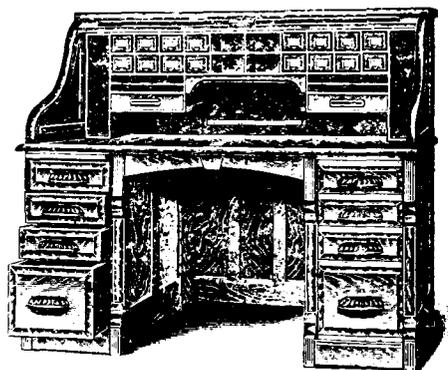


# From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



Dear Editor:

The WATCHBIRD has performed a significant service to the cagebird family by running Dr. Richard E. Baer's "The Perils of Buying Imported Birds" (Dec-Jan 78). It is, as your box implies, a controversial article. It should trigger considerable discussion, and that is what we need. I hope, however, that the discussion will keep his point in perspective: do not assume that you have healthy birds just because they have come through the current quarantine process.

By a curious coincidence my own column in the current AMERICAN CAGE BIRD MAGAZINE was on Pacheco's Disease and it carried essentially the same message. Dr. Baer's training and experience equip him immeasurably more than mine to say it, however. His is a professional opinion. We all should give it full credence.

In the heat of the discussion I fear a couple of important points need to be made explicit. Dr. Baer is NOT saying that all importers are scoundrels and their birds are infected. He IS saying that it is false security to assume that a period in present U.S.D.A. quarantine facilities has eliminated infectious diseases or parasites. Exotic Newcastle Disease, perhaps, but nothing else. And the current risks are disturbingly common through all parts of the country: ornithosis/psittacosis and Pacheco's Virus. These serious diseases are coming through precisely because the U.S.D.A. by law is prohibited from interfering with non-poultry disorders.

A second point that I hope does not get overlooked is this: we should gather our forces and support, not attack, the importers who are acting ethically. In the absence of other information I would assume anyone advertising in the WATCHBIRD to have the proper orientation toward the interests of the fancy. I urge you to enforce strictly the official policy that bans persons convicted of violating any state or federal law related to birds, and that when you receive a few convincing complaints against an advertiser

(as solicited in the "disclaimer" paragraph) the ads be held up until the accusations are resolved. Members deserve that protection. ACBM has withheld ads in the past with reason, and I firmly support the policy.

If we all use good sense in the way we handle new birds in the collection, and if we buy cautiously from trustworthy sources, the risks will be reduced greatly. Our combined thanks should go to Dr. Baer for saying it so well.

Sincerely,  
Val Clear



Editor:

Your thoughts on my article, "Perils of Buying Birds", which you appropriately identify in WATCHBIRD as being strictly your own personal attitudes toward the matter, are acknowledged and I should like to make a public response on what you wrote.

It appears to me that we are in agreement that diseased birds are a problem; that government does not guarantee the health of any birds put on the market; and, that isolation by quarantine is the most effective measure that an aviculturist can take for protection when he buys any bird. This last consideration cannot be over emphasized!

I concur with you that there are both good and bad importers just as there are both good and bad dealers and breeders. With some sixty approved quarantine stations now in operation and more in the offing, there are bound to be a few crooks. Unfortunately, the dishonest ones, no matter how few, cause the good and conscientious bird importers such as you describe to be stigmatized. It is always the law violator and the unscrupulous that make the need for laws and regulations.

Like you, I have received and continue

to receive much verbal response to my article — sometimes more than a dozen phone calls in a day. These calls come from both breeders and dealers. These concerned people invariably ask: "Just who is a responsible importer?" or "Where can I buy birds with confidence?"

While I am sure that there are other honest bird importers in the industry, my reply to these questions is to refer them to our advertisers in WATCHBIRD. These advertisers acknowledge and comply with A.F.A.'s code of ethics or we would not permit them to advertise in the magazine. Here is the best source of birds.

