

Wow! What a Convention!

by Sheldon Dingle, Los Angeles, CA

Part II

In the last issue you got a sense of how much joy I had in participating in the AFA convention. In this issue we hope to convey some of the glowing pleasures and sense of growth others got from the same convention.

One of the many highlights we all like is the recognition various folks receive for having done good things in aviculture. The AFA has for many years given the prestigious AVI Awards to a select few persons who have done more than their share to enhance various aspects of American aviculture.

U.S. First Breeding Awards are given to the individual or organization which is responsible for breeding a species or subspecies of bird hitherto not bred in the United States. The dynamics behind these first breedings are very convoluted and complicated and cannot be predicted by formula. But it is to the great advantage of aviculture that there are zoos and private breeders who are constantly working with difficult birds. These birds are generally an expense, not an asset. Those persons and institutions listed below have had good luck, good technique, perseverance and dedication in their avicultural efforts. The AFA honors them for their first breedings. These AVI Awards were presented by Dale Thompson, Chairman of the Awards Committee, at a fine Friday luncheon that was one of the highlights of the whole convention.

Awards went to:

The Toledo Zoo, for the Red-throated Gaudy Barbet, *Megalaima mystacophanos* hatched 6 September 1992.

Stash Buckley and Carol Anne Calvin for the Pin-tailed Nonpareil Parrot Finch, *Erythrura prasina* hatched 7 July 1989.

The Houston Zoological Gardens for the Crowned Hornbill, *Tockus alboterminatus* that hatched on 17 September 1993.

In addition to the first U.S. breeding awards, AVI Awards are also given to the two authors whose *Watchbird* articles have been deemed the best during the preceeding calendar year. These awards are of necessity somewhat subjective but a panel of skilled and astute judges come to as fair and unbiased a decision as can be made.

For 1994 one award went to Josef Lindholm III for "Focus on Finches...Buffalo Weavers" *Watchbird* March/April 1994.

The second award went to Les Gibson for "Breeding the Brown-backed Solitaire" *Watchbird* Sep/Oct 1994.

Our great appreciation for the work and talent displayed by these two excellent gentlemen and for their top notch contributions to the literature of modern aviculture.

There were many other special awards presented by President Desborough to folks who have been especially helpful within the AFA. These are the unsung heroes of our organization. This time, however, President Desborough sang their praises and bestowed well deserved honors. We all enjoyed the laughter and tears of the emotional handshakes and embraces.

There is always so much going on at an AFA convention that we can't hope to convey the whole impact in these pages. You really have to be there to appreciate it. Dianne Livengood has published in this issue a bit of her convention experiences. Be sure to read her article. She does a good job of explaining why one should attend AFA conventions. ➔

Convention Conversations With Dr. Branson Ritchie

by Dianne Livengood, Liberty, MO

When you attend an educational function such as the American Federation of Aviculture convention there are a lot of benefits. You get the chance to meet people who have the same interests, problems and worries as you. You get a chance to exchange ideas and solutions, and to form friendships with these people. There is the chance to see and investigate new products, books, etc. In this type of atmosphere you get to rev up your engine and re-establish your enthusiasm.

Then you always have the off chance of running into one of the big names, and getting to sit down and really having a brainstorming session. The first night, there was a group of four or five of us looking for something light to eat before heading up to our rooms for the evening when Dr. Ritchie stopped and asked us what we were getting up to. Needless to say, we invited him to join us.

Branson W. Ritchie, D.V.M., Ph.D., was to give the opening speech the next morning on "Prevention of Avian Polyoma and PBFD Virus". Dr. Ritchie is currently teaching at the University of Georgia Veterinary School directing Avian/Zoological Medicine. He is serving on the research committee of the AAV and is primarily involved in veterinary medical research.



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There were lots of side products to this meeting, including fun, laughter and relaxation, but I want to highlight the discussions both on that evening and in Dr. Ritchie's talk the next day on avian diseases and virus problems.

Listening to this doctor's enthusiasm and interest alone is a very up-lifting experience. He made several points that were very thought provoking.

