

The Village Aviaries



Babe and Bill Mackey

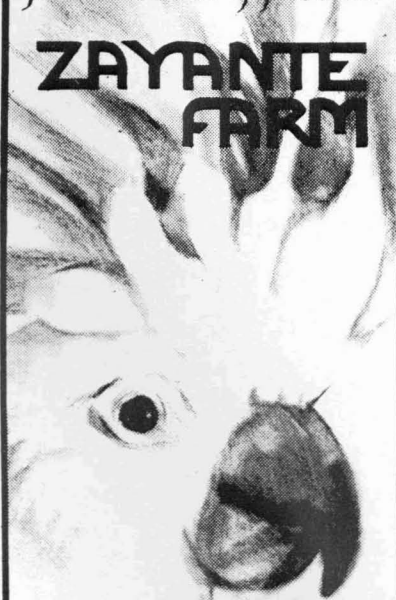
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Canary Culture

by Tony Bucci
San Pedro, California

A Visit With European Breeders

Three years ago I wrote an article describing the Parisian Frill canary, describing its beautiful characteristics in detail. The parts of the Parisian Frill are all named using the French language. It took much research and translation to assemble this article. Convinced of its accuracy, the article was accepted and published in the September 1979 issue of *American Cage-Bird Magazine*.

Five weeks after the article appeared in *A.C.B.M.*, I received a letter from Marseille, France. It was written in very good English and signed by Francois Bourdon, a Frenchman obviously by his name and the origin of the letter. What prompted Francois to write the letter was to correct two incorrectly spelled French words which he noticed when he read the article. Constructive criticism never hurt anyone. To the contrary, Francois and I became very good friends. We have been corresponding since then, exchanging ideas on aviculture in general. In his letters Francois invited me many times to visit him if ever in Europe. Last summer my son and I, Tony Jr., who had a desire to search for our family roots, went to Europe. And one of our side trips was a visit to Francois.

From Los Angeles, after one stop in New York, we landed in Milano, Italy. There we rented a car, and our adventure began by dodging Europeans who drive like Kamikaze pilots! During the first days of our tour in Northern Italy, we visited many bird breeders. One breeder who deserves mention is my long-time friend, Domenic Zanchetta, whom I've

known for many years.

Domenic is a dedicated breeder of Parisian Frills. A winner at most local shows, this year he became champion at the International Show (C.O.M.) which was held in Belgium. To win at the International Show is quite an honor. There were more than 15,000 birds exhibited. Domenic lives in the small town of Saronno, bordering Milano. He has a beautiful home surrounded by a garden with many fruit trees and a vegetable garden yielding many greens which he cultivates with tender loving care. His canaries never miss a day without greens or fruit. The two-room guest house with its colorful tiled floors located at the end of the garden is his bird room. There he breeds and houses his most exquisite Parisian Frills. Every time I visit Domenic I turn green with envy. He has the best Parisian Frills in the world.

As in previous times when visiting Domenic, we didn't escape without a good Italian dinner and some vintage wine from his own cellar. The same day, Domenic took me to see his friend, Ignazio Giambertone, who breeds Gibber Italicus canaries. Ignazio lives in Milano where he made one of the rooms of his 5th floor apartment into

Photos by Tony Bucci



Ignazio Giambertone with his Gibber Italicus. Notice the large breeding cages made of brass and chromed.



Tony Jr. and Domenic Zanchetta in Domenic's back yard. The nestling food is sun dried crumbs of a special sweet bread Domenic makes himself.

a bird room. I was impressed with his breeding cages which he made himself. The cages are made of brass stock and then chromed. The seed hoppers are all hand-made and have a wire mesh bottom to prevent accumulation of dust. It is a very convenient device; there is no need of blowing the dust and getting a headache.

Ignazio's Gibber Italicus canaries are the finest I have ever seen. For those who don't know, Gibber Italicus is the smallest of the frilled canaries developed in Italy. I am very proud of this breed, which I keep myself.

Our next objective was to head for France. We left Milano at 8:30 in the morning and 3 hours later reached Genova on the Mediterranean coast. Italy has very good freeways, and driving through the Italian countryside is a pleasure. The stretch from Milano to Genova reminded me of our beautiful Oregon. Once on the Mediterranean coast, we drove toward the town of Ventimiglia, which is on the border of France. Still hugging the coast, we crossed the border where the freeway then rides high above the French Riviera.

We passed the Principality of Monaco, then Nice and Cannes, and arrived in Marseille at 3:30 in the afternoon. The traffic at this time is maddening. After securing a room at a hotel, we went to visit with Francois. He was very surprised as I never told him I was coming. My whole trip to Europe was a last-minute decision, so I had a good excuse for not being able to warn him.

Francois and his girlfriend, Emi, were very glad to see us. His three bedroom apartment is perched on the 16th floor. Two bedrooms are used to house his birds. His main interests now are Zebra and Society Finches. Francois is fascinated with new mutations. Recently, he acquired a frilled Zebra from a Japanese breeder in Tokyo. He has other frilled Zebras which he breeds with great care. His objective is to establish and cultivate this mutation to a point where it would resemble the beautiful Parisian frilled canary.

The walls of Francois's apartment are lined with shelves full of books and magazines, all bird related. Francois subscribes to 50 bird magazines, including "Watchbird." His love affair with birds began when he was 15 years old. His mother gave him a pair of Spice Finches (*Lanchura punctulata*). Later he bred budgerigars and Type canaries.

