



This revolving, hexagonal cage, designed by Mary Jo Thomas' husband, is divided into four compartments and makes for easy maintenance and minimum labor.

Confessions of a Late Bloomer (and the Revolving Cage)

by Mary Jo Thomas
Jacksonville, Florida

Fourteen years ago I retired from the working field. I contemplated several hobbies to ease me over into the leisure style of retirement life and little did I know that a hobby could become a main focal point in my life. I decided on buying a bird!

I selected a beautiful, little blue-masked lovebird and, not knowing a single thing about birds, I worked for several months trying to tame this adult bird and had no success at all! The more I tried, the meaner he got. Well, that motivated me into buying a mate for him and trying my luck at breeding lovebirds. This was the beginning of the most satisfying, gratifying and pleasurable hobby I have ever had.

I bought a nice, wooden, stand-up glass aviary for my den and proceeded to find a mate for Beau Jangles. I finally located a beautiful specimen in one of the local pet shops (I didn't realize we had a great bird club here in Jacksonville). I set up my project exactly as the pet shop instructed and before long we had a good laugh. Beau Jangles turned out to be the female and Jingle Bells turned out to be the male! Soon they were tending to a nest full of eggs. I was afraid to disturb the birds so to freshen up the cage I kept putting in more and more cedar shavings instead of emptying the bottom tray. It wasn't long before the seed moths were flying around in the den. At this my husband said, "Whoa. Here's what we're gonna

do." He designed and built a beautiful hexagon-shaped cage around the base of my huge oak tree in the middle of my backyard. The wooden structure had wire sides and bottom. In time, I had blue-masked lovebirds coming out of my ears and I wouldn't part with a one! I finally decided on trading birds instead of selling so I acquired a pair of pretty black-masks. By George, they did the same thing and before long I was heavy into black-masks. I traded some of them for a pair of peach-faced lovebirds. This hexagon-shaped cage was divided into four very good sized compartments and, since it was out of doors under that big, old tree, it wasn't long before the birds had started whittling on the main supports. The area sometimes stayed damp so the birds quickly began to destroy the main struts. Damp wood makes for dandy whittling.

When my husband saw the success I was having raising birds (a surprise to both of us), he designed another permanent, hexagon, revolving cage of welded pipe, covered with a galvanized metal roof, also divided into four nice sized compartments for different kinds of birds and I was filling it up fast! By decking the whole backyard it not only looked attractive, but helped with easy maintenance. The revolving cage made feeding and watering very convenient because I could stand still while the entire cage revolved on its

axis just at the outside edge of the decking — perfect for daily cleaning with the hose and the birds soon learned to expect their regular baths. (Heavy, clear plastic shields the birds from cold drafts.)

In the meantime, I joined the Jacksonville Avicultural Society and saw other types of birds that would be fun to own. (Little did I realize they owned me, I don't own them!)

I soon learned the technique of pulling the babies for hand-feeding. Now the true fun and enjoyment starts! I have received two "first breeding" awards from our club and, at present, I'm trying to breed a pair of black-headed caiques. These are my favorite birds because they are not only beautiful, but comical and intelligent as well. I entered color prints of some of my hand-fed babies in the AFA photo contest and the last I heard they were holding their own in the competition.

My husband nicknamed my collection "Jo's Funny Farm" because we have lots of birds and a large, black Persian as a "guard cat" by the name of Rinky Dinky. He has never bothered my birds, but he won't let any other animal into the backyard.

A word of caution: If you want to own every bird you see, *the love bug has bitten!* Hold it to an easy, workable hobby so you can enjoy it. Good luck!

Nestmates Anonymous

This service is to match unmated birds, to bring joy to forlorn single birds and their discouraged owners, and to broaden the gene pool in needy species.

To list a bird give as much of the following as you can: English name or names by which it is known, Latin name and sex; your name, address and phone number; one dollar for up to four birds.

To answer a listing send a separate letter for each bird sought (each one goes to a different source), including your name, address and phone number; enclose a dollar for each bird sought (to cover mailing your response).

Address all communications to Ms. Cathy Grosse, 3120 Epworth Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211. Do not write to the *Watchbird!*

WANTED:

Female Red-breasted Bluebill Finch
(*Spermophaga haematina*)
Either sex Black-faced Firefinch
(*Lagonosticta larvata*)
Either sex Rufous-backed Mannikin
or Nun
(*Lonchura nigriceps*) ●