

INTRODUCTION

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APPENDIX

EXCERPTS

FROM INTRODUCTION

Being raised on a farm has its advantages. In order to survive, most farmers and ranchers learn to do things themselves. They become jack-of-all-trades. They are carpenters, plumbers, electricians, painters, fence builders, etc., as well as animal caretakers all rolled into one. I consider myself fortunate to have been raised on a farm where we did practically everything ourselves. In fact, I cannot ever remember when we hired anyone to do any of the above type chores when I was living on the farm. We simply did it all ourselves.

When we started our bird business in 1975, the thought never occurred to my wife and I to hire someone to build our aviary. If it had occurred, it wouldn't have done any good, because we couldn't have afforded it. We had to start our business on a shoestring budget, and the shoestring was short; I mean short.

I had thoroughly researched the bird business and felt that we could make a go of it. I had visited a number of bird farms, all of them in Texas, and patterned my first building after one of those. I was fortunate. In the beginning, I succeeded in spite of, not because of, those buildings. As we expanded, we went to much larger buildings. Again, I patterned the first of the larger buildings after another bird breeder's aviary. Through the years, I remodeled those buildings several different times in order to make them as efficient as possible, finally constructing the last building correctly. Although the bird breeders that I patterned my buildings after were making money, their profits could have been so much greater if they would have had the right type of buildings. My profits, also, could have been much greater if I had built the buildings correctly from the beginning. Remodeling takes more time and expense than doing it right the first time, not to mention that it disrupts your birds' production cycle.

During the past 29 years, I have had the opportunity to visit some of the most successful bird farms from Florida to California and exchange ideas. I have learned from other peoples' mistakes as well as my own, and the designs included in these pages have proven track records. While the hobbyist raising a few birds may get by with doing things exactly like it was done 50 years ago, the bird breeders who wish to derive a profit from their bird breeding operations need the most up to date information that is available. Cage breeding has replaced colony breeding for many types of exotic birds. Bird watering equipment has dramatically improved.

Convenience as well

as the comfort of both the birds and yourself should be a factor in designing and equipping both commercial and hobbyist aviaries.

This book was written as a practical guide for both the hobbyist and commercial breeders who want to save startup cost by building their own aviary and equipment. A great deal of money can be saved by doing it yourself. For example, the parakeet breeding cage described later in this book that holds two breeding pairs of birds, complete with tray, cost me \$10.20 to build. Manufactured cages of similar size and quality run from \$50 to \$70 each, plus freight. It doesn't take a mathematician to figure out that you can build 5 to 7 cages for the same price that you would pay for a single store bought cage. A little more math will reveal that if you build your own cages, you can probably save enough money to purchase top of the line breed stock to put in those cages and still have money left over, resulting in what would seem like getting your birds for free.

While there are some skills needed to build practically anything, you certainly don't need to be a construction engineer in order to build the things included in this book. Almost anyone with basic carpentry skills can build a suitable building that can be used for an aviary, and practically everyone can build the cages, nest boxes, etc. that are covered in this book. It's not even necessary to have a well-equipped home workshop. The things included in this book were built with hand tools and simple power tools such as a power saw, jigsaw, and drill.