Besides, it behooves us to patronize those who support A.F.A., which for its part is defending both aviculture and industry against restrictive legislation and regulations. Without the strong defense of aviculture by A.F.A., where would industry be today? They are totally dependent upon a healthy and unrestricted captive bird population. Without A.F.A., they will go down.

With regards to your remarks on something for nothing, I, for one, never want anything for nothing as I never wish to be beholden to anyone. I do, however, want that which I bargain for — a good healthy bird for which I am paying a good healthy price.

It is hoped that your admonition not to seek something for nothing is always heeded not only by our membership but also by our representatives and delegates. The "getting of something for nothing" can result in conflicts of interest, loss of freedom of decision, and the surrendering of the independence to direct our organization towards those policies which are in our best interests. This, indeed, is of grave concern to me.

The responsibility to shop wisely on the open market which you advocate is easier when one has ready access to that market and can see what he buys. When of necessity one must rely on mail order buying with payment in advance, once the birds have arrived, have been uncrated, and have caused disaster in your aviary, it is too late to be wise.

This brings us back once more to the problems of sick or diseased birds. While the conscientious importer does something about these problems, the unscrupulous does not. He must be enforced to do what is right. Proper supervision of the dishonest is not only in the interests of the aviculturist but also in the best interests of the good importer. Without proper controls, the whole industry is in danger of being lost. "While we are concerning ourselves with the price of milk, someone may make off with the cow." — The very same bureaucracy who

through its dereliction in administering its own regulations is permitting the unscrupulous importer to get by without the proper treatment of his birds, may use the ensuing health problem of its own making as a pretext for covering up its own culpability and call for a total ban on importations. This would leave the importer without birds to sell, and we, the breeders, without a source from which to buy!

I hope that not only the conscientious breeder but also the conscientious dealer and the conscientious importer will respond to this serious problem.

Sincerely,  
Richard E. Baer, D.V.M.



Dear Sir:

I would like to offer a modification to your response (Dec./Jan. 1978) to a reader who asked about THE AUK. As the quarterly publication of the American Ornithologists' Union, it is published by the Union, not by the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution, although the museum serves as the permanent mailing address of the Union. The journal is actually printed at the Allen Press in Lawrence, Kansas. Oliver L. Austin, Jr., having served for 10 years, is no longer the editor. That post is now held by Dr. John A. Wiens of Oregon State University.

Sincerely,  
Richard C. Banks  
Chairman, Committee on  
Public Responsibility



Dear Mr. Dingle:

I surely would like to compliment you on your fine magazine which is truly representative of an "on-going" organization.

However, in the article titled "World Pheasant Association Annual Convention Held" on page 20, Vol. IV, No. 5, Oct./Nov. '77 there has been a serious error reported.

Dr. Peter Severignhaus of Cornell did not discuss a two year survey involving the Edwards Pheasant. He did discuss the Mikado and Swinhoe Pheasants which are native to Taiwan. The Edwards Pheasant was last seen in North Vietnam several decades ago and is not only endanger-

ed in the wild but considered very scarce and almost extinct in its native habitat.

Once again congratulations on your excellent magazine.

Cordially yours,  
Charles Sivelle

*Thank you very much for your compliments. We must say at this point that the American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society, over which you preside, also publishes an excellent periodical. It is very well done and adds much to avicultural literature.*

*As it happens, our reporter was on the European tour that attended the World Pheasant Association Convention. He took notes, most of which were accurate, but he also took a slight overdose of medicine (Cutty Sark - to prevent chills). When under the influence of medicine our reporter can't tell a pheasant from a Volkswagen so we were lucky to get any information at all. In fact, we were lucky to even get our reporter back home - or were we? Hmmm.*

Editor

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your excellent magazine. I feel I must have all of the back issues I have missed.

The article in the Dec/Jan 1978 issue by Mr. Witt on the treatment of psittacosis is outstanding. Many articles discuss disease but Mr. Witt follows through with medication and where to get it. Not everyone has access to even the simplest of medications. Mr. Witt saved a lot of individual frustrations normally caused by obscure medication recommendations.

