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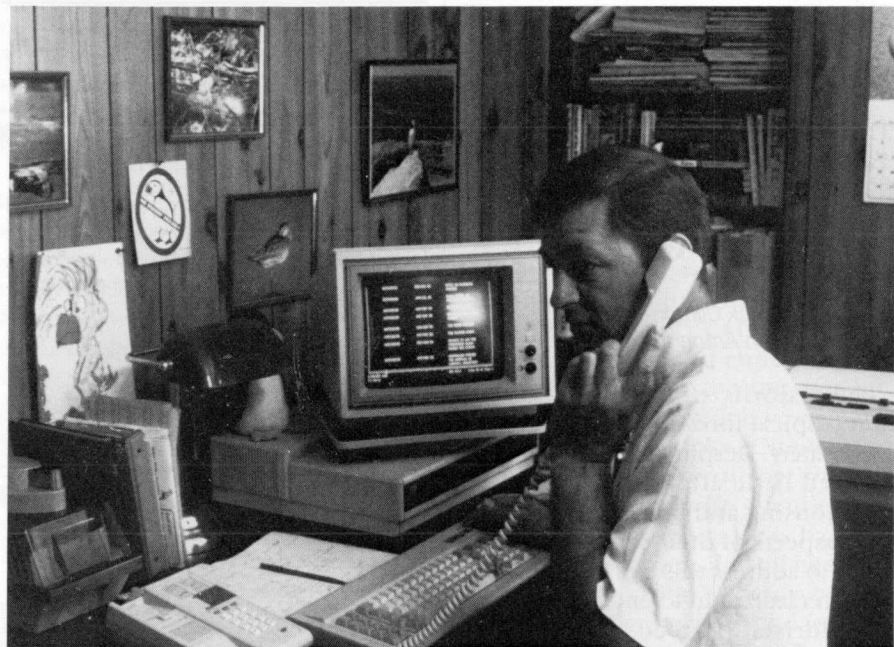


Photo by Marc Blundo

Paul Gildersleeve, owner of Pampered Parrot Haven, at his computer terminal. Paul uses his computer to log important articles and research papers. As a referral for the New York AEA and for LIPS, Paul frequently refers to this information when fielding callers' questions.

Pampered Parrot Haven, Inc. A New and Special Kind of Aviary

by Bob Abbandonelo
Glen Cove, New York

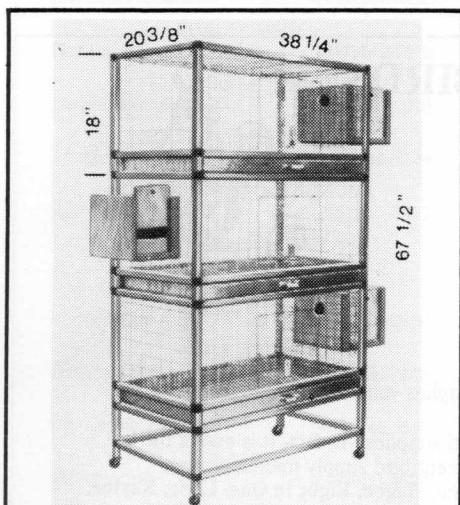
It's fitting that Pampered Parrot Haven, Inc. be situated in the Town of Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York. That's where Teddy Roosevelt called home. Teddy was a sincerely dedicated wildlife and environmental conservationist. The Teddy Roosevelt bird sanctuary, located near the Roosevelt home, is a tribute to Teddy's early conservation efforts. Today, a man named Paul Gildersleeve, a life-long Oyster Bay resident, is following in Teddy's footsteps with the opening of a special kind of aviary.

The concept of this new endeavor is quite interesting, as Paul explains, "Pampered Parrot Haven is essentially an experiment. While business must make a profit to survive, we want to prove that it is possible to make a profit breeding birds without compromising the birds in any way. Profits should not be made at the birds' expense!" Based upon this credo, Paul is offering, at wholesale prices, birds that are given super premium care and attention.

