

# Kenton C. Lint

March 19, 1912 - December 3, 1992

## Part II

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For the greater part of K.C.'s professional career, his efforts at establishing self-sustaining populations of captive birds were hindered by a lack of similar commitment on the part of other zoos. A particularly painful case is that of the Guam Rail (*Gallirallus owstoni*). In 1968, when this species' population was estimated at a probable all time high of 80,000, ten were sent to San Diego (Lint, 1968b). (From 1939 through 1967, 12 other species of rails bred there, according to K.C.'s private list.) From 1968 through 1975, Guam Rails bred prolifically at San Diego, and K.C., quite typically, sent them to several other U.S. zoos. But when, in the early 1980s, it had become suddenly apparent this bird would shortly be extinct due to the population explosion of the introduced Brown Tree Snake, none then existed in captivity. The successful species survival program that has since been implemented from a handful of survivors had to be started entirely from scratch.

Why had the San Diego line of Guam Rails, so generously spread across the continent by K.C. in the late '60s and early '70s, been allowed to die out? The answers reflect an avicultural world very different from the one that now exists. One need only look at the December 31, 1970 bird taxa inventories I have compiled in Table II. By comparison, here are some January 1, 1992 species and subspecies totals (American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, 1992); San Diego Zoo: 440, San Antonio: 237, New York Zoological Park: 327, Los Angeles: 253, St. Louis: 213, National Zoological Park: 155, Lincoln Park: 97, Milwaukee: 103, Cleveland: 171, Philadelphia: 190, Dallas: 134, and Brookfield: 129. (The collections in Table II not included in the above list are either larger or not all that different from the earlier figures.)

Comparing statistics across 21 years makes it obvious that different philosophies from today's were in practice.

Of course, it was ever so much easier to acquire birds then. Into the early 1970s, there were few tropical countries prohibiting (or seriously regulating) bird exports. CITES did not exist. The major factor, however, was the absence of quarantine requirements for all but a few species of birds entering the U.S. There can be little argument that the imposition of Exotic Newcastle's Disease quarantine in 1972 was, perhaps, the single pivotal event influencing American aviculture, which, of course, led to the formation of the American Federation of Aviculture. I cannot help but believe that the Newcastle's restrictions have ultimately had a wonderfully positive effect on aviculture in this country. If, at times, I might look back wistfully to 1972, when I bought waxbills for \$3.98 a pair at Woolworth's, I cannot ignore the fact that, under such circumstances, it would have been thought unconscionable for a public zoo to pay someone to work at propagating African finches to the extent of the program with which I am now involved at Fort Worth. The 1970 statistics for Table II result from a simple fact. For most species, it was uneconomical to establish in captivity that which could be procured from the wild for less than it cost to employ someone to breed it.

Not only was the emphasis of the American zoo in 1970 on exhibiting as many taxa as space and finances allowed, but as many unique or rarely exhibited ones as possible. Today, no matter what zoo one visits, if their bird collection is of any size, there are certain species, now almost entirely captive-bred, that one can expect to see almost everywhere — "American zoo standards" so to speak; Sacred Ibis, Ringed Teal, African Spur-winged Plover, Pink-crested Touraco, Lilac-breasted Roller, Red-billed Hornbill, Superb Starling, Rothschild's Mynah, etc. Many others will soon join the ranks; The Jambu Pigeon and the Azure-winged Magpie come to mind.

In the days when large collections distinguished by rarely-seen "esoterica" were the norm, it was easy for brown ground birds to be lost in the cracks. (The fact that Guam Rails are notoriously aggressive to other species, each other, and humans, did not encourage their propagation at other zoos when they appeared more secure in the wild. A keeper once told me he was unaware of any other bird that could appear so totally determined to hurt people.) Of course, K.C. was not alone in his efforts to establish the results of his breeding suc-

Table II

Bird Breeding Results for the year 1970, achieved by an arbitrarily selected series of U.S. zoos and bird parks. (Statistics from Volume XII of the *International Zoo Yearbook* (Zoological Society of London, 1972a7b))

