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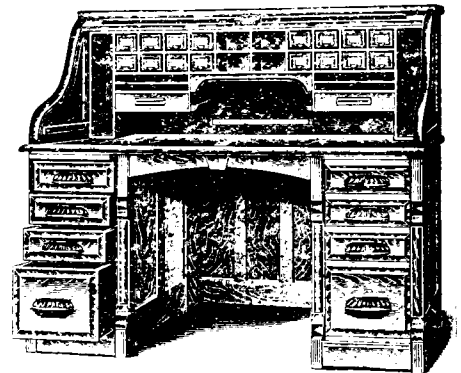
NOTICE

All correspondence intended for the editor of the Watchbird should be mailed directly to his address.

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



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I have been breeding cockatiels for about four years and have had a lot of pleasure with my birds and some sadness. I have sixteen cockatiels now and know and love every one of them. They all have names. I am breeding for beautiful colored babies, not for a profit.

Two of the babies hatched over the last four years have had spraddled legs. The first one now gets along with just a slight limp. I worked with her, exercising her legs, for over two months.

The second one is Toby. I wrote to you about him several months ago. He is crippled in both legs. He has grip but his feet are turned backwards. I took him to doctors and even wrote to several bird magazines for help. Finally I received a letter from the editor of the Watchbird which in summary said to just accept Toby the way he was - and I have.

Toby cannot walk but boy, can he fly. He takes off and lands the way a plane does. When he lands he just drops his landing gear and comes in low. In his cage he has a towel that he sits on. He moves around on his belly and manuevers himself with his wings and beak. Of course I will never clip his

wings. We take long walks together, I walk and he flies. Toby can talk and can whistle anything I want him to learn. God gave him the gift of loving life as it is.

Toby had faith and trust in me and I have faith and trust in God. I thank God for Toby and I'm sure there are lots of Tobys out there. When I get home and see Toby crippled but whistling away, happy to see me, it gives me faith in life even on my most terrible days.

The above letter is the second one received from Karen and Toby. The first one arrived a few months ago and I intended to publish it along with my response. Well, folks, even the editor gets edited sometimes. My wife and our art director, Jean Hessler, vetoed my response. They thought I treated a sensitive subject a little too lightly. In view of the second letter (above) and Toby's excellent state of mind as well as some of my prophecies being fulfilled I have over-ridden the veto. The following is the first letter and my original response.

Ed.

Dear Editor,

HELP. Toby my cockatiel friend and I are asking for help, either information as to what more I can do for him or an excellent vet in the area.

I breed cockatiels and this particular cockatiel is 5 to 6 weeks old. I have hand fed him since 4 days old plus plenty of other babies with excellent results. The parents stopped feeding him because his legs were out to the sides, either because of lack of vitamin D or sat on too tight. He does not have rickets, beak is fine, perfect health, skin and feathers, sings happily, eyes are good and the legs are not overgrown.

To this day he cannot stand. He has an excellent grip with his feet. I have and am working with his legs, bending and turning little by little. I prop him up with a towel to keep legs bent. I have made progress, legs bend, feet out to side and the legs still fall out of socket. When in my hand with support his one leg is under him. He gets around very well, sad but true, on his belly and knee joints.

Normally, I would have a bird like this put to sleep but this is sure a rare case. You would think a bird like this would be sad, mopey, sickly.

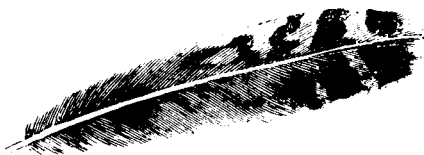
He eats like a hound and also maneuvers his way to the food dish and does eat on his own. I'm still hand feeding a little.

Help. What else can I do. There has to be something. I do pray. Toby is the strongest and cutest of all. I have been told his face is the cutest they have seen. He has good coloring and is very alert, has picked up a whistle of mine, very intelligent.

I don't want to destroy my friend Toby and of course will keep him. I am not going to give up and Toby, by his eyes, is not giving up either.

Please respond. Thanks.

Karen Curran and Toby



My dear madame, given my morbid sense of humor, your letter offers me just too much material to deal with. I'll try to keep an iron grip on myself and trust my more normal wife will edit out my unacceptable responses.

First off, there has to be a reason why Toby's legs are deformed. It may be a simple physical reason based upon diet, metabolism, a physical trauma, etc., etc. A good vet might diagnose the problem and still be unable to correct it. Then again, the bird may be living out some bad karma. Maybe in a previous life he spit on a snake and is now fated to go on his belly also. Who knows all of the ways of the world?