The motivation behind this endeavor stems mainly from a sincere desire

to assist birds and nature. "I've always loved wildlife and the outdoors," explains Paul. "Our tropical rain forests are being destroyed at the rate of 53 acres per minute. Birds, once free, must now be confined in cages. If that's the way it has to be, then it's time people learned how to coexist with birds and other creatures in a way that is mutually beneficial." Paul continues to explain that, in his opinion, there are practices employed by a few breeders that are giving the industry a bad name. Some quarantine stations and jobbers, he believes, knowingly ship sick birds just to get rid of the burden of caring for them. Usually, the birds die in shipment (or shortly thereafter) and the breeder collects insurance money from either his own insurance company or the carrier's. He further speculates that some quarantine stations and jobbers may even ship dead birds (kept frozen until needed) to collect the insurance, thereby compensating for previous expenses.

But these are extreme instances of improper care. Paul cites other, more



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common practices that he feels compromises the health and well-being of birds. For example, there's the practice of tube feeding instead of hand feeding. According to Paul Gildersleeve, many breeders tend to tube feed their birds. It's fast and easy so the breeder saves time and money. But Paul feels that hand feeding is unquestionably better because it allows the breeder to interact with the bird, encouraging solid development. What's more, by spending time with each bird during the hand feeding process, breeders get to know their special needs. "We always hand feed our birds at Pampered Parrot Haven," says Paul. "Right now, we're caring for 12 babies. If we tube feed them, it would take us about 15 minutes. Hand feeding these babies takes over an hour. But, in the long run, we believe it's worth it. The birds are apt to be more sociable, interacting better with their new owners and environments.

For Paul, Pampered Parrot Haven is the culmination of years of interest and involvement with aviculture. His interest in birds started as a hobby and soon blossomed into a part-time occupation. After joining the National Audubon Society and spending vacations on bird watching expositions in remote locations for weeks at a time, Paul began to breed and sell birds on a small, part-time basis. During this time, he managed to build close relationships with professionals at the New York Bronx Zoo and the San Diego Zoo. By working with these professionals and combining this experience with his insatiable quest for informa-

tion through empirical research, Paul soon earned a well-deserved reputation as a knowledgeable aviculturist. Continuing to build upon his credentials, Paul volunteered whatever spare time he had to various bird organizations. Today, Paul is New York State Coordinator for the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA), a member of the Long Island Parrot Society (LIPS), and a referral for the National Audubon Society in New York. He also picks up unwanted birds and tries to either place them with new owners or breed them.

In October of 1986, with a small amount of part-time business experience under his belt, Paul decided to expand his endeavor into a full-time occupation. "The initial transformation to a full-time business, even though I planned it carefully, was quite a jolt," exclaims Paul. "The reality of being your own boss and giving up a steady weekly salary was both exciting and stressing. But I'm glad I did it. I feel I'm helping the birds while making people happy, too."

Considering that his aviary consists of over 200 birds, including Amazons, cockatoos, finches, cockatiels, canaries, African grays and pionus, Paul's method of care is quite extraordinary. The first chore of the day is to wash each baby and hand feed them. Each different formula is constantly checked for proper temperature and consistency. Babies are fed and cleaned every four hours. Weaned birds are fed special mixes based upon individual requirements. "Our research, based upon empirical studies and collabora-

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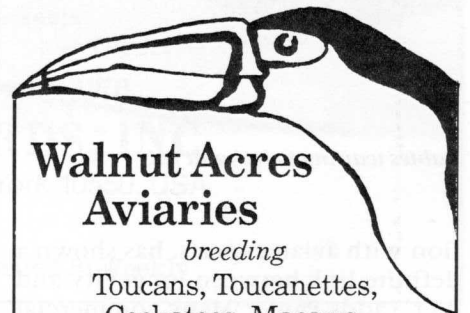
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Photo by Bob Abbondandolo, Glen Cove, New York



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Babies waiting to be hand fed.

tion with avian experts, has shown a definite link between longevity and diet," adds Paul. "Many commercial seed mixes contain mostly sunflower seed. Our mixes contain 25 to 30 percent sunflower seed maximum. Our mixes are also served with various fruits and vegetables. This is something many breeders don't bother to provide in any quantity. Here again, our emphasis is on the bird's health, not the breeder's convenience. We also rely upon and act as resellers for certain commercial avian products such as Roudybush, Nekton, Vitalite, and VetRx. We have found these companies to be responsive, reputable, and willing to support their customers."