	Taxa present 12-31-70	Taxa fully reared in 1970
San Diego Zoo	1,097	34
San Antonio	501	13
New York Zoological Park (Bronx Zoo)	476	40
Los Angeles	469	41
St. Louis	434	46
National Zoological Park	405	41
Lincoln Park Zoo (Chicago)	291	5
Milwaukee	290	6
Cleveland	282	6
Houston	275	29
Philadelphia	273	13
Dallas	258	19
Cincinnati	233	6
Chicago Zoological Park (Brookfield Zoo)	228	16
Fort Worth	182	7
Pittsburgh Conservatory Aviary	179	4
Tracy Aviary (Salt Lake City)	136	7
Oklahoma City	98	8

cesses at other zoos. The Bronx Zoo's Panamanian Boatbills, and Los Angeles' Crimson-rumped Toucanets immediately come to mind as examples of birds bred prolifically at one zoo, sent to many others, with little or nothing to show for it.

K.C. was all too aware of the public zoo situation of the '60s and '70s and, for this reason, perhaps, wholeheartedly endorsed and encouraged private aviculture to a measure beyond that of any other zoo man of whom I am aware. In 1936, the year he joined the San Diego Zoo, he also

became a charter member of the American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society (Lint, et. al., 1990, p.18). He not only came to serve on its Board of Directors, but held a similar seat in the International Wild Waterfowl Association (of which he was president for a term). He was a long-time member of the Avicultural Society of America, and gave much enthusiastic support to the fledgling American Federation of Aviculture. He was an honorary member of the Lovebird Society and the California Game Breeders Association. He and his wife Marie founded the Finch Society of San Diego County as well as the North [San Diego] County Avicultural Society (whose bylaws they wrote) (Ibid., pp. 18 & 26). These affiliations leave no doubt that K.C. was seriously interested in breeding birds.

Though records are not complete, I would imagine most of the enormous number of Psittacines (130 species) that K.C. produced (many personally hand-reared, using pioneering formulas) were surplused to private individuals. From the list he compiled from his daily logs, one finds that 61 Lead-beater's Cockatoos, 63 Bare-eyed Cockatoos (of Ashby's subspecies), 15 Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, 20 Keas, 23 Northern Rosellas (commencing in 1959) and 34 Princess Parrots (beginning in 1950) were raised up to 1976. If anyone has information on the genetic contribution these individuals have made to the present U.S. populations of these species, I would appreciate receiving it.

Rosemary Low (1980) comments that Red-fronted and Yellow-fronted Kakarikis "... are now so much a part of aviculture that newcomers are surprised when told they were not available prior to the early 1970s." Note that both species were raised at the San Diego Zoo in 1970. K.C. was always proud of his cordial relations with zoos and wildlife authorities in New Zealand, resulting in the arrival at San Diego of North Island Kiwis, Paradise Shelducks (Lindholm, 1991), Weka Rails, Pukekos or New Zealand Purple Gallinules, Keas, and the two species of Kakarikis. Yellow-fronted Kakarikis began breeding at San Diego in 1966, and the Red-fronteds followed in 1968. Again, I would be interested in hearing of the extent the San Diego birds are ancestral to the current U.S. population. Considering that New

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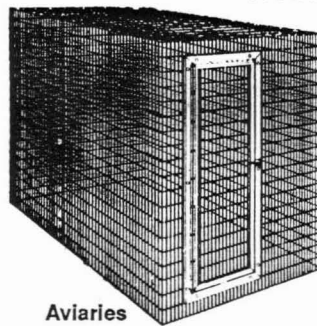
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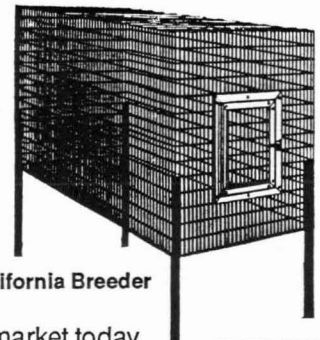
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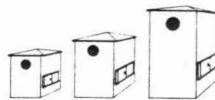


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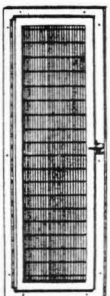
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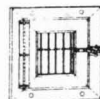
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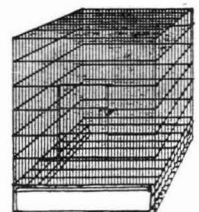
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Zealand does not allow commercial export of its native wildlife, I would imagine, with the exception of captive-bred stock from Europe, these birds must be the major founders.

