



Tom Marshall and Concetta at the AFA 2013 Convention.

Forever Dedicated:

SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE ON AN AFA MEMBER OF 35 YEARS AND COUNTING

By Concetta Ferragamo

In aviculture people come and go as their lifestyle or health leads them down different paths. It is most impressive how some people find ways to stick to their passion and stay the pace, avoiding biases and cliques which all too often create ill feelings, which leads individuals to stray and abandon a passion such as aviculture. Another challenge that leads to leaving a passion is the ability to stay neutral. On average, most of us start out as a pet owner, and then some fall in love with the birds so much that they attempt hobby breeding. Every so often that hobby of breeding turns into full-blown professional breeding. As life has it, all things must someday come to an end, thus the breeder retires. At that point, the breeder usually returns to becoming a pet owner once again. That common pattern sometimes suffers emotional challenges from society which makes it difficult to steer clear of the controversies between rescue pleas to adopt older birds versus store or breeder availabilities to buy baby birds. Being able to live in the neutral zone and encourage aviculturists with opposing views to unite, stay the course and support AFA comes easy for past president (1987–1989), retired breeder, proud parrot pet owner, AFA member of 35 years, Tom Marshall.

Marshall joined AFA in 1979 and has remained dedicated and very involved with AFA ever since. Marshall served as an AFA officer starting as the Virginia State Coordinator (1980–1981), Mid-Atlantic vice-president (1981–1982), second vice-president (1983–1985), first vice-president (1985–1987) and finally, president (1987–1989). Marshall served as committee chair for the Ethics Committee as well as Convention Chair in Washington, DC (1982) and Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia in 1990. Marshall remains active with AFA by attending annual conventions; and he is a frequent writer who has submitted many articles which have been published in AFA's award winning *Watchbird Journal*. When asking others about Marshall, it was reported that his "claim to fame" stems from his tenure as AFA president. During Marshall's presidency, AFA saw its most successful years to date. Marshall was notorious for his fund raising capabilities, which through his enthusiasm, as he described his methods, were obviously challenges that he enjoyed immensely.

The most successful fundraiser that Marshall and team pulled off was a letter that he wrote about the concerns about the creation of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), explained Marshall. This particular fund raiser letter was so impressive that *Bird Talk* magazine picked it up and published it also. A remarkable amount of \$18,000 was raised from that joint fund raising effort. The second major fundraiser



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was of a national campaign requesting membership donations for AFA. During those years, CITES and Wild Bird Conservation Act (WBCA) had pending issues that riled up the members of AFA. There was a constant lurking fear of the unknown threats to aviculture, which to this day still continues. Marshall reflected on his time of serving the Board of AFA and mentioned how he and past president, Lee Phillips, used to send out letters to the AFA membership highlighting new things taking place in aviculture and the importance of donations. These types of messages were well received by most and very helpful with raising supporting donations to the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.

As past president, Tom Marshall shared stories of his years in office, he made a point to mention that he is still very supportive of the organization and is a life member. He shared some fun stories of working alongside Dr. Benny Galloway and having the honor of getting to know Dr. Susan Club and Tom Ireland (a few of the many names that he mentioned). Marshall also talked about how important it is for people to attend the annual educational conventions, as he also tries to do. He says he enjoys seeing old friends and meeting new friends. Marshall made it a point to highlight how important it is to mingle with the newer and younger members, because they are the future of aviculture.

It was thrilling to spend time with Tom Marshall and hear about his adventurous life of aviculture and his 35 years with AFA. I especially got a chuckle out of hearing about Marshall's first large pet parrot who was a 20-year-old Double yellow-headed Amazon who scared him to death. He ended up selling that Amazon to an older woman, who boasted at how the

Amazon adored her, followed her around the house and turned out to be quite gentle. This was a first-hand experience for Marshall to witness the positive outcome that can come from re-homing a pet.

Not giving up on birds, but going a little smaller in size, Marshall bought himself a Black-headed caique, named Pepe. Marshall described how much he loved that bird but did end up selling him because at that time, he believed that you could only own one parrot per household. Marshall's third pet parrot was a wild-caught African grey who only talked if the door was closed in his room. It was Lee Phillips who ignited passion for Indian ring-necked parakeets when she gave him a tame pet female Ring-necked parakeet.

It was at an AFA regional convention in Alexandria, Virginia that Tom Marshall became enthralled with AFA. Marshall described how he was fascinated by the great articles that he read in the *Watchbird Journal*. Between his love of his pet Ring-necked parakeet and from those articles from *Watchbird*, he became inspired to become a smalltime hobby breeder. Marshall's breeding adventure started with Indian ring-necked parakeet mutations (lutino and blue). He also bred Stanley rosellas and Black-headed and White-bellied caiques. Living in a climate that dropped temperatures, Marshall opted for an indoor aviary. He described how his basement was set up with suspended cages 9' x 3' x 4' in size. Marshall shared stories about his breeding successes and talked about how much fun the caiques were to raise. Their comedic antics made them Marshall's favorite species of bird to breed.

