



The Summer Adventure Begins

Convention Gossip
by Rona Parrot

OK, Birdhearts. When you finish reading this sentence, I want you all to stop, get up, and march your feathered little fannies to the telephone and make those plane reservations for Seattle! Now, go! As long as the airlines are fighting to see who can give the worst service and the lowest fares, we all can get to Seattle for less than the price of a maroon bellied conure. Of course, the lunch you'll get will look like lunch for a maroon bellied conure, too.

No matter, darlings, once you're there, your *real* summer adventure will begin! It's an adventure only feather fanatics can appreciate. Bird people from all over the world will be mingling to brag about last year's conquests, puzzle over last year's failures, and learn the secrets of bird breeding for next year's successes. Freely translated, darlings, that means you're going to have one hell of a grand time as the AFA Convention swallows you up with non-stop bird talk, where the amateurs meet the experts, where the experienced breeders learn from the novices, where you find out that you're not doing so badly, or, poor babies, that keeping 3000 birds doesn't necessarily mean you're doing so great, except, perhaps, in bird-droppings technology. And that's worth something too!

And the speaker's list, darlings! It's growing by leaps and bounds! The last time we visited, Birdhearts, we only had three block-busters for you, well check out these new additions: First we have the Lory Legend himself, JOE LONGO, who will show us how to keep several Hundred lorries and lorikeets without going crazy with diets and housing. Then we have DON ADAMS, that lovely man from Canada who set up a zoo, a zoo darlings, in a shopping mall! Next,

from the University of Washington, Dept. of Ornithology, we have DENNIS PAULSON who will be speaking on native species of the Great Northwest. And I'm not talking about JOE McLAUGHLIN, Birdhearts. JERRY JENNINGS will be doing a presentation of the rearing of toucans in the home or office, and, as luck would have it, BARRY WOLD will be talking on aviary management, something we all could use a little more of.

Good news, Birdhearts! ROSEMARY LOW has taken the position of Curator of Birds at Loro Parque in the Canary Islands! Bad news, Birdhearts, the rumor is that this may mean she cannot attend the convention. Rona is sad, but wishes Rosemary the very best.

We are sincerely honored, Birdhearts, to have one of the finest curators in the country, Mr. ROBERT BERRY from Houston, coming to talk about his outstanding success in breeding and rearing of large psittacines. Rona intends to be especially nice to him so he'll also give us an update on the Venezuelan black hooded red siskin project that has conservation circles absolutely buzzing! And if your not overwhelmed yet, darlings, get this: JOHN VANDERHOOF will also be there speaking on finches and softbills!

Flash, Birdhearts, *Flash!* Another speaker just popped up on the computer screen! It's TOM IRELAND, the former AFA president who has raised more species of conures at his "plantation" in Lake Worth, Florida than any other breeder in the U.S. and probably the world! Rona hears that it's not just conures, darlings. Oh no. Macaws, cockatoos, Amazons, quakers, red bellieds, senegals, ring necks, caiques, you name it, he put a closed band on it! He also could tell us, Rona understands, how you hand feed up to 500 babies at a time from April to November! Rona's exhausted just thinking about it.

Well, darlings, as you can see, this convention program is really shaping up. In the way of group activities you can expect a legislative roundtable and meetings of the various specialty societies such as the Forpus Fanciers, the African Love Bird Society, the many cockatiel societies, the Parrot Society, the National Finch Society, the lory people, etc.

Now we all know, darlings, deep down inside, the *real* reason you'll be at the convention. Yes, Birdhearts, the reason we'll all be there is to meet and rub shoulders with the other Birdhearts! Rona, as usual, has scanned the registration list, read the mail, and tuned in to the AFA grapevine which works

better than network television to keep us all informed. Rona hears that TONY SILVA will be there demonstrating his new self-inflating flotation device for guinea pigs, ART RISSER may actually serenade us at the banquet now that he's over his initial stage fright, and RALPH SCHRIEBER will be roaming the exhibit hall looking for sexually dimorphic types from Hollywood again. DARRYL PADGETT, Rona hears, will be there to brush up on his peachfaced mutations, much to everyone's relief, and Darlings! Rona was absolutely *stunned* to see RUTH HANESSIAN actually speaking to LEE PHILLIPS! In front of a witness, no less! And what's more, CAROLE WHEELER was spotted sitting in a meeting with DON BRUNING! Listen, darlings, something's in the wind. This may be the biggest convention ever! Why even DICK BAER is coming to Seattle! We're talking about the inventor of the Baeromatic Seed Winnower, the undisputed King of Abyssinian Love Bird production, the past AFA president who made AFA a truly national organization, the writer of AFA parables (you remember the club delegates sitting in a boat, each pulling on their own oar), and the nemesis of the original USDA Newcastle eradication policy. Rona is awed. JIM COFFMAN, DICK DICKENSON, TOM MARSHALL, CAROLE WHEELER, and hopefully GRAHAME PHIPPS will all be there hoping to have another heart-shaped balloon secretly tied to their doors one night. And speaking of that Australian, GRAHAME PHIPPS, what was he doing in Florida and New York before the Delacour meeting in L.A.? I tell you, Birdhearts, something's up, and from what Rona hears, it's going to be good!

Rona's Feather Boa Award this month goes to long time AFA supporter, Dr. RAY JEROME of Dallas, Texas. The word is, darlings, that Ray has accepted the directorship of the Puerto Rican Parrot Project for the government of Puerto Rico! Rona thanks you, the Puerto Rican Amazon thanks you, and maybe even U.S. Fish and Wildlife thanks you, but I haven't gotten the dirt on that yet.

And what was that full grown woman doing walking around with hummingbirds stuffed down her bosom? And a sign around her neck saying, "Please don't hug me"? Really, Birdhearts, SHELDON DINGLE should get that picture of this phenomenon taken by CHRIS CHRISTMAN so we *all* can see it!

Keep those cards and letters coming in, Birdhearts. And remember, what's a gossip column without a little gossip? Watch this space. ●

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