Of the 34 taxa that were raised at San Diego in 1970, ten were lorries or lorikeets (Table I). (The Iris Lorikeet, *Trichoglossus i. iris*, hatched that year was the first in captivity [Low, 1977]). With the enthusiastic collaboration of his then-Assistant Curator James Dolan, K.C. produced an astounding number of these parrots, from the mid-60s into the '70s. If many visitors' favorite San Diego exhibit was the Hummingbird House, for others, it was the encyclopedic series of lorries and lorikeets and, especially, the "nursery cages" full of recent offspring. San Diego's "lory nurseries" were a direct inspiration for Mickey Ollson's Wildlife World Zoo "Lory Feeding Exhibit," which, in turn, inspired similar displays across the country, including one under my care at Fort Worth that opened in 1992. It gives me great pleasure that the birds in this aviary include ten Forsten's Lorikeets and seven Swainson's Lorikeets, direct descendants of birds that began breeding at San Diego in the 1960s. Fort Worth's birds were hatched by Texas aviculturist Dr. Ray Jerome, who also raises Red-collared Lorikeets, whose ancestors hatched at San Diego. San Diego Zoo no longer works with Forsten's or Swainson's Lorikeets, concentrating instead on lorries and lorikeets from Indonesia, New Guinea and Polynesia, and the Red-collareds there now are a new importation. I know of only one other public exhibit in the U.S. currently exhibiting Forsten's. In this case, K.C.'s work is clearly being carried on by private aviculture.

It is unfortunate that in too many cases no clear assessment can be made of K.C.'s contribution to a particular species' establishment in captivity, due to lack of records. This problem is certainly not restricted to private aviculture, as zoo record-keeping, prior to the late 1970s, was so often, to say the least, inconsistent. From two pairs of Rothschild's Mynahs that K.C. brought back from an extensive Asian expedition in 1961, more than 100 were reared (Lint, et. al., 1990). None can, with certainty, be designated as founders of the current population in U.S. zoos (Seibels,

1990), though I'm sure, in fact, their genes are represented. There is just no way, due to lack of records, to know clearly. One would think it difficult to misplace anything as large as an Andean Condor, but of the nine produced at San Diego from 1942 to 1952 (Lint, 1959 & 1961), three simply cannot be accounted for, and three more, though known to be from San Diego, cannot be identified as individuals (Kasielke & Wallace, 1990, pp. 1 & 18-20). It is pleasing that one of these nine, Studbook #8, is well represented genetically in both the captive and released population, and, in 1990, at the age of 45, was still siring offspring (Ibid., p. 9).

While the genetic contribution to the current captive population of the enormous number of birds hatched during K.C.'s career may never be fully comprehended due to lack of records, the contribution to aviculture in the form of his astounding literary output is unarguable. I refer the reader to a bibliography from four journals which I compiled for the *Avicultural Magazine* (Lindholm, 1993); 126 articles spanning more than 40 years. K.C. cannot be faulted for his own record keeping. His source of data were his meticulously maintained daily logs, his personal possession, which, when made available to scholars, are certain to continue to be an invaluable avicultural resource. From his notes, K.C. and his wife Marie compiled a unique book on bird diets, an essential reference for both zoo and private aviculturists, appearing in two editions (Lint & Lint, 1981 & 1988). K.C. was ready to write as enthusiastically on lovebirds (Lint, 1974) and cockatiels (Lint, 1975 & 1976a), as he did on frogmouths or hornbills (Lint, 1968c & 1972a). Always generous, he published in the pages of *Zoonooz* his own hand-raising formulas for macaws and cockatiels (Lint, 1972b and 1975), and was always cordial in advising aviculturists.

I have written thus far of K.C.'s work, and much more should be said; his pioneering efforts in incubation and artificial insemination, his attempts to set up a California Condor breeding program, his expeditions, etc. However, I will refer the reader to my *Avicultural Magazine* article and bibliography (Lindholm, 1993) and K.C.'s Oral History for the Zoolo-

gical Society of San Diego (Lint, et. al., 1990), and write briefly of the man himself.

