

The President's Comments

by Lee Phillips
Harwood, Maryland

As I approach the end of my term as President, I wish to re-affirm my confidence in the American Federation of Aviculture as the premier defender of our right to keep and breed birds. Recent events in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Alabama have indicated that, given the opportunity to present their viewpoints supported by facts, aviculturists can refute the malicious statements offered by those who would further restrict our avicultural pursuits.

I leave office with some satisfactions and, I have to admit, a little pride. It has been a unique privilege to have headed an organization of such diverse interests which, nevertheless, focus on one major objective, namely, to retain our right to keep birds.

It is a source of pride for me to leave A.F.A. with an efficient and smoothly functioning Home Office sensitive to the needs of the membership; to know that A.F.A. is in sound financial condition and in the hands of capable financial direction: escrow accounts have been established to service our obligations to our Life members and on-going funding for the Research and Conservation Committees has been established out of membership dues. There has been an 8-page increase in the size of the A.F.A. *Watchbird* due, in part, to larger numbers of advertisers. Further, for the first time A.F.A. has been represented at the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species (C.I.T.E.S.).

New by-laws, a legislative position paper and fact sheet, revised state coordinator packets, revised delegate packets and the inauguration of a state co-ordinator's newsletter and a club delegate newsletter have been steps forward as also the utilization of the regional vice presidents in the decision-making process.

A.F.A. has gained stature in the national and international avicultural community as evidenced by the request from the Venezuelan Audubon Society for our help in sustaining the population of the black-hooded siskin; U.S. Fish & Wildlife's use of our members in establishing the rules for the consortium for the black palm cockatoos; the excellent partnership which exists between A.F.A. and the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and our endeavors to

establish a working relationship with World Wildlife Fund.

The number of affiliated clubs has increased by 33% to a record 130 and A.F.A. income has risen by almost 50%. With growth comes a corresponding increase in operating expense and staff salaries have been raised to bring them more in line with local wages. A.F.A. *Watchbird* Editor Sheldon Dingle will have a copy editor to work as his assistant.

We are entering a critical period for the survival of aviculture as we know it and my primary concern is the apathy exhibited by the general membership toward the threats to aviculture from ill-conceived legislation. Now, more than ever, we are threatened by legislation at the state level which could impact seriously on the entire avicultural scene. And the threat exists also that legislation of a highly restrictive nature will be introduced at the national level. In order to meet our moral and/or ethical responsibility to propagate those species faced with extinction in the wild due to habitat destruction and the encroachment of humanity, we must be alert to those dangers and prepared to take the initiative in convincing those who oppose us that we are the true conservationists. Perhaps then we can all join in convincing countries such as Australia to permit the export of fauna which they annually slaughter as pests.

I am very grateful to the many A.F.A. officers, committee chairmen and members who have been helpful and also to our affiliated clubs, new commercial members, Life members, dealers and advertisers for the support and confidence they have placed in A.F.A.

There is a great need for A.F.A.'s purpose and message to be more widely heard and I feel it is imperative that we obtain professional help in the areas of public relations, membership promotion, advertising and conventions and I intend to ask the Board of Directors at its annual meeting to approve a budget item for such help.

I expect to continue to work for A.F.A. and I urge your support for my successor. We need to work together to achieve the purpose for which A.F.A. was founded. ●



Ken McConnell

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