The World of Aviculture revolved around this table, especially when it involved several of the great old timers. There genetics and mutations were discussed. It was at the table of Dave West that some aviculturists guessed what the Whitefaced-Pearly-Pied Cockatiel would look like before it came into the States from Europe. We were all wrong! This was where many of us learned of someday owning one of them.

Those of us who knew him well have very fond memories of Dave West but it was his wit that made our visits to his office so memorable. We would schedule precious time in our lives just to hear Dave West tell stories and learn from him. But it was his jokes and humor that we have kept in our memories for a long time.

Indeed, even during times of stress, Dave usually remained calm and cheerful. In the early 1980s when over $25,000 worth of Ringnecks (including many of the then top mutations) were stolen from Dave West, he was asked why he did not get angry over this great injustice. Dave replied, "When I was in the Korean War in the 1950s, I was stationed and fighting in the north looking like me." The little girl replied that she would never smoke, while her mother smiled and looked on.

Dave West, of course, had never smoked.

Dave West lost a lengthy and painful battle with cancer and one of the best friends of aviculture (and especially the birds) passed away on February 4, 1993.

Although Dave seldom became angry, his sense of humor led toward a penchant for "balancing the books" as he called it. A wholesale bird buyer once came to the farm and offered $1.50 each for Zebra Finches. Dave told him the price was $1.75 each. The buyer nodded and Dave caught up a couple of hundred young Zbras. With the birds in carrying cages, the dealer again said he could give only $1.50. Dave looked calmly at him, said that if the birds aren't worth $1.75, they aren't worth anything and turned all the young birds loose into the sky. Stunned, the amazed dealer walked away. It was only an hour or so, however, before Dave had caught all the young birds in traps set for the very purpose. The next time the dealer showed up he did not haggle prices.

Dave's joy was to raise birds. He did not want to just keep birds. He was once overheard saying, "It is more fun to breed a Zebra Finch than it is to not breed a Gouldian Finch."

During one of the last years of Dave West's life an incident showed the compassion he had for children. This was when he had the graft (from cancer on his face) that extended from his cheek like a fleshy protrusion. Dave was in a grocery store when a mother and small daughter walked by him. The daughter was of an early age before she could be "taught" about "being different" or "ugly." This little girl pointed up to the protrusion on Dave West's cheek and ask him "What is that?" Dave West knelt down and replied, "This growth is from smoking too much so never take up smoking yourself or ever take a cigarette from any of your friends. You may turn up looking like me."

The little girl replied that she would never smoke, while her mother smiled and looked on.