As much as he was extravagantly fond of birds in all their variety, I do not believe he took any less pleasure in people and their ways. I don't think I have met anyone with more of a capacity to spontaneously make solid friendships. Born in Missouri, raised in Tulsa, a 1934 graduate of Oklahoma State University, with a Master's of Science in Animal and Poultry Husbandry, K.C. estimated he traveled around the world 21 times. His diversity of friends ranged from the infamous President Sukharno of Indonesia, members of the Japanese Peerage and Australian Knighthood, to a homeopathic bird rehabilitator in Texas and self-described "Bohemians" who keep three species of toucans in an urban condominium. Like his close friend Delacour, he took great delight in funny situations. I will mention only his entertainment at the expression of horror from Japanese Secret Service agents when he placed live mealworms in the hand of her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Nagako, so she could feed the tame Red-legged Honeycreepers in the Hummingbird House, on the occasion of the visit of the Emperor and Empress to America in 1975. The mischief which underlay K.C.'s profound gentleness is, I think, nicely illustrated by the time he observed a child galloping up the moving sidewalk at the zoo, in clear defiance of posted signs. "Don't run, Little Girl!" began K.C. admonishingly, "Don't run, or you'll fall down and break all your teeth, and you'll have to go to the *dentist!*", concluding with his famous beatific smile.

Any given bird in the San Diego collection was likely to have its own fond anecdote—a Jackdaw extracted from the walls of Jean Delacour's chateau in Normandy, a Brazilian Pygmy Owl once used by Augusto Ruschi to lure hummingbirds to traps, and, of course, King Tut, the recently deceased Moluccan Cockatoo, imported to the U.S. in 1925, whom K.C. once took to a fashion show, where Tut "kissed a hundred models, and didn't bite one of them!"

K.C.'s enthusiasm for birds was not denied to other animals. Despite the wonderful collection of birds he brought back from his 1961 expedition to India, Thailand and Indonesia,

his greatest source of pride from this trip was the breeding pair of Proboscis Monkeys. He was also delighted, while in Indonesia, to have initiated the process of obtaining Komodo Dragons for the San Diego Zoo. The arrival of Koalas for the U.S. bicentennial (when San Diego otherwise had only aging females) owes much to his efforts, and led eventually to a relaxation of a total export ban on this enormously popular marsupial.

Following his retirement in 1976, K.C. and Marie traveled extensively, and were to be expected at any major avicultural conference. Marie's sudden and unexpected death in 1983, after 46 years of marriage, devastated K.C. and effectively ended his writing and traveling. Supported by his quietly secure and good-natured Christianity, he continued to live in the house he had bought in the '40s, not far from the zoo, surrounded by a delightful private museum of decorated ratite eggs, bird art in all forms, mementos from 40 years at the zoo, and objects he'd picked up around the world. He busied himself with mutation lovebirds and Gouldian Finches, as well as exuberant gardening, and took the monthly meetings of the North County Avicultural Society very seriously. Of course, he kept a close watch on his beloved zoo and wild animal park. His correspondence with countless friends and colleagues was a source of great delight. It was only very near the end of a long and painful illness that he was persuaded to leave his San Diego house for his son Roland's home in Red Bluff. K.C. died in his sleep, surrounded by a loving family.

K.C. Lint's legacy is immense. Even if insufficiently documented, the results of his breeding programs continue in collections around the world. His articles and books are vital references. James Dolan, Director of Animal Collections for the Zoological Society of San Diego, and Arthur Risser, General Manager of the San Diego Zoo, were, successively, his Assistant Curators. His other protégés work in zoos across the world. If the San Diego bird collection, in its specializations and complex projects, is now a very different one from that directed (for so many years with a miniscule staff and inadequate finances) by K.C., it is built on the foundation he laid, and remains very

much a prime leader in international aviculture. And, of course, there is the influence, often intangible, on countless aviculturists, long-time friends, and one-time acquaintances, which will continue to guide what we do as long as birds are kept in captivity.

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