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Photo by Dick Ivy

An historic meeting of all "feathered bird clubs" and state agencies of Virginia, June 29, at Harrisonburg, Va., included fancy poultry show clubs, poultry and egg industry associations, poultry breeders, game birders, four veterinarians from the state veterinarian's office, Virginia Polytechnic Institute's poultry science department, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and Bird Clubs of Virginia. Central at the table to the right, Ken Wartben, BCV; Phillip Clauer, extension poultry specialist for small flocks; Dr. Dick Boyd, chairman of the veterinary advisory council of the Virginia Poultry Federation; and Bill Weaver, also of the extension service.

Bird Clubs of Virginia Form a Federation

by Dick Ivy, Administrative Coordinator
 Yorktown, Virginia

When Bird Clubs of Virginia, a state federation of six independent cage bird clubs, pipped in 1985, it didn't realize it was the beginning of new horizons, for the state and hopefully the nation.

BCV soon developed friendly relations with the state legislative assembly, state veterinary offices, the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, poultry clubs and the giant Virginia Poultry Federation, the state game bird association, the pet industry, and nearby veterinarians and their associations, as well as bringing the best aviculturists and veterinarians in the nation as speakers for its annual conventions and vet clinics.

It has also brought visibility to Virginia as having a responsible group of progressive, talented and concerned exotic bird aviculturists, interested in the pet industry, conservation and veterinary facets. Yet it has no officers and no members!

What? It's not a bird club! It's not competing with local clubs for members! There are no dues. It is an umbrella organization supporting local clubs reporting their activities for other club leaders, providing speaker information, state-level and bordering state bird club activities, and national and state activity, and monitoring laws and legislation affecting bird folks.

Its principal vehicle is a neat, quarterly bulletin, "The Bird Box," which features the many facets of aviary management written by aviculturists and veterinarians. It is mailed free to principal elected club officers including editors, and to those who participate in the BCV planning meetings, and government and educational leaders. Others, including out-of-state readers who want a timely copy, pay \$5 a year. Club members may pick up a free copy at their club meetings, later though it may be. A number of copies based on membership totals are sent free.

Wait up! Soon there will be many more state level organizations. Joining Virginia, where American independence was won, is Pennsylvania where the liberty bell rang and a quill set down signatures of far-sighted men who had formed the Constitution. The Pennsylvania Federation of Aviculture (PFA) was incubated in October and at the National Cage Bird Exposition in November. PFA includes as planning partners those from many other facets of aviculture, unlike BCV. There are seven clubs supporting the Keystone federation, but in status much like Virginia concerning membership and leadership. Bird clubs in other states are thinking about such an umbrella federation even if there are only two clubs.

With ready-made officers in every state, this writer is at a loss why state

federations haven't been formed. Do enemies have to kick us in the pants in order to motivate us to band together in state federations which are only going to help aviculture prosper?

It stands to reason that concerted research, a plexus press going to bird leaders and others, and a combined strong voice of the best leaders in the states in addition to those of club leadership will have an impact far beyond a temporary flurry by individual clubs.

The poultry people of Virginia have the same menace of disease and responsibility of watching legislative proposals and government regulations as do exotic cage bird people. The various poultry organizations didn't know cage bird people existed in the state, and bird breeders certainly didn't know the extent of poultry numbers, and their serious pride, breeding, preening and care of their "birds", object of their industry. Their numbers and power are far greater than ours.

Al Nelson of Pennsylvania told this writer the poultry people in that state testified against the "irrational" bird ban bill. Their voice supported that of cage-bird folks. They were perceptive

and interested.

State organizations can do all of these:

- Promote cooperation between in-state and border bird clubs.
- Do their own fighting in the Assembly against negative bills or for positive ones.
- Promote greater support and credibility of AFA in that state. The AFA Virginia state coordinator is a key planner in BCV and the Keystone AFA state coordinator, Brenda Geesey, is a part of the planning group for Pennsylvania.
- Save AFA time and money by putting out "fires" in their own states, and help AFA to spend more time on national and international level concerns. State lawmakers prefer to hear their own citizens. Of course, if there are no proactive in-state spokesmen, threatened aviculturists will be happy to have AFA, PIJAC, etc., fend for them.
- Promote aviary management education seminars.
- Coordinate at a state level with other comparable and similar mission units.
- Communicate with national organizations with more credibility

than a single club. (If a member of AFA, I'm sure your club has attentive listeners at AFA).

- Maintain the ready-made mailing list for maximum coverage for emergency notifications and governmental proceedings.

BCV existed for three years without "officers." BCV's administrative coordinator was in on the ground floor of BCV organization and was chairman of the bird club which hosted the charter ticket banquet of leaders of the state. He or she must have adequate time to field all the problems, produce bulletins, convention mailings, etc., or keep the activity visible. There are no job descriptions.

The AFA coordinator for Virginia, Carole Wheeler, needed no coaxing to be a part of BCV. She was the banquet speaker along with Tom Marshall (who didn't sing but eloquently supported AFA) at that first banquet. Each club was represented by its president or representatives. Some clubs didn't participate at first, the whole idea being quite new, and entailing travel from home base for someone from the club.

