



# 2005 AFA Convention Keynote Address

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I am going to tell you a story.

**M**y father grew up just outside of Boston, Massachusetts during the Depression. After the Depression, he was fortunate that his father started a business that provided him with an opportunity that few children his age had -- the ability to have pets. But my dad's pets were not just the traditional dogs or cats; they were a flock of homing pigeons that he kept in an enclosure in his back yard. Dad grew up with a great respect for animals which he passed on to me. They were part of the family.

In the 1950's when my folks were finally able to afford a house, they decided that it was time that I learned the responsibility for caring for animals. But again, it wasn't a traditional dog or cat. They bought me singing yellow canaries from the local 5 and 10 cent store. They didn't just buy one canary; they bought a pair of canaries. I learned about feeding, watering, whistling and, when my mom had her way, cleaning their cage. One day we put a little wire mesh nest and nesting material in the cage. Low and behold a nest was built and a few weeks later, eggs appeared in the nest! This was a very exciting time for me as an 8 year old because I now had a family of my own. Much to my amazement, one of the eggs actually hatched. I watched as the female dutifully raised the baby. Little did my parents or I know what an impression their gift would make upon me.

Following in my father's footsteps, as a young teenager, I had marveled at the homing pigeons kept not too far from my house. I talked a lot with my father about homing pigeons, and my father shared many stories about how he and his father would take pigeons to New York, New Hamp-

shire, Maine and Rhode Island, release them and amazingly, have them come home. One day my dad and I visited the local neighbor's backyard coop. We bought six pigeons, three pair. Keeping with the tradition of treating animals like family members, I named each of the birds. There was Whitey, Red, Specks and Checks. The canaries had names, too. Very cleverly, I had named them Tweety and Tweety Pie. The pigeons were taken home. A tool shed in the backyard had been converted to a coop with an outdoor aviary, a trap, a breeding area and a holding area. Breeding cubicles were built along the wall in the breeding room. The breeders were separated by wire from the holding area, the outdoor aviary and the trap were kept secure so that there was no chance of escape because the first lesson I learned was that homing pigeons went back to where they were hatched. The pairs laid in the spring and raised babies; the babies were hacked out, released and made a bee line to a nearby tree branch which went out over the neighbor's driveway. I will never forget the white line across that black stretch of driveway. The neighbors learned very quickly where not to park their cars. Low and behold, when the birds became hungry, they flew from that branch to the top of the outdoor aviary and went in through the trap. These were very exciting times and of course the birds all had names. I eventually ended up with over 60 homing pigeons. My dad and I flew them from all over New England, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They always came back. Except I remember that one bird who disappeared for two weeks. I thought for sure that the bird was lost forever but then we realized it was breeding season. Eventually the bird showed up. I swear he had a smile on his face.



When I went away to college, dad sold the birds to other breeders. After college, came law school, marriage to Janet, my own house and then that fateful day in 1975 when we walked into a local pet store and saw the sweetest, most lovable Yellow Cheeked Amazon Parrot, blind in one eye. The only question was, what would we name it. The birds all had names. Cheeks came home with us and we never looked back. A room was dedicated to him and then to the Sulfur Crested Cockatoo which we bought from Berne Levine. The Double Yellow Headed Amazon which we adopted from someone who could no longer keep her pet, and then two pair from a woman who got them in a divorce – a pair of Galerita Galeritas and a pair of African Greys. The basement became an aviary. By 1977, our family had grown. Our veterinarian, Marjorie McMillan, who we first met in 1975, for the first of many well bird checks warned us we better start buying birds in pairs because some day bird importation would end and we would not be able to fulfill our passion for birds by obtaining wild-caught stock.

