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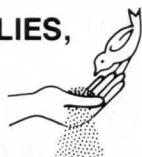
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# President's Message

by Thomas C. Marshall  
 Vienna, Virginia

It is with considerable excitement, tempered with healthy trepidation, that I accept the presidency of the American Federation of Aviculture for the next year.

I was elected to this position after eight years of working my way up through the ranks. I served on committees, served as a committee chair, as Virginia State Coordinator, a regional vice-president, second vice-president and first vice-president, prior to being elected to president. I was not anointed by any past predecessor — I was elected by the volunteer cadre of dedicated aviculturists. And for this fact, I am especially proud and grateful. I owe you, the voting membership, certainly my thanks; but, more importantly, I owe the entire membership an open, hard working administration that will consolidate our position as the premier organization in the United States representing the aviculturists.

In this context, I will utilize, to a greater degree, the Executive Committee in making decisions, and I will delegate certain responsibilities to them, monitoring their progress, but not undercutting their authority. I feel very fortunate to have been elected with Phyllis Martin, first vice-president, and Davis Koffron, second vice-president, for they are proven assets to AFA. I feel equally fortunate to have retiring president Jerry Jennings as a member of the Executive Committee. Jerry's perspective on AFA and aviculture is invaluable, and I trust his impact will always be present. Jerry was our first president and our most recent president, and AFA owes him our gratitude.

Volunteers are the backbone of this organization. We are all volunteers, and I will always treat volunteers with respect and gratitude. I will work to build this valuable pool of workers so necessary for America's grass-roots organization of bird breeders.

We have indispensable individuals serving AFA presently. Our legal counsel, Gary Lilienthal, and retiring legislative vice-president, Lee Phillips,



Tom C. Marshall  
 president

come to mind readily. But there are others and I don't want to lose any one of them. Frankly, I bemoan the loss of former volunteers who served AFA so well in the past but for whatever reason have left. I promise to work hard to retain the good people we have and regain those individuals we have lost. This administration will be sensitive to people and their feelings — and that is a firm pledge to you.

I have several personal goals as president that will be priorities for me. First, we need to get our membership up and constantly promote AFA whenever possible. If every one of our members recruited just one other person, we would be in a very enviable position. The Home Office, in the person of Pat Benoit, and I will work to maintain our present membership by trying to be as responsive as possible to member needs.

I wish to establish a Personnel Committee, by which performance criteria can be established for paid employees, allowing them to develop professionally and be rewarded accordingly.

With regard to finances, we need to determine the fiscal parameters under which we operate and be in a position to know at all times the financial health of the organization.

In concert with David Richards, our new C.F.O., and others, I will work to get our financial procedures, record keeping and methods of reporting our financial status streamlined and easily discernible. I am a born-again believer in fund raisers through the mail. Every non-profit organization does it and we need to do it on a regular basis as well. You'll be hearing from me.

Finally, I am committed to increase our public relations efforts so that no one who has an interest in our kind of birds — certainly breeders — does not know about and think favorably of the American Federation of Aviculture.

In this regard, let me take a moment to commend the editors of *Bird Talk* magazine for their uninhibited and unrestrained support, in print, of AFA. This giant publication rarely misses an opportunity to promote AFA's programs, goals and accomplishments. Those magazines, for profit only, which never mention AFA for fear of competition, are not serving aviculture at all! They are serving only self-interest. I will do what I can to end or ameliorate this situation by talking directly with these publications in the hope that they will understand that we all need each other if aviculture is ever to realize its potential.

Why should AFA be the recipient of our support?

The answer is simple. We are AFA. We are, as the U.S. Congress' Office of Technology and Assessment described us, the grass roots organization of bird breeders in the country. AFA has provided an identity for the aviculturist. We are an entity which government cannot and will not ignore. AFA has given us legitimate status in the eyes of the law makers and the bureaucrats in government.

In many ways, AFA is uniquely

American. It was founded in 1974 to right wrongs, to address grievances, and to protect our rights and interests as American aviculturists.

There is also an entrepreneurial aspect to our membership that stems directly from our capitalistic economic system. Most of our members have bread-and-butter birds — i.e., birds that breed easily and for which there is a ready market. The revenue from these activities allow us to be able to afford to keep less profitable birds which challenge our husbandry techniques or ones which are in need of our concern because of their status in the wild.

If it were not for us, there would have been little motivation for the development of surgical sexing, pelleted foods, and other advances in the practice of aviculture.

Many of us are bona fide conservationists who have genuine concern over the destruction of avian habitat in the wild. We hope this trend is arrested, but we are practical conservationists. We believe that captive breeding is a viable alternative to extinction. We do not subscribe to the tenets of some conservation organizations that a species is biologically dead if it no longer exists in the wild. We represent hope for these birds. We refuse to write them off. If they are alive in our aviaries, then there is hope for them. We believe in the possibility of re-introduction — as in the case of the peregrine falcon which was successfully re-introduced to the eastern United States. We are watching with great interest the attempts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to re-introduce the thick-billed parrot to suitable habitat in Arizona.

As members of the American Federation of Aviculture, we have great potential as an organized force on behalf of bird wildlife. We know that captive breeding is a vital tool in the conservationist portfolio. Aviculture is conservation. We know it. Let us make sure everyone knows it. ●

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Photos by Anders Hansson, Sweden



*President Tom Marshall recently made a special working trip to California to personally meet with financial adviser Jim Jewell, new chief financial officer David Richards, the Watchbird staff and office management. From L to R: Tom Marshall, Chris Christman, Jim Jewell.*