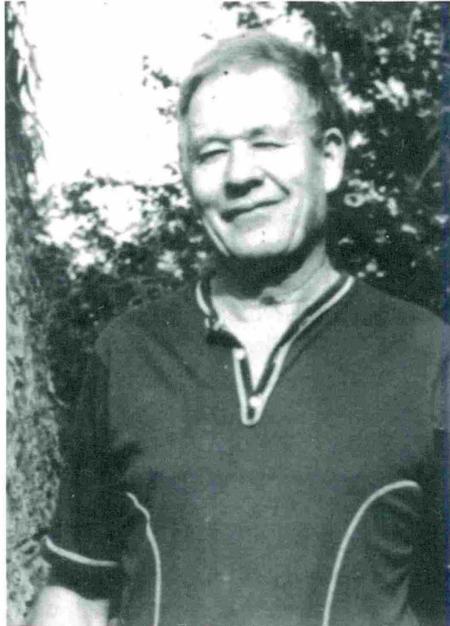
Bernard Roer, one of the Giant Redwoods in the world of aviculture, quietly passed away December 20th, 1999. As I thought about it, it seemed an irony of sorts — as we close the century, so we close the 100-year book containing many chapters on this great contributor to aviculture.

At the time of his passing, Bernard had been involved with birds longer than any other living soul that I know of on the face of the earth. Born July 13, 1916 in Logan, Kansas, he moved, while still a young boy, with his family to Phoenix, Arizona, where they were involved in farming.

Bernard started his avicultural career in 1921 with a chicken that had a broken leg and was destined to become the evening meal. He convinced his father that he could fix the bird and take care of it. He did and it became a true friend and a pet for many years. When his father gave him the chicken he imparted to him the immortal words that many of us have heard Bernard speak— “OK, now you have live stock and sometimes you will have dead stock.” Bernard retold this to me when I was eight years old while I was raising Red-saddled Fantail Show Pigeons. I had a couple of chicks die while hatching with my assistance and I called him to discuss my problems. I am a slow learner so it took me a while to figure out what that statement meant.

Bernard was always willing to visit with anyone who was seriously interested in birds — he'd visit with whoever dropped by the farm or called him on the phone. Sometimes he seemed somewhat abrupt, but it's just that he did not have a lot of patience with stupidity. His influence has reached far beyond anyone's wildest dreams, especially his, and I wonder if he even realized it. He was very humble.

Bernard has been an inspiration to many, young and old alike, and has



mentored many of the great aviculturists of his time and ours. To name only a few, Dave West, Jack Thropp, Mickey Ollson, Francis Billie, and Bernie Teunissen. And Bernard was considered a colleague by such great men as Dr. Jean Delacour.

The Roer Bird Farm was a Mecca for bird people from all over the world including aviculturists, ornithologists, professors, and bird enthusiasts, but especially for thousands of school children who were given tours almost daily over the years.

Bernard was a founding member of the Arizona Aviculture Society, and was one of the driving forces that helped found the Phoenix Zoo. He also brought poultry exhibiting to the Arizona State Fair which filtered down to every county fair in Arizona. Roer's birds were always represented in the poultry division at every Arizona State Fair and Bernard promoted youth showmanship constantly.

Bernard Roer was an icon in the world avicultural community. He had received almost every honor and recognition that could be bestowed or given

an individual for involvement with birds. He had experience with almost every kind of bird that is or has been kept in captivity. And yet Bernard never took himself too seriously. He was truly a legend in his own time and now will live on through his legacy of those he taught and influenced.

Bernard Roer never wrote any books about birds — he was written about. He did not give lectures or speeches about birds — others quoted him.

If only we had known how much he would be missed, we would have taken more time and, over a cookie or two, visited more about birds.

Bernard is survived by his loving wife, Barbara, nine children, 20 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. ➤

Donation on Behalf of William (Bill) Wilson

I am making a donation to the American Federation of Aviculture in memory of William (Bill) Wilson who passed away 16 April 1990. He was an avid supporter of AFA and received the Phyllis Martin Outstanding Member Award several times and held office as Mideastern Regional Vice President for several years.

Many probably remember Bill in connection with Norshore Pets and his success raising birds such as the Painted Conure and the Queen of Bavaria Conure. I'm sure that although he is gone, he is not forgotten by the many who knew him.

Lynn Courier ➤