Little did we know then how wise and prophetic her words would be. We decided that our birds and we needed more living space and the one most important ingredient of the search was a large basement with open spaces and a concrete floor. Raising birds outdoors in New England was not in the cards. The Greys, the Sulfur Cresteds, and two pairs of Double Yellow Heads were all set up for breeding in suspended Florida-type flights. One by one by two-foot wood nest boxes were affixed and then the Greys had four eggs. Never thinking that they would be fertile, we left them there and watched occasionally and then one day, a baby Grey. And then a 2nd, a 3rd, and a 4th. The nest box was like a tenement, so after the first clutch a 1x2x2 box was built to accommodate her 4-baby clutches. We estimated that over the years we got over 60 babies from our female grey. She is still with us enjoying retirement with her 4th mate, having outlived the first three. She is a tough old broad. Over the years, the family grew, Yellow Napes, Hawkheads, Hispaniolans, more Double Yellow Heads, Scarlet and Hyacinth Macaws, Leadbeaters, Palm, Molluccan and Bare-eyed Cockatoos. All pairs – they all had names. Most of our birds were adopted from families that couldn't keep them any more. Then the Double Yellow Heads bred, the Napes bred, the Hispaniolans bred, the bare-eyeds bred, we acquired a Yellow Faced Amazon at a USDA auction and set out on a

crusade to find her mate. We found him and they bred.

Early on in our introduction to aviculture, our weekends were spent visiting pet stores. In 1977, with only 7 birds then in our collection, we stumbled upon a mom and pop pet store in the basement of a home in Southeastern Massachusetts. The birds were kept in interesting floor to ceiling wire enclosures with pine shaving and a cob-like material as floor bedding and large cages for flying for the varying and diverse species of birds kept. But this time it wasn't the birds that attracted us. At the cash register on a counter was a paper tabloid titled "The Watchbird – the Journal of the American Federation of Aviculture". It was in black and white print and folded like a newspaper. Janet picked it up, looked at it and showed it to me. On the cover was a picture of half a dozen or so people standing on the steps of a government building in Washington, DC. The headlines were "AFA sues USDA to Halt California Bird Depopulations." We read the story with sadness, shock and disbelief. It was about a grassroots organization from California that had been formed by a group of people from diverse backgrounds but all with one cause – to save their birds from being eradicated by a government which was reacting to a dire situation that threatened the United States Poultry industry – Exotic Newcastles Disease. We had no idea. We couldn't believe it. And while this moving experience would be the start of something totally unforeseen to us, it hit us in a way that we never imagined we could be hit from the few birds we kept at that time. In this tabloid were letters from aviculturists chronicling the experience of watching their beloved birds being "depopulated", the euphemism used by government agents for putting down flocks of exotic birds. It was a simple as that. The poultry industry was threatened by Exotic Newcastles Disease. Hundreds of millions of dollars of people's livelihoods and the U.S. economy were at risk. The disease known to be carried by parrots could have come in through legally imported or smuggled parrots. Populations of birds in California dying from these symptoms were identified. All birds that exhibited symptoms or had come in contact with those birds were "put down". Then it went further. The fear of the devastation to the poultry industry was too great for the government to ignore. If the exotic birds in your facility had come from an infected facility, all of your birds were put down. If you had been in an infected facility and then had been in your facility, all of your birds were put down. Pets,





breeders, founding stock all were treated the same.