W. Snowden  
Pineville, LA.

*Mr. Witt is one of our finest and most productive staff members. We appreciate him as much as you do. In fact, I'm going to ask the directors to double his wages.*

Editor

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is a check for a years subscription to the Watchbird. After reading Tanner Chrisler's article in the American Pigeon Journal regarding the work of your organization I would like to know more about it. He mentions legal and educational programs, etc.

I'm interested in any outfit that can stop a senseless government rampage such as their last VVND outrage.

Sincerely,  
A. Wheeler  
Grand Ronde, Oregon

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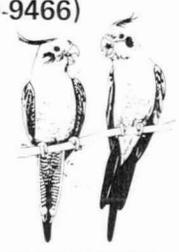
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Even though the last V.V.N.D. fiasco was a disaster our vigorous fight had the effect of grabbing the Department of Agriculture by the throat. It was no death blow but they now know that they cannot steam-roller our interests without causing a horrible and embarrassing shriek.

Much to their credit, Agriculture decided that our controlled voice of reason is much easier to listen to than our Banshee screeches. As long as we can reason together there is hope for fair solutions to our problems.

The general information you asked for has been sent to you under separate cover. We appreciate your support.

Editor



Dear Editor:

First of all let me say I'm writing this letter because of an article I read in the American Racing Pigeon News. It was written by Tanner S. Chrisler of the American Pigeon Fanciers Council. Next let me say a little about myself. I'm a man, sixty-seven years young. I'm the father of six loving children, grandfather of twenty-one loving grandchildren, and, God willing, will be a great grandfather this coming August. I've kept pigeons since I was a boy of six, first fancy then racing pigeons.

I've had my share of heartaches because of some people who hate all birds and animals. And sometimes I wondered if they hated all humans also — including themselves. All my life I've loved all birds and animals and I've often wondered why the laws always seem to favor people who hate birds and animals. After all, God created this world to be inhabited by all creatures, not just humans. I've also wondered many times how long the world would last if there were only human beings living on it. Not long I'm sure.

Naturally I was very pleased to read there was a group who wanted to protect all birds. This is the way it should be. All who love to keep birds or other animals, and keep them properly, should be allowed to do so. And they should band together, if not world-wide than at least nation-wide. Such a group would be very strong. I myself would love to become a member of such an organization. So enclosed you will find my check for a years subscription to the Watchbird. Next month at our combine meeting I

shall propose that all members become subscribers. I don't know how successful I shall be but I shall give it a good try. If something like this could only catch on; if every family who loves birds and animals would join, then this organization would have enough money and strength to really protect the birds. I don't know how much longer the Good Lord will give me but I hope it's time enough to see this happen.

Yours in a happy world for all

F.J.A.

Islip, New York

For some reason, Dear Sir, your letter touched me very deeply. First off, you seem to be the kind of man who is the absolute salt of the earth — the rock bottom foundation of our country's greatness. Such men seem rather rare today. Secondly, your motive is just love of birds and animals — just plain old love. And it is wonderful, sir, truly marvelous. In our world of hustle-bustle, fly here-fly there, buy low, sell high, collect this — pay that, etc. etc. we some-

times forget to love our birds and to enjoy them.

The enjoyment of live creatures is pure therapy. Such love and enjoyment brings a man humility and puts him in touch with the only important values in life. I sometimes think of one of the greatest men this country ever produced, Abraham Lincoln, and how he loved and enjoyed animals. During the final carnage of the terrible Civil War Lincoln was returning to Washington by train when he spotted a turtle sunning itself near the track. Lincoln caused the train to be stopped and the turtle to be brought to him, and amidst Senators, Generals, and woes of war he spent two hours laughing and delighting in the antics of the ungainly little beast. Such pleasure is intrinsically pure and I thank you for reminding me of it.

And may all animal lovers be as prolific and fruitful as you have been. And, on the contrary, may all animal haters be cursed with sterility and barrenness. We may overcome yet.