First, why have the hobbyists and breeders of birds let the pet shops dictate how we run our operations? For every other pet offered in the pet shops or shown at shows, there are guidelines and requirements on health. There are tests, vaccinations, and selective breeding expectations. The price of the animal is indicative of these items. Let's take this thinking a step further, and ask ourselves why we let the pet industry set the price we use to sell birds. We spend the money for housing, cages, lights, feed, vet services, etc. Consider an American or an English Budgerigar for starters. Figure why we would try to breed them when most pet stores would not pay more than three to five dollars per bird. At what price do the pet stores sell those Budgies? Why should a pet store make one hundred percent profit when we are struggling to make back the money we invested? How many years will a dog or cat live with proper care? How many years will a Budgie live with proper care? What is the price difference? We have to re-educate the public. We have to re-educate ourselves. We have to take the bull by the horns and decide that *we* control our trade. We are entitled to a fair share of the profit for our labor. So, to finish the original thought, we have to stretch, grow and do the logical thing and that is to test and to vaccinate and set the prices our labor indicates for our birds. We need to unite.

Dr Ritchie was not surprised to hear of the problems we experience within our clubs regarding testing and health checks for the fairs. He is seeing the same struggles all across the country. He feels that responsible breeders and clubs are making the changes that will ultimately help eliminate the spread of virus and diseases from show or fair to home and aviary. He said that it was another way that we had to take charge of our own industry or lose it. He is seeing pet stores change their viewpoints also. They are finding that they don't have to deal with as many

problems or worry about their reputations when they do business with breeders who test their birds and can guarantee health.

Second, we need to appeal to youngsters by sharing what we feel, the pain and the joy, and what we've learned. In other words, share our *passion* with young people.

Third, the good news is that he has developed a vaccination for polyoma virus and is awaiting FDA approval.

High Points

- According to Dr. Ritchie, testing is a tool to isolate diseased birds. PBFD is a choice, as is any disease or virus when tests are available.

- PBFD — New World birds with the full blown disease can recover. Old World birds, with few exceptions, do not.

- What birds are susceptible to polyoma virus? — All psittacines, ratites, finches and chickens from neonates to adults.

- How is polyoma virus transmitted? — Dust, both fecal and feather dander; mechanical vectors; through eggs; through feeding.

- Do all infected birds develop clinical signs? — No.

- Is the polyoma virus that infects macaws similar to the virus that infects cockatoos? — Yes. What about finches? Sometimes.

- Why is it important that a similar virus causes disease in different psittacine birds? — Cross-immunity.

- Which birds should be vaccinated? — All psittacines, including neonates, breeders and pets.

- What is the recommended vaccination schedule? — Adults; two doses two to three weeks apart with a yearly booster. Babies; a vaccination at 20 days of age then a second shot at 34 days of age.

- In about one year the vaccines against polyoma virus and psittacosis should be combined into one vaccine.

- What side effects may occur in vaccinated birds? — Very few. Perhaps yellow discoloration and thickened skin which will disappear in three to six weeks for most birds.

- The serum is put under the skin at the end of the sternum, not into the muscle.

- What does the vaccination do to previously infected birds? — Nothing.

- What can be expected when vaccinating birds in a breeding aviary? —

The stress from handling the birds is the only noted problem. The birds do have to be caught.

- Will the vaccination stop an outbreak in progress? — No.

- What are some techniques that will reduce chances of an outbreak? — Vaccination, hygiene both indoors and out, and proper quarantine.

Excuses — All the Best

- Vaccines will damage previously infected birds. False

- Polyoma virus is not in my aviary. False

- Vaccinations pass the virus from one bird to another. False

- Vaccination is not 100 % effective. True, but it is over 90 % effective.

- Survival of the most fit is the best control. False. It is too costly in loss of individual birds, loss of gene pool diversity and loss of reputation of the breeder.

When Available

Dr. Ritchie's best guess as to when the vaccine will become generally available is around the end of 1995. It depends upon when the FDA clears the vaccine for national use. It is already available on a limited basis in some states. Dale Thompson, editor of this journal and a feature writer for *Bird Talk* magazine has already had his birds vaccinated. Thompson lives in California.

Money Talks

Dr. Branson Ritchie has his sights set on research and development of a vaccine for Psittacine Proventricular Dilation Syndrome (PPDS, Macaw Wasting Disease). Very little is known about this devastating disease but what is known makes it important that we support the research. We control what avian medical researchers like Dr. Ritchie can do for us by the amount of support we send their way.

Conclusion

Dr. Ritchie was only one of the many intellectual and interesting speakers I met over a full three day period. Every one of the speakers and other people important to aviculture was available to sign their books (if they had authored any), to answer questions and to exchange ideas.