I will never forget Janet reading the letters to me. I remember vividly some of the letters. They went something like this. My husband and I stand here while the government agents dressed in their coveralls and masks gather the birds. They were not careful or gentle with the way the birds were being caught as their fate was such that it wouldn't matter. Birds were held, placed in containers or plastic bags and the gas was pumped in. The birds flailed, then the flailing became slower and slower and then nothing. Our birds were thrown into trash barrels or on heaps of other birds. Years of dedication and devotion were gone in minutes. Then they came into our house and took our pets. Our pets were treated the same way. We fought back the tears but to no avail. Watching our beloved pets and all of our beloved birds being put down was more than we could handle. . . they all had names. A group got together. They came from diverse backgrounds but all had the same interest. While there were many things they might not agree upon, there was one thing they could agree upon. Despite their varied interests, they all cared deeply about birds. And thus the American Federation of Aviculture hatched. It sued the USDA. The case was settled and the victory although bittersweet was at hand. Birds would now be quarantined. No bird would be released from proper quarantine until it had been swabbed and cleared of Exotic Newcastles Disease. If Newcastles did get into the country through smuggled birds, only infected birds, as determined by a test, would be put down. If birds had been exposed, they would be quarantined again, retested and if they were clean, they would be spared. Inspectors were educated about procedures preventing the inspectors themselves from carrying disease from aviary to aviary such as stepping in disinfectant and only visiting one aviary per day. The American Federation of Aviculture had met the first threat to aviculture. We were at our best when things were at their worst.

In the late summer of 1979, Janet and I attended our first AFA convention. I think it was in Hollywood, Florida. I remember we felt very strange and very out of place. Most of the people were from California or Florida. They all seemed to know one another, we knew no one, and they had birds we only dreamed about. We met a few people during the convention, listened to some people whose speeches, birds, and breeding

experiences made our eyes open like saucers. There was Luther Dean from Dripping Springs, Texas who kept and bred more cockatoos than we knew existed. Sheldon Dingle was there telling Luther that he hoped his springs dripped eternally. Ramon Nogel talked about endangered species. We were blown away. The group was as diverse as the birds they kept but despite their diversity, they also were united in their purpose – to love and breed their birds and to enjoy and share their experiences through AFA. It wasn't politics. Just pure fun and we loved it. We returned to Boston with a new commitment to our birds. We were aviculturists. Over the ensuing years we met others who shared our love and enthusiasm for birds and they taught us and befriended us. There was Sue and Kevin, Berne Levine, Marshall Meyers, Tom Ireland, Bob Berry, Davis Kaffron, Mike Cunningham, Don Cavender, Jeri Wright, Natalie Frumin-Weiss, Dale Thompson, Ray Rudisill, Lee Phillips, Vicki Fletcher, Dick Baer, Ramon and Greg, Gary Clifton, Dwight and Beth, Lyrae, Rick and Mark and too many others to mention.

Around 1980, the United States Department of the Interior, which was responsible for the administration and enforcement of the U.S. Endangered Species Act, seized a shipment of Tahitian Blue Lories, an endangered species, for illegal entry into this country. The word went out through AFA that these birds were to be destroyed. The hue and cry through AFA, united in its efforts to save these birds, was that the government was misguided in its efforts to protect endangered species by destroying them. The birds had been housed at the Los Angeles Zoo under the watchful eye of Mike Cunningham, an original member of AFA. With the exertion of pressure and the assistance of Rosemary Low the birds were, rather than killed, re-exported to England where they sat until details were sorted out and eventually brought back to the San Diego and LA Zoos for a breeding consortium. It was during that time that the concept of a captive bred wildlife registration program allowing the legal ownership of captive bred endangered species was floated with the USDI.

I became interested in this project and worked with Rick Parsons of the United States Department of Interior, and Marshall Meyers of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council. AFA got behind a Captive Bred Wildlife Registration Program whereby aviculturists who demonstrated that they were responsible breeders of similar species

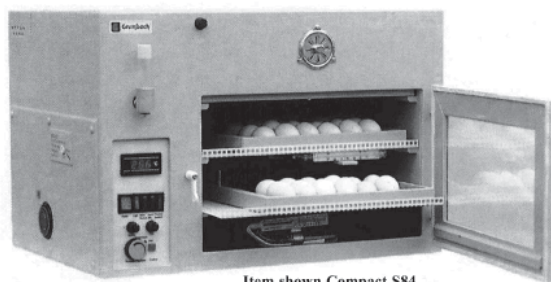
could obtain from other registered owners captive bred wildlife covered by the Endangered Species Act. They could buy, sell, loan and trade those species with other similarly registered owners. The idea caught on. Queen of Bavaria Conures became a well-bred species. Turquoise and Scarlet Chested Parakeets became prolific. Cuban Amazons, Isle of Pine Amazons, Cayman Island Amazons being bred by Ramon Nogel were entrusted to other breeders. Some breeders were able to obtain and breed Vinacious Amazons. AFA, united in its effort to increase the breeding of endangered species in the United States, worked with the United States Department of the Interior and others to promote the breeding of these and other endangered species in the United States. That program continues today and although successful, success is limited due, in part, to the distrust of many aviculturists of the government and the limited trading and sales capability of endangered species to only other registered owners.