If you pray sincerely and God does not work a miracle, perhaps the bird erred somewhere along the line. After all, God punishes.

If everything about the bird works except his legs, I suggest you adjust to that situation and take some positive, creative steps. First you might build a tiny skateboard and teach Toby to propel himself with his wings. If the skateboard is designed with aerodynamics in mind he might even be able to take off and land something like a pontoon plane. For short hops around the house you can build strategically placed catapults that Toby can enter and release with his beak. Pull a string here and ZIP he is hefted over there. There is, in fact, a Rube Goldberg type toy that has all the little trap doors, conveyor belts, and levers necessary to transport a little wooden, or a paraplegic bird almost anywhere you want it to go.

After all, people accept other people with handicaps. I myself, spent several years working with a school for handicapped children. In a very short time the kid's personalities come to the fore and one tends to completely forget their handicaps.

To sum up, give it your best shot with the veterinarians and maybe Toby can be healed. If not, follow my advice and dwell upon the positive factors in Toby's life. After all, he can be very happy and healthy without legs. And, by the way, I'd change his name to Porgy.

Ed.

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CLASSIFIED RATES — \$5.00 minimum charge for 4 lines of type (average 7 words per line). Additional charge of 9¢ per word for ad running over 28 words. (28 words to include name, address and phone.) All copy to be **RECEIVED BY 10th** day of month preceding publication. One inch boxed ad - 58 word maximum — \$12.00.

Hatched in my aviary & handfed. NOT QUARANTINE. All under 4 mos. Blue & Gold, Military X Green wing, & Catalina macaws. Umbrella & Citron cockatoos. African greys. Quality, not quantity. Mickey Hensel, Rt. 1 Box 222, Kankakee, Ill., 60901, (815) 932-9631. S.A.S.E.

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FARMING UNCLE. International Journal, Periodical for Natural People and Nature Lovers. P.O. Box 91 - B7, Liberty, New York 12754. 1 year subscription only \$8.00.

SUN CONURES: Tame handfed baby Blue Head Pionus. African Grey, Grand Eclectus, Yellow Napes, etc. all hatched in our aviary. Jo Hall, Thorndale, Texas. (512) 898-2552.

CATALINA MACAWS & UMBRELLA COCKATOOS. Handfed babies, cuddly. Hatched in my aviary. Brilliant colors. Mickey Hensel, Rt. 1 Box 222, Kankakee, Ill., 60901, (815) 932-9631.

POSITIONS WANTED: For experienced and respected bird persons. Breeding, taming, retail, wholesale, and managerial experience. Knowledgeable in all aspects of birds and pet industry. Willing to work with any animals. Will relocate anywhere. Two persons available, together or separately. For resumes - H. Beck/T. Buchanan, 66 Orchard, Cambridge, Mass., 02140, (617) 834-9298 eves./864-2211.

J & R Parrot Ranch is offering for sale: Hand-fed Yellow Napes \$450, Baby Blue & Gold Macaws \$750, and many more fine birds. Send SASE for list. 11217 Pala Place, Mira Loma, CA 91752, (714) 685-5118.

Cockatiels 1980 hatch - normal \$25., pied & albino \$45., ½ English parakeets, 3 young orange wings in excellent health \$85. ea., trade for breeding pairs. Rod Hug (707) 539-3413.

TOTALLY TAME MACAWS, COCKATOOS. Hobbist acquires birds for orders. Sits 30 days precautionary home quarantine, excellent diet. Satisfaction within 3 days or money back! References. KATHY VERBECK, WINGS UNLIMITED, (216) 493-0560, Monday-Friday, 4 pm-8 pm.

Continued on next page.

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Imported exhibition Budgerigars, Lady Gouldians, Chestnut Breasted, parrot finches, owl finches. Wanted: mutation Bourkes, scarlet chested, Stanley's Rosellas, home bred birds only. Dr. R.G. Travnicek, Wilber, NB 68465, (402) 821-2121.

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ANNOUNCING NEW BIRD PRODUCTS "Perfect Red" and "Pure Red" water dispersible canthaxanthin colorants for red birds; "Beta Carotene" color enhancers for all birds; "Multi Vites" water dispersible complete vitamin mixture and "5-1-8" vitamin-mineral supplement for birds and all pets. Dealers, distributors wanted. Canadian inquiries invited. Write/call: Clifford's Pet Supplies, Box 1994 Blasdeil, NY 14219. (716) 822-3278.

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