Start your plans now to go to sunny California for the 1996 AFA Annual Convention. ➤



Jean Hessler, creator of the AFA Watchbird Journal, loves beautiful things and found plenty at the booth of displays run by Mark Lourey, the representative for artist Oneta of S. & M. Too's, Booneville, Mississippi.



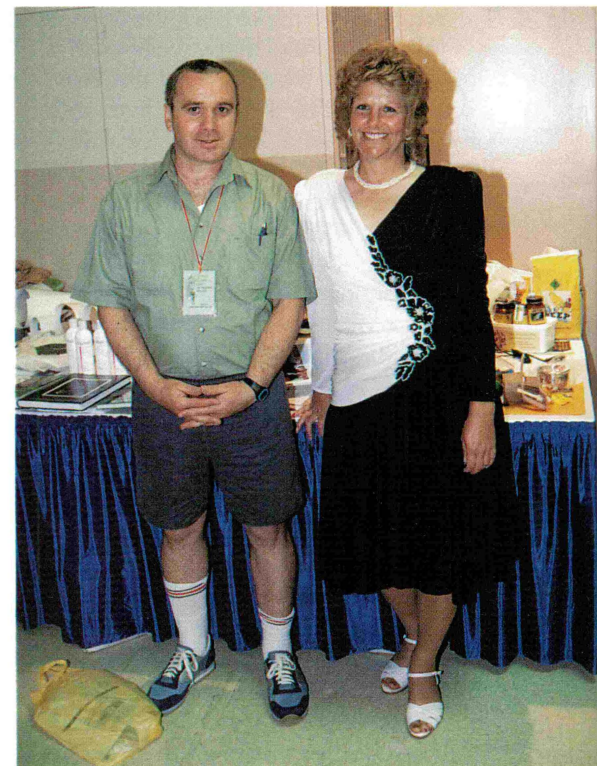
Mark Runnals of Myakka City, Florida displays some of his birds in the commercial section of the convention. Everyone enjoyed the many booths and displays of the commercial hall.



This "light" buffet took place in the commercial hall. Dr. John O'Neill, left, and Ed Huston, right, really dug in and enjoyed the good Louisiana food. This Thursday evening Speakers Gala was sponsored by Mark Hagen of Rolf C. Hagen (U.S.A.), Joe Freed of "Pet"iatric Supply and Jeff Clark of Sun Seed



The ZuPreem booth saw lots of action under the management of David Morris.



Yvonne Patterson and John Quatro. Both are very interested in Black-hooded Red Siskins. Quatro came all the way from Australia to attend the convention and meet the AFA Siskin people. Read his article on the purity of the species in this issue.



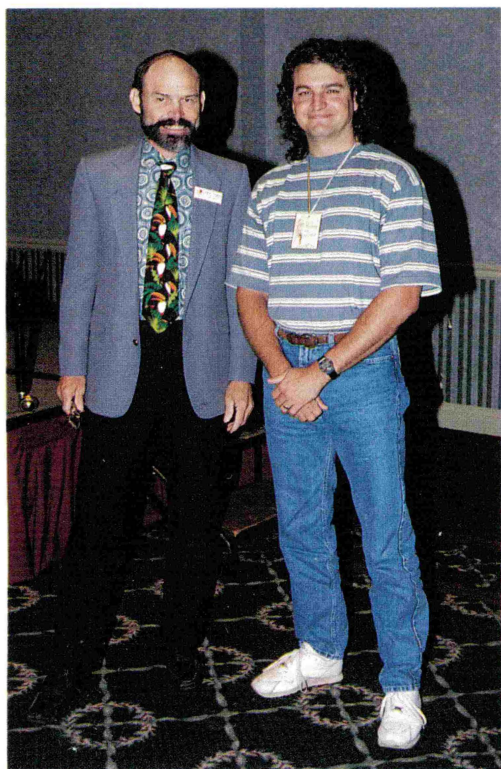
Jeff Clark of Sun Seed is in the audience whipping up the crowd during the great auction after the main banquet.



Mark Hagen (microphone) and Joe Freed (weird bird) get the big auction going after the Saturday night banquet. These guys (along with Jeff Clark in the audience) raised a lot of money for the AFA and had a ball doing it.



Sue Pack ran the Absolutely Aussie booth where one could get any number of beautiful bandi-craft and artistic items that come from Australia. Many folks took home an Absolutely Aussie gift for their friends and family.