In 1981, for the AFA annual convention, President Dick Baer asked me to give a presenta-

tion, a workshop titled "The Law and Aviculture". We talked about Exotic Newcastle's Disease, endangered species, CITES importation, injurious species, the Lacey Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty and at that time, many aviculturists consciousness was raised over the number of laws which affected aviculture. I was nervous as hell. Marshall Meyers, PIJAC's lawyer, was there, as was Berne Levine, the largest importer in the U.S., Rick Parsons of USFWS and Keith Hand and Wade Ritchie of U.S.D.A. As a result of that meeting, President Baer determined that AFA needed a legislative/legal arm to be the watch bird of the aviculturists interests in Washington and at state capitals. There were reports of seizures of smuggled birds, issues regarding the breeding and keeping of endangered species and predictions by some that it might not be too long before wild birds were banned from importation into the United States. Cliff Witt, a resident of Maryland near Washington DC, was named legislative vice president and I was asked to serve as legal counsel. As an aside, I will never forget those early conventions in 1979, '80, '81, '82, especially the convention at the Town and Coun-

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try Hotel in San Diego, California. 900 aviculturists attended the convention, all with the single purpose to enjoy aviculture, all supporting AFA and embracing each other's diversity as a way of getting themselves together to enjoy each other's experiences. It wasn't politics, just fun.

Around 1984, a cold shot rang out through the avicultural community. It was realized how prescient President Baer had been. The New York assembly, without hearings, without notice, adopted a law banning the ownership of imported birds in New York. The New York Senate approved it, and within weeks of its introduction, the New York Wild Bird Act became law. The basis for this law was the experience of the grown daughter of a former New York state senator who had purchased a bird in a pet store. Her bird became sick and died, and shortly thereafter the New York legislature decided that people should no longer be able to buy wild-caught imported birds. AFA, sniffing the winds of change and fearing for its members' freedom to keep, breed and sell birds, went into action. A network was set up to monitor activities in various states where it was anticipated that well-funded, misguided or mal-intentioned animal rights groups

would propose such laws at the state legislative level. Much of the misinformation which arose from these efforts were based on published materials written to promote the cessation of importation of wild caught birds. Many of us believed that these materials were for political or fundraising agendas based on misstated or partial numbers horrifically detailing the loss of birds in quarantine. While we agreed that the loss of any bird in quarantine or any other way for that matter is regrettable, we also believed the misuse of numbers for fundraising or advancing of corporate political agendas was equally inappropriate. Realizing that the very existence of its constituency was in peril, AFA set up a network of people on a regional and state-by-state basis to monitor state legislatures and to react quickly in the event similarly misguided laws were presented. We formed an alliance with the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and Marshall Meyers to work hand in hand to disseminate information about aviculture in order to prevent legislatures from adopting anti-bird legislation based on ignorance or misstatements. AFA's purpose as an educational organization expanded dramatically during this time.