As we talk, Paul frequently glances at a television which displays two of the many spacious avian living quarters in the building. When asked about the setup, Paul explained that he has four cameras that constantly scan the major living quarters. In this way, he can easily check on the birds from his office, eliminating the need to physically watch over the birds. As he explains further, "This frees up some time, and I need all the spare time I can find!"

If you think Paul is meticulous about the care and feeding of his birds, wait until you try to adopt one. First of all, Pampered Parrot Haven does not conduct business with dealers or pet

stores. In fact, after careful evaluation, Paul has so far identified only two pet stores in New York state capable of providing the level of care he expects his birds to have. Occasionally, when a customer wants a bird not presently at Pampered Parrot Haven, Paul will attempt to obtain the bird from another breeder. But so far, he has found only four breeders that meet his minimum care requirements; one in New York, one in Arizona, and two in California.

To adopt a bird through Pampered Parrot Haven, you must first undergo a prescreening process. "Prescreening is extremely critical," says Paul. "Thanks to this process, we have not had a single problem relating to a sale. The owners are happy and the birds are happy." During the prescreening process, Paul tests the prospect's knowledge of birds, explores why the prospect wants a bird, and evaluates the environment the prospect plans to provide. Paul also insists that each prospect visit their bird at the aviary at last three or four times prior to taking possession. During these visits, the future owner and the birds establish a relationship and Paul evaluates the potential success of the relationship as they interact. He can also observe the care and feeding techniques of the future owner. Once Paul is satisfied that the match is a good one, he'll complete the sale. (Pampered Parrot Haven will not

release a bird for sale until the bird is eating on its own for at least ten days and holding its weight. Birds do not start to be weaned until they are fully feathered.) A contact sheet is supplied with the bird during the transfer of ownership. The contact sheet lists the bird's birth place and date, weight, diet, recommended veterinarians in the owner's area, and other vital information. Paul expects new owners to call him frequently and provide status reports concerning the progress of each relationship. Furthermore, Paul will not hesitate to drop in on new owners from time to time and obtain a first-hand view of the situation.

While commercial shipment of birds from Pampered Parrot Haven is highly discouraged, Paul will consider it on occasion, as long as he feels that conditions are adequate. "The decision of not shipping birds severely limits our business, but the safety of our birds comes first. Despite this self-imposed restriction we have had people visit us from over 150 miles away to purchase birds," mentions Paul.

When asked about the business status of Pampered Parrot Haven, Paul responded as follows, "So far, the business is holding its own. We've been in business for over eight months now, and we're keeping our heads above water. Bird sales are basically covering our operating expenses. Once we do sell a bird, we hope the new owner will support us further by purchasing their supplies from us."

If Pampered Parrot Haven proves successful, everyone will emerge a winner. Marginal undedicated breeders will be forced out of the business due to lower profit margins and increased demand for higher quality. Breeders that survive by providing this higher quality will be rewarded by greater sales and profits. The image of the breeding industry will be bolstered due to the higher standards. Customers will benefit by obtaining a healthier, more adaptable bird, and birds will benefit from the increased attention and care. At worst, if the experiment fails, others may be able to learn from this experience and, someday, discover the proper mix of ingredients to make this concept a success. In any event, Pampered Parrot Haven is presently making many people and birds very happy. More importantly, Paul's on-going efforts are helping mankind realize the importance of aviculture and the need to save these rare and priceless gifts of nature. In that regard, o' Teddy would be might proud. 

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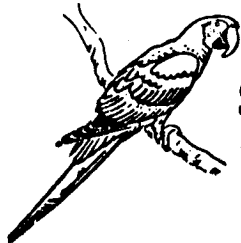
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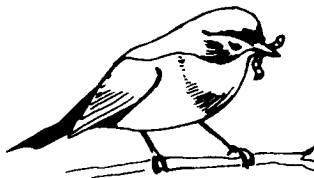
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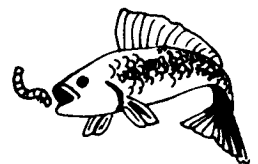
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