

Memorials

Robert "Bob" L. Chambers

By Benny J. Galloway, Ph.D.



Bob Chambers

This first half of 2009 has indeed been notable for the passing of many prominent aviculturists and supporters of the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. (AFA). It is with sadness that we add Bob Chambers to that list. He will be sorely missed. Bob served as Parliamentarian for AFA throughout my tenure as President, beginning in 2000, and continued in that role in support of President Hawley until the time of his passing on 17 June 2009 at the age of 77. He had long served AFA as a Delegate for the Butte County Bird Club and also as a State Coordinator for the Northern California and Hawaii region of AFA.

Bob was a strong and courageous man, characterized by his honesty and sense of fair play. His big smile would light up a room. He was also his own man and was not bashful when it came to expressing a dissenting opinion with the leadership of AFA. However, he always presented his views in a professional manner. Given these attributes, it was my view that he was the perfect choice for Parliamentarian. It was probably the best decision I made as President of AFA.

A little about Bob you may not know. He was selected as an "all-city" athlete in both baseball and basketball (Los Angeles!) in his junior and senior years at Torrance High School. In fact he played on a semi-pro baseball team at age 15. He received an athletic scholarship in baseball at UCLA and also played basketball for the legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. However, the lure of professional baseball lured him into that profession, and he played professional baseball in the Pittsburgh Pirates farm system.

Then came Korea. After serving in the Navy during the Korean conflict, he returned to college (U. California at Long Beach) where he graduated with an economics degree and coaching credentials. He took a job as an accountant for General Motors, was married and had four sons.

He and his first wife moved to the city of Chico in Butte County California in about 1964. There he worked as an accountant for the County in the auditing department. He lost his first wife to cancer. Later, he met and married Mary Lou Fraser (newly elected Northern California Regional Director of AFA), who just happened to be an aviculturist. It was a match made in Heaven...Mary Lou loved birds (and she had a lot of them) and Bob was really into building things. As Mary Lou will attest, if you have a lot of breeding birds you can never have enough cages! In any case, they became an avicultural team and were

both active in bird organizations.

Bob not only knew parliamentary procedure and the AFA Bylaws, but studied continuously. He was prepared for every meeting of the AFA Board of Directors. Thanks in large part to him, the meetings were conducted in a professional and appropriate way. As many of you know, Bob lost a foot and lower leg to diabetes in 2006, a handicap that would make most people quit serving as a volunteer for a non-profit service organization like AFA. Not Bob. He didn't miss a meeting; and, by the way did I mention that attending Board meetings in Houston while living in Chico requires flying all night. He was a man to be respected and admired. We will miss you, Bob.

Leslie Gillis

By Wanda Elder

I met Leslie via telephone during an AFA board meeting. She needed to talk to Sheldon Dingle and didn't have a cell phone number for him. Being the person that she was, determined, she called my home and explained to Bill what she needed. Bill gave her my cell phone number and there you have it.



Leslie Gillis, with Sam

Determination was a trait that carried her through her life. It was reflected in the way she managed her birds and especially in the way she raised her daughter, Samantha or as she called her, Sam. Sam was her only child and she was determined that she be raised in such a way that she would never question whether she was worthy of the love bestowed upon her. Sam was her pride, or as she once told me, "her heart and reason for living."

Leslie brought this same determination to AFA. She worked tirelessly behind the scenes during the END outbreaks. There were numerous flocks that would have been eradicated if not for her. Leslie had the trust of many field agents as well as their personal phone numbers and e-mail addresses. She proved herself invaluable during this time.

She served on the Nominations and Elections committee with Jerri Wright and later agreed to chair that committee. Not an easy task but with the right leadership it was one of the areas the Board of Directors never had to worry about being done. She was proud of her accomplishments and we were proud of her.

She was a champion of the underdog and if she thought someone was being mistreated, misunderstood or simply ignored, she was there to help. She had a way of searching for information that astounded me. People talked to her because she could be trusted and that was conveyed even in an e-mail or over the phone.

We join Sam in mourning the loss of a truly wonderful lady but rejoice in the privilege of having known and worked with her for many years.

BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNE DRABICKY