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With love and adoration comes heartache and stress. Marshall described terrifying experience and a life lesson. Lee, Marshall's beloved pet Indian ring-necked parakeet, was riding along on his shoulders while he was tending to his aviaries. "I unconsciously opened the basement and she flew out of the door and was gone in a flash. I could not find her and had no idea which direction she went, she was so swift." It was obvious how heart-wrenching a memory this was because Marshall explained the events of the next day with such emotion as though it were a recent incidence. He went on to describe how he brought a young bird outside (in a cage) in the back yard. Marshall explained that this particular bird was rather quiet but Lee liked him, so it was worth a shot. "Low and behold, Lee flew back home screeching her arrival and landed on the roof of my house," Marshall described. He went on to explain, "She walked down to the roof gutter and sipped some water, but she did not fly down to me." Marshall then decided to act on instinct and ran into the house and brought out a dish of sun flower seeds and other "goodies." Relieved, Marshall continued, "That did the trick. She flew down and landed on the edge of the bowl before I even had time to set it on the outdoor table. I promptly turned around and carried the bowl, with Lee perched on it, back into my house." Lesson learned—if you don't clip wings, make darn sure all doors and windows are closed.

Moving from the adrenaline rush of catching an escaped bird and raising comedic caiques, Marshall described yet another entertaining aspect of his life with aviculture by sharing stories of his long-ago neighbor, Tom Ireland, who happens to be an aviculture icon and mentor to many. Marshall mentioned that Tom Ireland was the president of AFA from 1981 through 1983. Ireland owned a pet store in Falls Church, Virginia. He also once owned a flower/plant shop in Washington, DC. Marshall described Tom Ireland as being his mentor and inspiration throughout aviculture. Eventually, Ireland bought Tuwana Aviaries in Florida. Marshall talked about how he volunteered as Ireland's second car for that move. Marshall also reminisced about his volunteer time working during the summers for Ireland. The experiences that Marshall was exposed to left him "wide-eyed in so many areas of aviculture," said Marshall. It was through Tom Ireland that Marshall met Linda and Dr. Greg Harrison of Harrison Bird Foods who also were inspirational to Marshall.

Marshall said that it was because of his interactions with the pioneers of aviculture that his passion never swayed. When asked to tell about his top accomplishments in aviculture, his enthusiasm was almost contagious. He spoke about his success of breeding the caiques through several generations. He said that meeting prestigious individuals such as Susan Clubb (DMV), Tom Roudybush, Rosemary Low, George Smith (DMV), Benny Galloway (PhD), Dale Thompson, Jamie Gilardi, Charlie Munn and so many others helped shape his undying devotion to aviculture. Marshall also talked about the time he served on the board of directors and his presidential term for AFA as being a proud accomplishment.

While networking and mingling with the legends of aviculture served as a long lasting motivation, Marshall shared some more of his life experiences that were also inspirational. Marshall talked about his visit to Loro Parque which was their first parrot convention. He said that he saw the wild parrots in Costa Rica three times, St. Vincent, Mexico and the parrots of telegraph Hill in San Francisco. Marshall also spent the night at Dick Shubot's ABRC in Loxahatchee, FL.

Inspiration leads to dreams as Marshall shares his wishes for the future of aviculture. My dream, he said, is to see the Thick-billed parrot re-introduced to the pine forests of southwestern USA, living prolifically in the wilds of Mexico and re-established in their former habitat in Arizona." Marshall also shared a special and endearing wish for the future, which is to take his wife for a second honeymoon to "St. Lucia and see their parrot."

In closing, as years pass and children are raised, life throws curveballs that send people on different paths; but the passion for aviculture never extinguished for Tom Marshall. Ultimately, Marshall down sized and no longer breeds birds. He has gone back to his initial love of aviculture and keeps Lola, his Blue-fronted Amazon as his companion pet.

As a parting wish for the future, Marshall offers advice for any aviculturist to "travel to see parrots in the wild, to attend AFA conventions for the educational aspect, but also for the sense of belonging to something bigger than you are, but which represents your avocation, breeding birds." Marshall also said that he believes in "supporting conservation efforts to save birds in the wild, especially if they are using avicultural techniques, for example, artificial nest boxes, supplemental feeding, etc."



Nancy Speed, Tom Marshall, Mark Moore