

## We Go Together

Read the December 2007 BIRD TALK Editor's Note from former editor Melissa Kauffman.

*By Melissa Kauffman*

Melissa L. Kauffman, BIRD TALK magazine Editor, and her two cockatiels, Carlisle and Natty Bird.

There's been a lot published lately about how, for the first time, four generations are in the workplace together: the Silent Generation (born 1933-1945), the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1976) and Y Generation (born 1977-2002). I recently read an article in HR & Economic Trends that discuss the following information about the generations.

The Silent Generation grew up in economically challenging times and had to be self-disciplined and self-sacrificing. They may have served in the Korean and Vietnam war. They are typically loyal, conservative and mechanically savvy. Baby Boomers grew up in much more prosperous times, with stay-at-home moms and the American dream of a house for each family. They were the first generation to grow up with television. They work so hard that they have the dubious honor of increasing the 40 hour work week to a 70- or 80-hour week. They are considered to be competitive, optimistic and viewing change as painful but inevitable. The GenXers grew up with fast food, designer clothes, the awareness of AIDS, the war on drugs and the fall of the Berlin Wall. They also had parents with high divorce rates and mothers who worked full time. They are independent, like lots of feedback and give lots of feedback, like fun when they work and are committed to work.

The Y Generation grew up with Baby-Boomer parents who showered them with attention and had high expectations. They grew up with rapidly changing technology, such as cell phones, computers, the Internet, iPods, etc. They are great multi-taskers due to the huge amount of school activities they were involved in. They are team-oriented and confident. In many regions, they also will have a lot harder time in their 20s buying a house, let alone moving out of their parents' home due to rising costs of college educations and housing.

So what does this have to do with birds? Well, this has to do with pet ownership. Pet ownership has changed so much through the ages. When I started 15 years ago at Bird Breeder magazine, the majority of people at the bird events were aviculturists, and most of the educational seminars were about aviculture. Now, it is more challenging to get bird people to go to a bird event (all those extra work hours people are putting in, plus the advent of social networking over the Internet takes up a lot of people's time), and most of the educational talks are geared toward pet bird owners and cover bird behavior or in-the-field research.

Baby Boomers treat their pets as family members, which has really changed the pet industry: what is or isn't sold, the increase of shelters, the increase of pet ownership (from 56 percent of total households in 1994 to 63 percent in 2006, according to APPMA), the creation of animal welfare and animal rights organizations, the creation of the super pet market chains and much, much more. (Some companies now even create wigs for dogs!) So much has changed, and pet bird lovers have changed with it. We do blogs, join lists and create web pages for our birds. We go to South America, Australia, African and Costa Rica on eco-tours, checking out our pet birds' wild cousins.

And, although I believe we do so many things so much better, I wonder about other things. Because the pet bird segment of the pet market is so small compared to dog and cat, pet bird owners still have to fund a lot of the medical research for our pet birds. With so much going on in our lives' today, how much time do we have left to really spend with our pets?

I am sure that every one of our readers, no matter the generation, has some really good thoughts on this subject. (Feel free to send them in!) I know we are all struggling with challenges of spending enough time with our birds, taking the best care of our birds and finding the money and time to do it all. BIRD TALK magazine has been out there for 25 years helping readers take better care of their pet birds, just as its tagline says. I am so proud to be a small part of a quarter of a century of work. The last 25 years have been tough for magazines, and lately it has been even tougher for a pet bird magazine in a world gone dog crazy. So the fact that BIRD TALK made it to this anniversary is a pretty big deal.

This is my last issue as editor, and it is a great issue to go out on. It's filled with our readers' views about everything pet bird. Through all the years, our readers have had a great voice. BIRD TALK has been your magazine, which is why we've

taken great pains to provide all points of view, so our readers can look at everything and make an informed decision. This anniversary is your anniversary. You cared enough to want your birds to have the best possible life because you love them, and they have helped you have the best possible life. Congratulations — you deserve it!

The movie “Grease” was popular when I was a kid. The final number was an uplifting, fun and its title words are so true that made it the title of this column. No matter where I go and what I do, the bird owners I have met through these past 15 years have made my life a better one.

Not too long ago, Alex, the African grey, passed away and even though I never met him, I feel like I have lost a friend that also made my life — and my birds’ — better. So I dedicate this issue to all of you wonderful friends and readers, to Alex, to my budgie Kistler, who passed away years ago, and to my darling tiels Natty Bird and Carlisle. I’ll just end my final editorial the way the song “We Go Together” ends, in my heart ... “We will always be together. We will always be together.”

— Melissa L Kauffman