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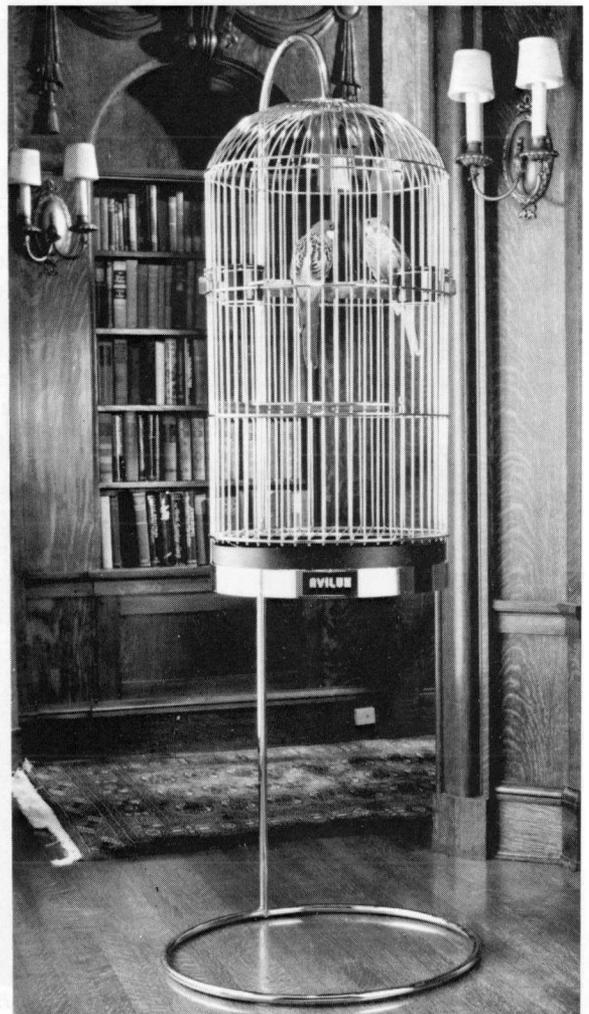
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standing. One person travels nearly four hours to attend the monthly planning and discussion meeting. He's the veterinary activities coordinator, Ken Warthen, a student at the veterinary school at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Most others travel two hours and more. When a convention is pending in one of the club areas of Virginia, several meetings are held at the convention site. The other times, it is at Richmond, the state capital. Pet Industry coordinators Charlie and Cindy Zoby were the convention facilities "honchos" this year for the local club, Parrot Breeders of Virginia, at Norfolk.

Also, a part of the group are specialty club state representatives such as Olivia White and Ed Kent, National Cockatiel Society coordinators. The club in the area of the convention provides several coordinators and the senior one is convention facilities coordinator for that year. Then there are the speaker, raffle, and commercial room coordinators.

Clubs are the only members of BCV. They vote by resolution to belong, with no fee, and they are now beginning to elect or appoint their represen-

tatives to the BCV meetings at the same time.

Some don'ts:

- Don't elect officers at first. Let each be on equal turf, though the work may not be equal. Do you want a federation or another bird club?

- Don't charge dues for clubs.

- Don't have individual membership. It's a federation of clubs! Some planners and many conventioners may not be members of bird clubs, but who cares. Any aviculturist, if he is willing to take the time and travel, is welcome at planning meetings.

- Don't rush group decisions. A better idea may come up. Decisions are not binding on clubs unless they themselves decide it. Clubs are completely independent, still a part of BCV, whether they accept state-level decisions or not.

- Don't give up.

If this information is not enough of a blueprint for readers' consideration, the writer can be reached at BCV, P.O. Box 2005, Yorktown, Virginia 23692, or by calling (804) 898-5090, during the day or evenings. ●

Capitol City Bird Society, Inc. Promotes Aviculture and AFA at State Fair

by Helen Caudle
C.C.B.S. President, California

For the past three years we have had an exhibit at the California State Fair to help educate the general public along with adding a little money to our treasury. In 1987 the fair was from August 21 through September 7. Our club members staffed the exhibit for 12 hours a day. Our club has two AFA delegates, Sharon Garsee and Helen Caudle. We promoted AFA along with our club, NFS and NCS. We had demonstrations on several occasions throughout the run of the fair. The exhibit was organized by Bob and Jessie Abbott. More than 40 of our members took turns at shifts, some

more than once.

Our club has a membership in excess of 250. We meet once a month with excellent speakers. We also have an annual bird show, Christmas party, round table discussions, etc. We have been in existence for 13 years and we grow each year both in membership and avicultural knowledge.

There is no way of knowing how many memberships AFA obtained from this exhibit but I know of one that happened to call me after the fair and told me how excited she was that her veterinarian husband sent in a subscription for her. ●



C.C.B.S. member Joe Atkinson (left) answers questions after his public presentation on basic bird keeping at the California State Fair.