*Continued on page 41.*



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Similar laws were proposed in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Washington state and other states. The proponents of the laws were principally animal rights and conservation groups seeking to end exotic bird importation. Some even believed that no birds should be kept as pets. AFA members passed the word. Other members, including Janet and I, produced information packages, position papers and statements telling the truth about aviculture and exposing the misstatements contained in the proponent's statements. We were able to rally our troops to write to their elected representatives, attend hearings and to make presentations. In fact, in Massachusetts, during the hearing for the first of the two years that anti-avicultural legislation was proposed, we assembled enough people for the hearing to elicit a comment from the Chair of the Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee that he had not seen so many people at a committee hearing on a piece of legislation since recent legislation on gun control. At the hearing, for the second year the bill was introduced in Massachusetts, the Chairman of the House/Senate Committee opened the hearing by welcoming everyone to the 2nd annual Lilienthal family picnic. In each state, except New Jersey, AFA was successful in educating legislators about the misguided basis for this legislation. In New Jersey, statements were made at the hearings by representatives of well-funded animal rights and conservation groups which so misled the committee people that the legislature adopted legislation. Of course, as predicted, this legislation and the promulgated regulations were enforced on a spotty basis at best. However, in addition to preserving our freedoms, we demonstrated once again that out of our diversity came unity. We are at our best when things are at their worst.


Well, the state legislative anti-aviculture bills of 1984, '85 and '86 met with little or no success, but we knew it would not be too long until the focus was changed. In 1987, I was contacted by the then Executive Vice President of World Wildlife Fund, Buff Bohlen, who was later to become an assistant Secretary of State of the United States, and asked to come to Washington to represent AFA in a meeting with Marshall Meyers of PIJAC, World Wildlife Fund, the Humane Society of the United States and the American Zoological

Association to discuss a proposed federal ban on the importation of exotic birds into the United States.

I will never forget that meeting. I felt so far over my head and out of my element that I wished I had never introduced myself to Dick Baer or ever opened my mouth to anyone in AFA that I was a lawyer.

The meeting was surprisingly and deceptively pleasant. It was clear where the agendas were. HSUS was belligerent toward the bird trade. Marshall Meyers talked about the economic impacts of such legislation on the pet industry in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars. World Wildlife Fund represented by Jim Leape, Ginette Hemsley and Buff Bohlen, spoke of conservation, sustainable use and humane treatment of birds. Don Bruning represented the zoo community. I sat, I listened and then I spoke. I said that none of this would work without the assistance of the people most affected by this – the aviculturists of AFA. Out of our diversity came tremendous empowerment. It was decided that a group would be formed. It would be called the Cooperative Working Group on the Bird Trade. The group would be made up of Marshall Meyers representing the pet industry, conservation groups, Audubon and World Wildlife Fund, the Humane Society of the United States, the Zoological Community, the Avian Veterinarians, the American Federal of Aviculture, the American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society and a number of animal rights groups. The animal rights groups were, among others, API, AWI, SAPL – and when you added in AAV, AFA, AZA, HSUS, WWF, and, for kicks, the NBA, NHL and the NFL, you had more letters than Campbell's Alphabet Soup. Our first meeting was in 1988 at World Wildlife Fund Headquarters in Washington DC. My memory is that there were over 20 groups represented around the table. Buff Bohlen lead the group. I represented AFA. Somehow the word had got out that AFA was a power to be reckoned with. We had proven this at the state levels. Now the question was could we, the aviculturists of the U.S. with all of our diverse backgrounds, the diverse birds we kept and the diverse interests we had, rally around our differences and become unified behind a single cause -- that of speaking with one voice to keep aviculture alive, protected and without unreasonable interference within the United States. More than importation was at risk – it was our very existence.





