



## AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE

Dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public.

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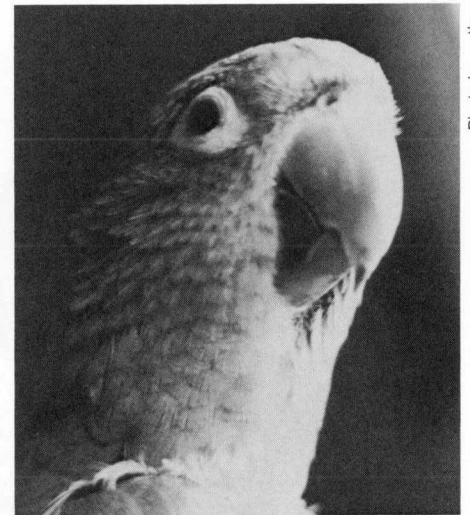


Photo by author

# WOODY

## Part 5

by Paul Wiener  
St. James, New York

*EDITOR'S PROLOGUE: From the dim prehistory of the human race to this very hour, certain people have had special communion with certain animals. To one degree or another, I believe, we have all had such experiences.*

*The following column is about the relationship between a man and a parrot. It reflects the philosophical, introspective musings and intimate thoughts that many of us have had but have not expressed.*

It is sometimes not simply necessary to remind myself that Woody was born in the wild. It is also rewarding, for such parrots have something for their owners that their tame, hand-fed cousins do not: they have secrets. I have nothing against those gentle, trusting birds we all see in pet shops, birds known from the egg, whose beaks are never to be feared, whose voices are subdued, whose sense of creaturely obligation is as blatant as any spouse's. Nor do I oppose the views of the parrot conservationists whose valiant work brought us the laws banning the sale of imported birds. The wilderness makes pets obscene, and caged birds have long symbolized man's inhumanity. Yet, for those who own one, a parrot is not a parrot without its secrets.

The problem with secrets is that to be effective, they must remain unknown. Vast, soft, shapeless shadows cast by a visible life, they should be indescribable. Everything I've learned about the natural world tells me that once Woody was a tiny, nearly-bald pink chick with fluff and budding feather shafts sprouting in every direction, whose beak was waiting for a face, whose fierce gut many times a day took nourishment from a large, beautiful green mother. Woody, a baby, a wild baby! Woody a free jungle citizen! Woody, a wild, unknown, unknowable

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's closest state coordinator. There is a state coordinator listing with phone numbers elsewhere in this publication.



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Mark these dates and plan to attend!

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 Seattle, Washington — Westin Hotel  
 13th Annual Convention

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bird called differently in Latin, Greek, Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Gaelic, Mayan, English. Woody, a baby with a destiny, a parrot with potential, conure unsuspecting, hungry for life, mother's pet, waiting to be fed. Since he won't fly, he probably was taken from the nest, though not before he'd learned the necessary pride allotted to his species and, I'll wager, not before he began to think of flying.

These are the facts, these are the guesses, the fantasies, conclusions, projections and visions, but they are not secrets. Facts are as undeniable as time: once Woody was one week old, once three months old, once Woody was captured. Secrets are captured possibilities: what Woody actually looked like at that age, where he actually lived — country, terrain, tree, height — what his mother actually looked like, what he heard at night, whether he ever found his own food, how he actually was caught, how like a holocaust is separation. These actualities are his secrets, though he doesn't know he possesses them. And I've been talking only of his origins, only about Woody ages before we would recognize each other.

All wild captive birds have such secrets. You could say being captured gives them the power to have secrets, secrets they nourish and flaunt like selves. Yet parrots, whether captured or hand-raised from the egg, seem to have other secrets too; those of maturity and ambition, not merely the secrets every species shares only with its members, but secrets they have chosen to communicate, used to gain favor and attention from a more powerful species. We say parrots seem wise, can reason, can talk, can joke. Parrots make good company, we feel, as if their secrets were a kind of knowledge we like having before us, colorful and compact, a verification of the benign nature of the way things are.

We seek that knowledge, always have, we think we need it, think we can grasp it, and every chance we get we tell ourselves we're onto it, scraping and bowing to the source. Such knowledge has always been a treasured, guarded secret, unspeakable by all but the elect, the proud owners of the proper icon. Am I one? Hail Woody! Living icon, bearer of secrets, hoarder of knowledge, eternal infant crushing your shell, trembling with greed. Hail Woody, immortal, feather-bearded savior! Selfish, humoring green god, perching on a pedestal, your blessed indifference to my fate I profane with every gesture I perform before thee and in thy sacred name, my pet. ●