Dino Michalski, striped shirt, represents the Toledo, Ohio Zoo and came to receive a coveted AVI First Breeding award for raising the Gaudy Barbet. He stands with Dale Thompson, Chairman of the AFA AVI Awards Committee.



Paul Breese, one of the best speakers at the convention, and his lovely wife, Jean, discuss the merits of a microchip scanners with Dr. Hannis Stoddard of Avid. Stoddard was an early pioneer in avian medicine and in the use of microchips to mark birds.

Photos by Sheldon Dingle

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Siskin Meeting at the '95 Convention

by Yvonne Patterson, Kansas City, MO

Several members of the AFA Red Siskin Recovery Project met at the August 1995 convention to discuss the future of the project and to generate more support and to make more contacts. Personally, I feel we were very successful in these matters.

Among the RSRP members present were Virginia Baker, Dr. Gail Colwell, Steve Fowler, Diane Grindol, Dianne Livengood, Dale Thompson, Craig and Cheryl Tisdale. Dr. Randall Brue and Dr. Rainer Erhart were present to lend their support, Dr. Brue on behalf of Kaytee Products (a company that is joining the Project and will raise Siskins) and Dr. Erhart as one of the main speakers at the convention.

It was especially nice to have John Quatro, an honored guest, come all the way from Australia to be with us. He has been very supportive by donating money to the Project and by writing pertinent articles. It was fascinating to hear his description of his own Siskin breeding operations in Australia.

It was also good to have Roddy Gabel visit with us for a few minutes. Gabel is a good finch aviculturist who is also a zoologist with the Office of Scientific Authority within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He was at the convention in an official capacity but took some time to meet with us. Throughout the years, Gabel has been very helpful to the Project especially with his knowledge of the laws that regulate endangered species.

Executive Director Robert J. Berry expressed his sincere desire to help the Project in every way possible to reach its goals. He also said that because the Project is nationwide, is in the private sector and is dealing with an endangered species it has the great respect of the professionals in the American Zoological Association. It was reassuring to hear these words of affirmation.

Craig and Cheryl Tisdale were last at the 1993 Siskin Summit and it was good to have them at this meeting. Craig offered to assume the responsibility for promotions and was soon busy making new contacts and gaining support for the RSRP. He received a promise from Animal Environments to donate a cage for the next AFA con-

vention auction. Cheryl volunteered to put information about the Red Siskin Recovery Project on the Internet and Compuserve computer listings. This may lead to making new connections and more support for the Project and we all certainly look forward to that.

Awards to Project Participants

At the Friday luncheon, AFA's CFO, Jim Hawley gave an award to Joe Witt of California which reads "In appreciation for your generous donations of 48 Red Siskin offspring from 1993-1995 to the AFA Red Siskin Recovery Project." In Witt's absence, I received the award on his behalf.

Starr Kirchoff received an appreciation award for her dedicated and professional work in producing RSRP newsletters and invaluable communications support. Our best wishes for her quick recovery from surgery done at the time of the convention.

Dick Sisler and Sandee Correll each received a 1995 Breeder Award. Sisler's reads "For continued growth and high productivity for the AFA's Red Siskin Project." Correll's award reads "AFA Red Siskin Project - Thank you for your high productivity and keen observations leading to new and better ways to breed the Red Siskin."

At the Saturday night Banquet an award of appreciation was given to Kevin Gorman for "Conservation: Red Siskin Chairperson for outstanding service, support and contributions toward the achievement of AFA's goals." Gorman was not present but he sent a message promising to be "available infinitum as a consultant..." His resignation as Chairperson will be effective 1 October 1995. We'll miss him.

As we look for a new chairperson for the Project, the overall responsibility falls on Benny Gallaway, Ph.D., the new Chairman of the AFA Conservation Committee. Dr. Gallaway has a personal commitment to the Siskin Project as well as a scientific knowledge of DNA that should prove very helpful to the Project.

Our very special thanks to Natalie Frumin-Weis for hanging Red Siskin banners everywhere and thanks to many others who helped so much to make the RSRP meetings so successful.