AFA rallied to the cause. The AFA House of Delegates and Board of Directors gave each of the presidents of AFA from 1988 to 1992 the authority to represent the interests of AFA. I served in the role of AFA's representative to the CWGBT during those four years with great pride and with a sense of great responsibility. I attended meetings often on a monthly basis in Washington, DC. At meeting after meeting we pounded home the same message – you will not do anything which will adversely impact our ability to keep and breed our birds. While it was clear that importation in its current form would be totally altered, it was also clear that aviculture would not go quietly into the night. In fact, our impact was so profound because of our dedicated collective voices and those of our affiliated clubs which joined as one under the AFA umbrella all pulling in the same direction, that at one meeting where the arguments became so intense, during a break, a conversation was overheard in the ladies room where one alphabet soup member said to another, "Those aviculturists are major pains. I don't know how we're ever going to get them to come around." The other said, "Well, if we can't get them to come around, we'll just go for a damn ban." When the meeting resumed, I remained standing at my seat – I was tempted to stand on it – my voice was trembling with anger. I stated that if there was anyone at this table who thought that they were going to put in a ban on the keeping and breeding of birds of any kind that were legally in the United States, let them stand up and say so now and we would agree to leave the room and file our own protective legislation. Much to my relief, no one took the bait. We continued with the debate.

The meetings went on for months. Months turned into years. Then in 1991 we were ready to file legislation. But first some of the groups unhappy with the deference which had been shown to aviculturists, the game bird breeders and the zoological community broke ranks with the CWGBT and filed their own legislation proposing to ban importation and highly regulate aviculture at all levels. Our response was swift. AFA, PIJAC, AZA, WWF and some others filed the WBCA. Hearings were held before U.S. House and Senate Committees. Aviculture was well represented. Our written testimony was signed on by virtually all of our member clubs. Our oral testimony at the hearings was clear. Pass no laws which would interfere with the pursuit of aviculture in the U.S. There would be cooperative breeding programs for importation of

birds into the U.S. Importation would be severely curtailed. Game birds would be exempt as would a clean list of predominantly captive bred birds. Ranching in situ was to be encouraged as was sustainable use. I was proud to present AFA's position at each of those congressional hearings.

In 1992, the bill became the WBCA of 1992 and was passed by the House and the Senate and signed by the then President of the United States. AFA's written and verbal testimony is memorialized in the congressional record.

Since that time, aviculture has evolved from an importation based pursuit to that relying generally on captive breeding. During the initial years after the adoption of the WBCA, we worked with USFWS, the department responsible for the enforcement of the WBCA, to promulgate sensible regulations, but as with many things in Washington, not much was accomplished. Fortunately, the Act had sufficient detail in it that aviculture, while changed, has not been seriously impeded in the U.S. However, much of the promise of the Act regarding in situ ranching, sustainable use, cooperative breeding programs has not realized its potential. One thing under the Act which has been realized is non-interference with aviculture. In fact, there is a section in the Act which I am proud to say was written by Janet Lilienthal during one of the legislative process heated exchanges. It states "the Secretary shall seek to ensure that the regulations promulgated under this Section will not have the effect of deterring captive breeding of exotic birds." The insertion of this provision was a requirement by AFA in order for it to continue with its participation in the process of the WBCA adoption.

In 2003, having adjusted to avicultural life after the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992, a dark cloud again appeared for aviculture. Over many years a controversy had loomed as to whether or not the Animal Welfare Act administered by the United States Department of Agriculture covered birds, rats and mice. It had been the position of the USDA that the Act did not cover birds.



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However, in keeping with their philosophy that there was always room for another good cause, especially one which promoted fundraising, animal rights and animal welfare groups brought suit against the USDA to require them to include birds, rats and mice under the Animal Welfare Act. The courts decided in their favor and Congress adopted legislation which removed any doubt as to whether birds, rats and mice would be included in the Animal Welfare Act.

Again, aviculture rose to the challenge. A group was formed – the National Avian Welfare Alliance – NAWA. AFA participated in and supported the efforts by NAWA to identify and recommend appropriate action for the USDA to take in promulgating regulations which would cover birds under the AWA. The members of NAWA came from very diverse groups and, with AFA's participation dedicated themselves to a comprehensive review of the appropriate method for implementation of the Animal Welfare Act to birds. They considered husbandry practices, physical environments, nutrition, environmental issues and a panoply of issues related to the keeping and breeding of birds under the Animal Welfare Act. In 2004, they reached their findings. At the same time, AFA, under the leadership of President Benny Galloway, made a determination that it had a responsibility to make an independent review of the Animal Welfare Act as it relates to birds on behalf of its own avicultural constituency. Dr. Galloway asked me to review the Animal Welfare Act from a legal point of view as well as to review the NAWA findings and recommendations, and to report to him as to my findings and recommendations.


