

# WOODY

## CONCLUSION

by Paul B. 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. Whatever your personal interest in parrots may be, read on. Your spirit will be expanded and warmed by the relationship between the writer and the comure "Woody."*

I've been searching for the right way to say this. Such is guilt and shame. But why should I feel guilty or ashamed? Woody is happier than he has ever been, and it's all my doing! Woody is no longer living with me.

Is it possible, you might ask, that anyone who loved a parrot as much as I say I did could deliberately give the bird up? Does one give away a child, a wife? No, but when you truly love a fellow creature you give away a part of your soul — although you receive an equal amount in return. That is what I did. For the past 16 months I have lived minus a part of myself. All because we decided to give Woody away. Am I sorry we did?

We? I couldn't have done it without my wife. We had decided Woody didn't really fit into our plans. We were buying a house — smaller than the one we'd been renting, cozier too. It was not built for a parrot. Also, it had lots of wood paneling, frames on windows and doors. But this was hardly the main reason Woody couldn't stay.

It had become clear that Woody didn't love me — and he never had. He

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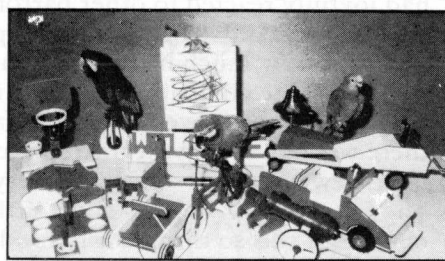
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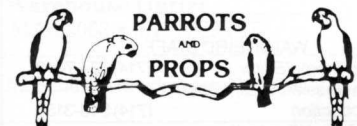
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loved my wife. I'm broadminded and I could have let them continue carrying on like that for years, right before my eyes, but the problem was my wife didn't care.

She didn't love Woody, she liked him a lot — though Woody wasn't the only one who took advantage of her accepting nature. So neither my wife nor I were really satisfied with Woody's performance. We knew what he could do, and what he couldn't. Now it was his turn to learn the consequences of being clearly evaluated by an alien species. But this, too, would not have been enough to make us ditch him. If I could banish him for such reasons alone, I might banish everyone else as well.

It was my wife who had a friend whose husband was a parrot freak like me, who moreover already had a blue and gold macaw, a cockatiel, a sulphur-crested cockatoo, and, yes, a blue-crowned conure — which, when I met her (her?) seemed even more distraught, neurotic and lost than Woody had that day I found him mooning in the pet shop. This man was willing to add Woody to his flock — eager, lusty to get the bird (never grateful, it turned out).

Knowing over the years how Woody had joyfully reacted to other parrots when we'd boarded him at a pet shop, we knew how much he loved — and needed — the companionship of his kind. And Woody loved all races. That there was one of his very own species in his new home was something everyone felt excited about — and a little nervous. I was so thrilled for Woody that I was able to put aside a minor selfish matter — I didn't like Woody's new master very much, for several, all-too-human reasons. And I was embarrassed by the peculiarity and nakedness of his bird-obsession.

None of this mattered because the moment we brought the two conures together they not only fell in love, they became inseparable cuddlers making up for lost time. And I was as hooked

as anyone who gets off on bringing pleasure.

Woody is there now. At this moment. While I'm writing about him in front of a blazing wood stove in a room he would have loved (to eat), Woody is basking in the grace of being rescued from an empty, ugly life as the lonely object of some man's selfish, tyrannical contemplation. In his new large house, empty of human warmth (the man's wife and child have since left him), in that babbling menage a' six, Woody is happy at last, even without his dowel sticks, Cheerios and mangoes, his casserole bathing dish, even without my wife's gentle fingers tickling his wingpit. He is happy for the best of reasons, and all because of me (and really, don't I deserve the credit for finding the wife who found the friend who found the husband who found and bought the right mate for Woody?).

Yet sometimes my heart longs for Woody. On certain afternoons in June when he would stand against the screen of an open window, gazing at the yard; or on frigid winter nights when Woody would huddle sweetly, miserably under an electric bulb; or anytime at all I hear Elgar's haunting Sea Slumber Song: "Sea birds are asleep./ The world forgets to weep..." At these moments I miss my little bird the way we all miss the first innocent object of our adoration, some hapless creature we thought the most beautiful on earth, someone we hardly even knew.

Woody still inhabits my memory, my imagination, my philosophy of life, my dreams. Now, himself lost in the labyrinth of love, he is mercifully spared my company and lives oblivious to the past. Will I ever trust a parrot again? It is a fact that since the day I introduced him to his future spouse, Woody has never acknowledged, when I visit him or call him with a favorite sound, that he knows me — or, indeed, that we have ever met. **f**

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