Deadline Schedule

Jan/Feb '96

Featuring

SMALL ASIAN HOOKBILLS

Nov. 1 - editorial copy
Nov. 15 - display ADS

Mar/Apr '96

Jan. 1 - editorial copy
Jan. 15 - display ADS

May/Jun '96

Featuring Eclectus Parrots

March 1 - editorial copy
March 15 - display ADS

July/Aug '96

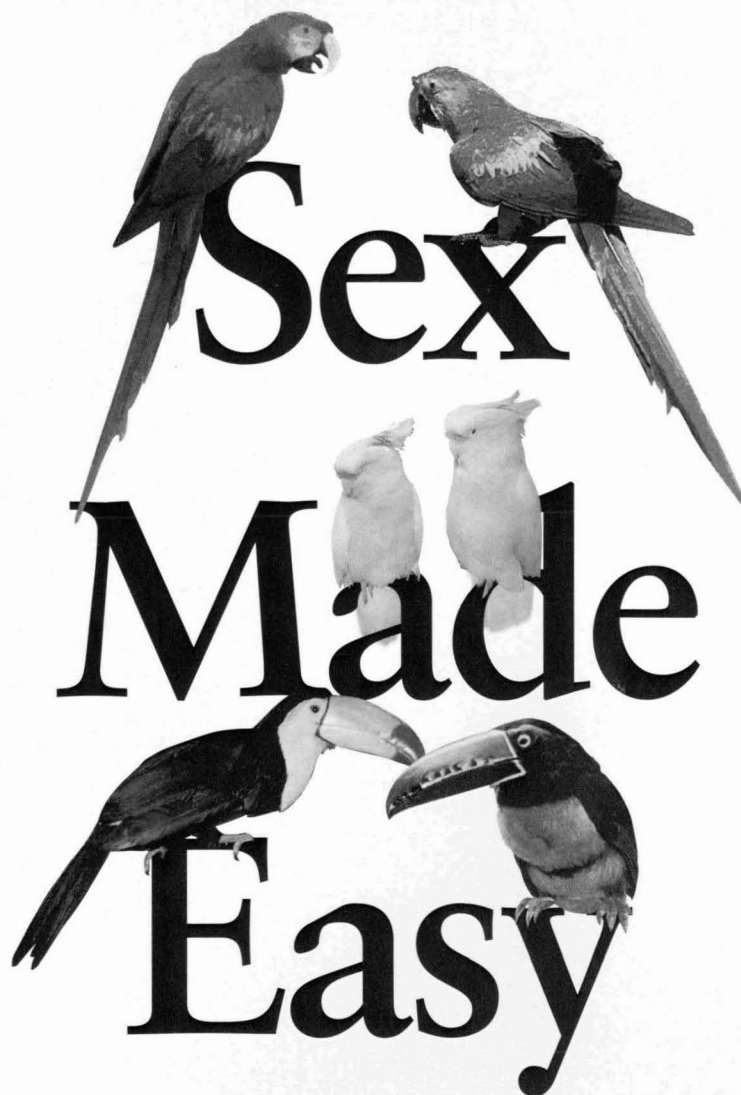
May 1 - editorial copy
May 15 - display ADS

Sept/Oct '96

July 1 - editorial copy
July 15 - display ADS

Nov/Dec '96

Sept. 1 - editorial copy
Sept. 15 - display ADS



Sex Made Easy

DNA sexing provides safe, accurate results *without surgery*.

**99.9% accuracy in over
150,000 birds.**

Now, there's a better way to sex your birds. It's a DNA process called Sex Made Easy – and it's safer, easier and as accurate as surgical sexing. Sex Made Easy is non-invasive and requires no anesthetic, so there's minimal stress to your birds. And unlike surgical sexing, it can be used for birds of any size or age – even very young or small birds.

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2. Fill the capillary tube with a drop of blood.
3. Mail the sample to Zoogen. No refrigeration or special handling needed. It's that easy!

Do it yourself.

Or, see your vet.

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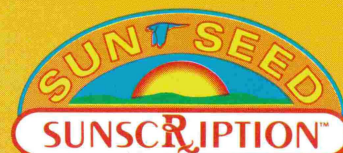
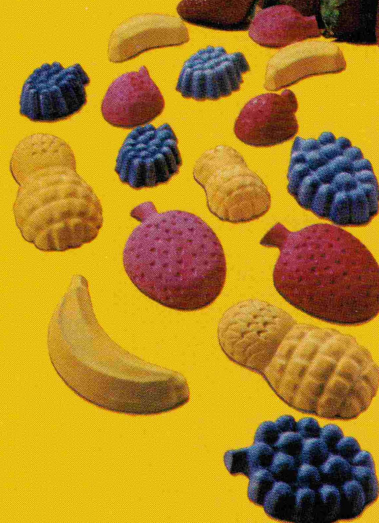
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