After a comprehensive review of the law and the correspondence and communications which I had received as to NAWA's recommendations, I informed Dr. Galloway that, without further legislation or judicial intervention, the implementation of the AWA to aviculture appeared to be inevitable. Knowing that, I believed that it was important to focus on the impact which that implementation

would have. Keeping in mind the single purpose of AFA in its consideration of legislation and regulation -- that of non-interference with the practice of aviculture and the breeding of exotic birds -- it was my recommendation to Dr. Galloway that AFA's position be a simple one.

The intrusion and interference with aviculture by the AWA must be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Based upon that premise and knowing that NAWA had covered the possibility that AWA could become intrusive into aviculture, at Dr. Galloway's request, I prepared a position paper on behalf of AFA which points out to the USDA that the Animal Welfare Act does not require either intrusions of inspectors into aviaries nor specific procedures with respect to keeping and breeding birds. AFA has suggested that while, like the Captive Bred Wildlife Registration Program, the AWA might be applicable to certain breeders who reached a "commercial" threshold to be under AWA, the procedure for regulating these aviculturists should be minimally intrusive if not completely non-intrusive. After extensive research into this issue, I determined that no where in the Animal Welfare Act was there a requirement for on-site inspections. AFA submitted its position/proposal to USDA based upon the CBW program, which also does not require on-site inspections although it allows for them in appropriate cases. If an aviculturist/commercial breeder rose to a threshold level of being covered by the AWA, a detailed application for registration or licensure with descriptions of facility practices and pictures, if necessary, along with the description of the experience of the aviculturist should be the only requirement for licensing, clearance or registration under the Animal Welfare Act. President Galloway approved this position, and the position of AFA was forwarded to the United States Department of Agriculture along with other AFA recommendations including inclusion of an aviculturist in the USDA animal welfare review board for birds and the continuing participation of AFA in the process. We pointed out that, due to the diverse nature of aviculture, it would be impossible, unnecessary and counter-productive to adopt specific regulations for avian husbandry under the Animal Welfare Act. The diverse nature of the birds themselves, as well as avicultural practices on a geographic basis, made it impossible for such controls to be either adopted or enforced in any sensible or coherent manner. AFA also pointed out the need to avoid interference with captive breeding activities and the need to preserve bio-security in aviaries.







At the current time, our proposal and the recommendations of others are under consideration by the USDA. I note with great appreciation and respect that members of the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service are here at our convention to listen to, address and be sensitive to our concerns. I would further note that ever since the initial encounter between AFA and USDA in the 70's, a bond of friendship, understanding, cooperation and appreciation have existed between AFA and USDA. In fact, over the past 20 or so years, when Newcastle was detected in the United States, one of the first calls that was made by USDA APHIS was to members of AFA's quick reaction team comprised of the president, the legislative vice-president and me, to activate an alert network so that aviculturists would be aware of the presence of Newcastles and be able to take the appropriate precautionary measures. In fact, on occasion I have been called to Washington to meet with the administrator of APHIS and his staff to discuss matters of common interest between AFA and APHIS. For that I personally would like to express my great appreciation to past and present staff members of APHIS for their understanding, friendship and concern.

Well, I guess it's time to try to make sense of this walk through history into the present. Hopefully most if not all of you understand the point I have been trying to make in the stories I have told. Not only is this intended to be a historical perspective and an attempt to ground those of you who were not present during all of this period in aviculture and AFA with roots a sense of history, but it is also an attempt to focus on what I consider to be one of the greatest strengths of aviculture. That strength is not the diversity of the birds we keep. That strength is the diversity of the individuals who make up the avicultural community and AFA.