Editor

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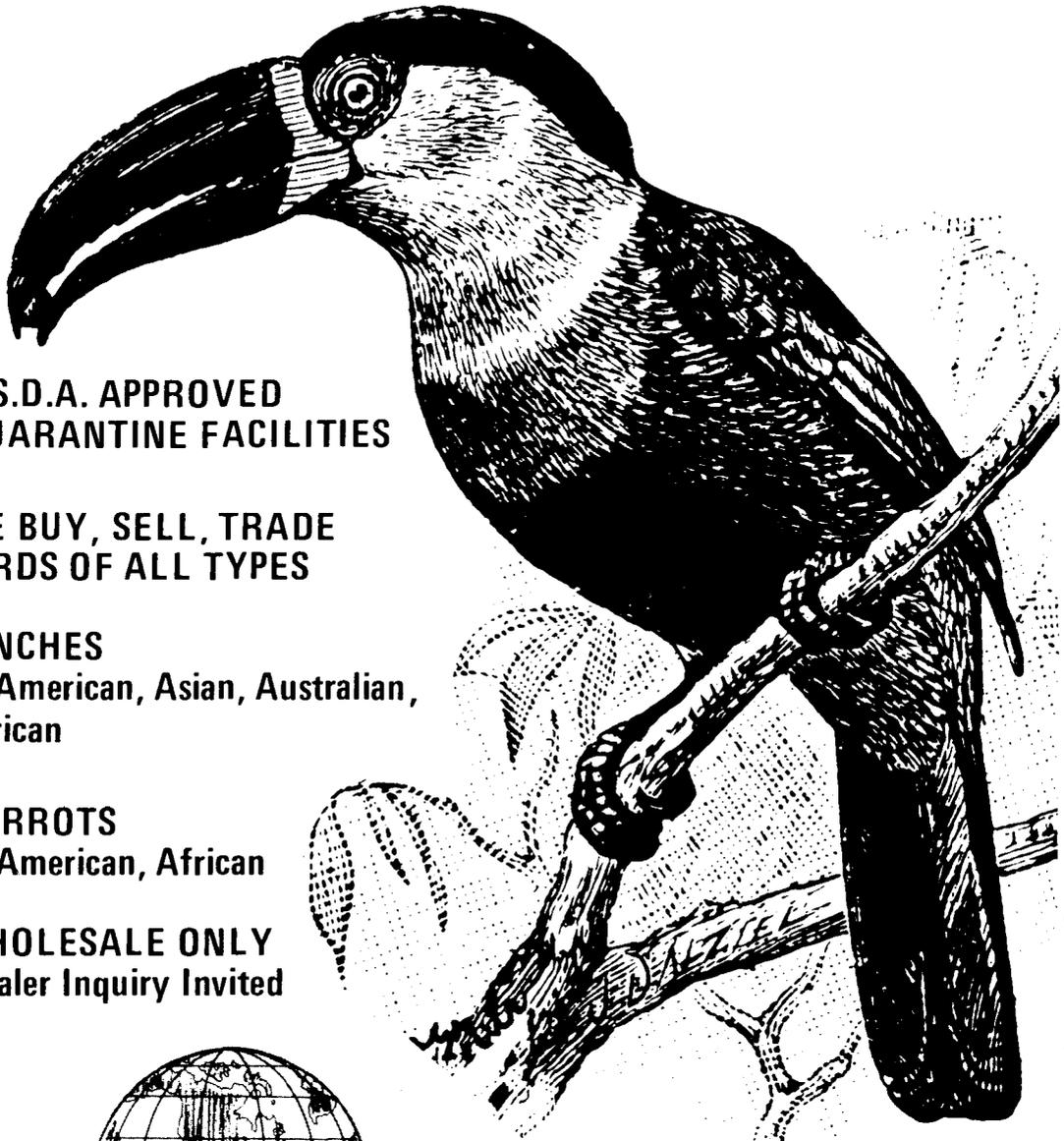
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