My intention was to have a short visit with Francois, but he insisted that we stay in Marseille at least two days. The next day, they gave us a royal tour of Marseille and we also visited the Museum of Modern Art.

On the same day, Francois included in the itinerary a visit with a noted canary breeder. In the afternoon we visited with Mr. Claude Catalano. We were greeted by him and his very gracious wife who appears to be involved with canaries just as much as Claude is. The bird room

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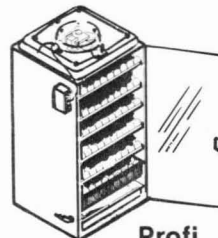


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is part of the house and occupies almost half of it. Claude breeds color canaries and is especially fond of his opals. Opal canaries have the tendency to come up with frilled feathers, which is not a desirable feature for the opal canary. Claude has a solution for this malady. He introduced opal factor into his opals which eliminated the frilling problem.

One of Mr. Catalano's yearly programs is to vaccinate all of his canaries. Most European canary breeders vaccinate their canaries against canary-pox. Why is it that canary-pox vaccine is not available in this country? Well, that's another story.

The Catalanos also raise several Australian finches, using a fostering system with societies. The nests used in their society cages is of the cup type, the same nest used for canaries. The nestling formula for their canaries and finches does not include hard-boiled eggs. Claude claims eggs cause liver ailments.

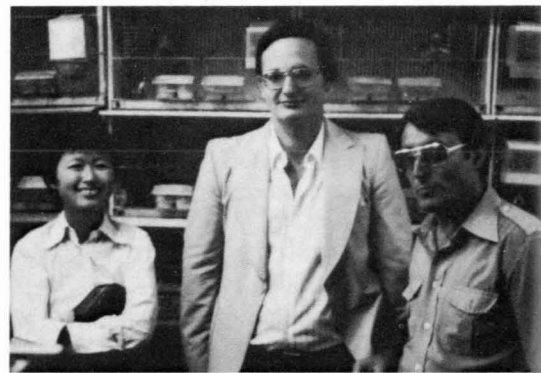
Another phase of aviculture Claude is involved with is hybridizing. Hybridizing is very popular in Europe. Many breeders specialize only in hybrids. Claude has obtained a beautiful hybrid by mating a male satinet to a European Gold Finch hen. The hybrid is a satinet, obviously a hen, totally diluted with no black left. Red eyes and an orange mask make the bird appear as if it was colored with pastel chalk.

Our visit with the Catalanos ended late in the evening with hors d'oeuvres and French wine.

The next day Francois scheduled a side trip to the small town of Cassis, a beautiful seashore resort town south of Marseille. There we spent most of the morning sightseeing and enjoying the balmy Mediterranean weather. In the afternoon we had scheduled a visit with another bird breeder. Running a bit late, and now driving on the freeway, Francois took advantage of his Citroen's performance. We reached some hair-raising speeds. I was afraid to look at his speedometer, and in panic I remember mentioning to Francois that it was not that important to see this guy!

We reached the residence of Mr. Jean-Pierre Marchant late in the afternoon. Mr. Marchant is a certified exotic bird judge. His last year's efforts in the bird room were to improve the quality of self societies. Not only did his societies win at all the shows, he created a totally black society. Yes, a pure black society. I think it is first in the world.

The technique Mr. Marchant used was to cross a Black Hooded Nun to a self society. These crosses are fertile and therefore able to reproduce. After several

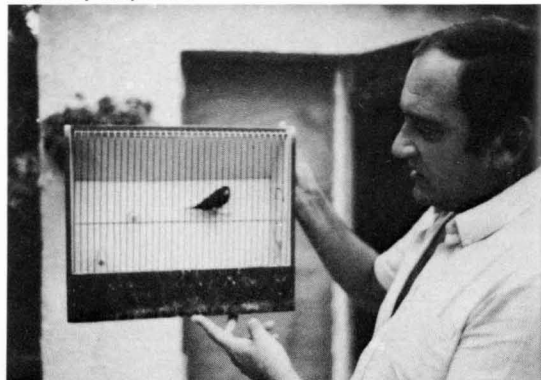


From the left Emi, Francois, and Mr. Claude Catalano in his bird room.

generations of crossing back and forth, the result was a black society. Mr. Marchant was very proud of his achievement, and he should be. The only way to succeed in something like this is to specialize. We had to cut our visit short as it got dark and began to rain.

We returned to Marseille, and I spent a nice evening at Francois's place. Emi prepared another delicious dinner, and we sipped wine and talked birds until early morning. I will never forget the hospitality we received in France, thanks to Francois and Emi.

Photos by Tony Buccia



Mr. Jean-Pierre Marchant and his totally black society finch.

The next morning we left Marseille and reached Milano, Italy late in the evening. Our trip back to Italy was slowed by continuous storms and rain. This weather is expected in northern Italy during the first part of September. My son, Tony, had a treat with the natural fireworks of thunder and lightning. Coming from Southern California, he has rarely seen this.

We spent a few more days in Italy and visited more bird breeders, making sure to leave a "Watchbird" with each breeder we visited. Prior to my departure, Helen Hanson had given me several copies of "Watchbird" to distribute throughout Europe.

Although we enjoyed our trip to Europe immensely, we were happy to be back in the Good Ole U.S.A. ●