It is my belief that in order for us to use that diversity as a great strength, we must have tolerance for those who believe and feel strongly

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but differently from each of us. That tolerance I believe leads to better understanding of ourselves and others as well as a deeper understanding of and appreciation for aviculture and our birds. Without tolerance and respect, we weaken AFA and aviculture. Without civility and a tolerance of diversity, we have no unity. It is not our place to use our diversity to force others to do what we believe is right for us. It is so much better to use our diversity to broaden the knowledge and appreciation of others of our concerns and positions. While we won't always believe that somebody's practices or positions are right, whether they be positions of a personal nature or positions which become part of AFA's position on issues, we should support those who have been elected or appointed to lead us until we either change their minds or change leadership. Over the 28 or so years that Janet and I have been involved in AFA, we have seen our share of demagogues who wished to make over AFA in their own image. Without any sense of history of AFA or history of participation in AFA, they demanded board positions or representation of AFA at meetings or hearings. They only showed up when they wanted something for their own agenda. They were bright lights with great potential but who came on the scene quickly with no sense or appreciation for AFA's history and who, through selfish and egotistical efforts, tried to make over AFA in their image rather than become a part of AFA. Their lights burned out as quickly as they were lit. And then there were those who over time become beacons for AFA and aviculture. They have contributed on a continuous basis. As much as they could, they ignored the attacks by others who, through their efforts to force their personal agenda on AFA, brought weakness rather than strength to AFA. They have passed on and continue to pass on a legacy to all of us of caring, understanding, dedication and the willingness to make room for the concerns of others even though those others would seek to put them down, or worse, exclude them from participation. It is no one's place to use procedures and processes within AFA to attempt to foist one's personal agenda or points of view on others. It is each of our responsibilities to support the elected and appointed representatives of AFA in doing their jobs to protect all of us and to be the watchbird of aviculture while at the same time educating its constituency and providing a platform for the enjoyment and sharing of knowledge among members of AFA as well as members of the avicultural community.

Out of that tolerance for diversity comes unity and strength. Having served AFA for the past 20+ years, the one thing I have observed and for which I am both thankful and I have regret, is that we, the aviculturists of the United States and the members of AFA, truly are at our best when things are at their worst. My one hope in making this presentation is that we can change that. Through tolerance of diversity and the unity which would evolve from that tolerance we can be at our best not only when our very avicultural lives are threatened but also when we are able to be savor and enjoy aviculture and thus advance aviculture and AFA. So we can return to the days when 900 aviculturists attend the AFA convention.

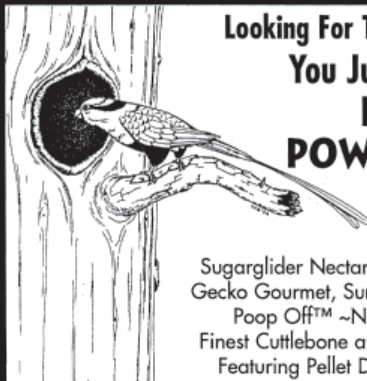
Mickey Olson, an aviculturist for whom I have great respect, once gave a presentation at AFA which he called "headlines." That presentation had a profound effect on me. It was more than a decade ago when I first heard it and I have never forgotten it. I now ask you what the future headlines will be. Will they be – Today the American Federation of Aviculture had its final convention and sadly dissolved amid controversy as to the application of its bylaws, the election process and the authority of its president to adopt

positions on issues concerning aviculture. Or will those headlines read – The American Federation of Aviculture – the organization proudly representing aviculture and aviculturists in the United States was asked today by USDA to represent aviculture on the board which will administer the Animal Welfare Act so that the Act will not interfere with the noble pursuit of aviculture in the United States. The choice is ours.

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