

Birdman of Prince Edward

By PAULA SCOTT

There is one place in Prince Edward County where the word turkey is not automatically preceded by the adjective "roast" and if there is any mention of "family" it is not in connection with dinner but other birds of the same species. The place is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Caldwell on the Burr Road in the township of Hillier. Mr. Caldwell has a large aviary containing birds indigenous to Ontario and exotic birds from the other side of the world.

As is typical of people who are born with an interest in the natural world, whether it be house plants or birds, Mr. Caldwell cannot recall when he first began to keep birds as pets.

"I have always had birds around me, even when I was a young boy. When we moved here after the war I started the aviary. I do sell some birds to feed the rest, but it is a hobby, I just like having birds around, I guess."

There are certainly birds around, the cages are spread across the back of Mr. Caldwell's yard and his barns as well. It takes him two to four hours a day to feed, water and care for his collection. The work is so obviously not a chore that it seems the least important aspect of the hobby.

"I enjoy showing the birds to visitors," he said, "the school children used to come on tours which was good, some of them had never seen a live turkey, they thought it was something that came out of a freezer."

Mr. Caldwell has wild turkeys as well as exotic fowl such as the Chinese silver pheasant, the Lady Amherst pheasant, brought from Burma to Europe by Lady Amherst in 1828, and peacocks of many varieties.

"The peacocks are known for their longevity," said Mr. Caldwell, "I haven't had any last that long but apparently they can live to be 35 years old in captivity."

The peacock is very slow in maturing, Mr. Caldwell pointed out and that seems to have something to do with life expectancy in birds. The longer it takes for a bird to gain the size and plumage of the mature adult the longer it lives.

There were young Bantams of all varieties running around the enclosed yard and five Canada geese strolled about keeping up the constant dialogue for which geese are famous.

"Every spring they are visited by their wild fellows on their way northward. They seem to be flying too high in the fall to stop. These geese, are almost human now they follow me all over when I am feeding the others. The one pair have been around for 10 years.

The North American birds remain in their outdoor homes during the winter. Mr. Caldwell explained that it is not the cold which drives our birds away each year but the fact that they cannot find food. If birds have food they can withstand the cold.



Harold Caldwell holds a Polish chicken who proudly shows off her elaborate white feather head dress.

Some of the more exotic birds have to be moved inside a heated house for the winter. The Australian birds such as the budgies, tiny members of the parakeet family, the colorful cocatiels who belong to the parrot family; and the Australian the diamond doves along with the cheery canaries need

the warm and protection of the house.

Safe in his barn Mr. Caldwell keeps his pigeons, these are his show birds and the part of his hobby which he seems to have become most involved in. The other birds he trades and sells to the many other collectors who visit him regularly but the pigeons he shows all over Ontario and in the United States.

As well as showing his own birds Mr. Caldwell is heavily involved in judging pigeons and fowl across the province.

"I think that the judging has made me too critical of my own birds, when I look at them I see faults in them.

Norwich Croppers strutted by with their beaks in the air, chests puffed out and their tails out behind. Pigeons it appears can do almost anything from fanning their tails to blowing

themselves up into enormous pouts and they can even perform tricks. Upstairs Mr. Caldwell has a class called the "rollers", they turn somersaults in the air. He also has "tumblers" who used to do the same but that has been bred out of them and now they are a splendid brown and white pigeon instead. "Tipplers" don't drink they fly, non-stop circles are their trick and the English pigeon that holds the world's record kept up constant flight for 21 hours.

The varieties go on and on, they frill back with its feather feet, the English carrier pigeon with its ornate cere the ordinary person would not believe there could be so many different pigeons.

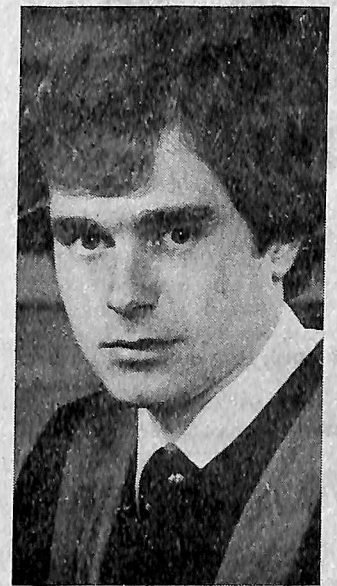
Showing the birds at fairs and at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto gives Mr. Caldwell great pleasure and the constant handling of the birds puts them

at ease with him as well. When a stranger awkwardly tries to hold them they are not at all comfortable and make the fact quite obvious.

Mrs. Caldwell helps out in the feeding and watering and shares her husband's interest in birds but she is also fond of four-legged creatures. They no longer have a dog but she is quite busy feeding no less than 11 cats and kittens who straggle over twice a day from the barn to demand a hand out.

"They don't bother the birds at all they seem to understand they belong but I wouldn't leave a cage door open deliberately to test them," he said.

Mr. Caldwell is a truly humane man with a wonderful collection of birds who is a pleasure to visit and who can provide an insight into the world of birds gained over many years of observation.



VETERINARIAN DEGREE - Leslie G. Orsborne, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. George C. Orsborne, Picton, graduated with his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, on Friday, June 2, from the University of Guelph. He has accepted a position with the Picton Animal Hospital.