



Rocky's Holiday Gazette

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Good Bye Tyler, Good Bye George.

When I was a little boy, our family pet was a parakeet, Tweety. As far as I know, this is the only photo that exists of Tweety. I'm

guessing I was about ten here.

He was allowed out of his cage most of the time, and would fly freely around the house. We were careful when we



Rocky & Tweety, circa 1955-57

opened our doors so he wouldn't escape to the outdoors, although he once did on a windy day when the door flew open. That was a very traumatic day for our family.

Somehow, we were able to locate him about two weeks later. He had been rescued or captured by a family a few blocks away, and when we went to see if it was indeed Tweety, he got so excited to see us that he chattered excitedly, using most of the 60 or so words he could say.

He was a constant companion/pest at dinner time. He loved people food, especially butter (well margarine—we didn't ever have real butter). He would fly to the table and climb on our plates and eat whatever he could. He was pretty small, and didn't eat too much!!

Then after dinner, he would land on my chest waiting for me to open my mouth. He would proceed to clean my teeth, sticking his head inside my mouth, like the proverbial lion tamer, and picking little bits of dinner from my teeth.

To reach the back of my mouth, he would perch on my front teeth and lean way in. I'd love to have that picture!

Tweety loved to sit in front of a mirror and talk to himself. We had a suction cup dart stuck on the bathroom mirror where he would spend literally hours. He flew in and out of the

bathroom, usually stopping on the top of the bathroom door to plan his flight to the mirror. One day, Mom was going into the bathroom, and as she was closing the door, Tweety flew up there to land. He died a few minutes later after being crushed in the door. Talk about traumatic; that was the worst day of our lives, or so it seemed! We had other parakeets after that, but it never was the same.

Fast forward about 30 years...

I figured If a small bird was that much fun, a big bird would be so much more fun!! So 27 years ago, I bought (for a small fortune) a Blue and Gold Macaw, and named him Tyler. He was about 8 months old. And he was fun, although quite different from what I remember about Tweety.



Then I was in a pet store and met George (short for Crazy George), a Goffin Cockatoo. He became the second of my BIG bird fun.

Well, as the years wore on, these poor guys received less and less attention, which is not good for



birds—they like lots of attention. For a while, we put them together in one cage. Over time, they bonded to each other, and unbonded from us humans. They



became unfriendly—in fact, downright aggressive.

And they became very noisy—several times a day, our whole house reverberated with their squawking and screeching. Keeping their room darkened helped some, but also meant our

room was dark—not good.

In addition to the noise, they are very messy. The space around their cages was always littered with nut shells, rejected food, bird poop (no, they didn't always manage to hit the cage floor!), and dust (bird dander) covered everything in the room. Daily vacuuming and cleaning only managed to keep the mess slightly under control.

And furthermore, the only place in the house they fit well was in our bedroom. Those two large cages took up all the spare space in the room.

We decided a few years ago that they needed a new home, but we were unwilling to just sell them cheap or give them away for fear the new owner would just try to sell them for more or mistreat them.

Then in July, I saw a TV news bit on a macaw sanctuary in the Seat-

tle area. I contacted them, and after determining

that the birds would be happier there than at our house, we finally delivered them for adoption in mid August. The birds here are kept in bird families and placed in very large (garage sized and larger) flights. They have over 400 exotic birds in about 20 flights. See their website: www.macawrescueandsanctuary.org for more information.

Meanwhile, we are loving our quiet, clean, roomy, bright bedroom all to ourselves! And our cats don't seem to miss the birds at all...

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Sunshine—please...

Ohhh, how I'd love to be somewhere sunny right now! As I get older, this cold, cloudy, rainy Northwest weather seems more and more undesirable. Early this year, we did escape to warmer climes for at least a while.

I had a bunch of airline miles that were set to expire this year (I hate the "airline miles" game, but that is a subject for another

whine). We had enough to fly to Hawaii, so we rented a nice condo from some friends, and headed across the ocean to Maui.

We have been there a few times, and are in



Maui does have absolutely beautiful sunsets!

the habit of going to the public park to play tennis at 7:00 in the morning. When we did that this year, we were met with empty courts. The players began arriving around 7:30-8:00. The humidity was so bad that we were dripping with sweat and ready to quit by 9:00. The days were so humid, we just didn't really have a wonderful time.

From Maui, we flew to LA, rented a car, and went to Palm Desert to spend a week with my former tennis partner and his lovely wife. There, we could play tennis from 8:00 (or earlier, if we wanted to), and play until noon. No humidity, lots of warmth, we loved it. With all due respect to our Hawaiian friends, we found Palm Springs/Palm Desert to be

Milestones

Sadly, I have to report that two of my remaining aunts on my dad's side—his two remaining siblings, passed away within days of each other. Elsie Gustafson left us on Sept 23 at the ripe old age of 98! And just a few days later, Mary Lehl, joined her. Elsie had been amazingly healthy up to the end, and Mary, except for macular degeneration, was also in fine shape. I was fortunate enough to visit them about three years ago to celebrate Elsie's 95th birthday. I had hoped to make another trip to see them again this year, but the plans just never fell into place.

Dad's sister-in-law, Marge Phelps, almost 92, is my one remaining aunt still alive. It seems like the Midwestern life is a good one for longevity!

Tennis Highlights

This year was my first year in the 65's age group, and I was anticipating a very successful year in the Northwest tournament circuit. Unfortunately, the face of the tennis world is changing. We used to have lots of tournaments for individuals based on age, but in the last few years, tennis leagues have grown tremendously, which has caused many of the age-based tournaments to be discontinued due to small turnout. The growth of the leagues has been good for tennis, but not good for age-group tournament play.

In any case, The sparse tournament schedule, combined with my own travel and other commitments, has left me with too few tournaments to "count."

I've done well, though, in the few I've played in.

2011 was a very big year for Jeremy. He turned 15 in January, which, in the eyes of a young man, means **driving!!** We enrolled him in a driving school as soon as we could, and gritted our teeth as he progressed through the school and wanted to drive us to and fro every time we needed to leave the house. By now, he has been practicing his driving for almost a year, and is actually pretty good, except for being easily distracted by "neat" cars or talking to us while driving. He is just a month away from being 16, and is already car shopping!! Dreamer!

He is now a sophomore in high school, and is managing to get almost straight A's—we are proud of him for that!

The other grandkids also continue to grow. Brook is now in college! She is a freshman at UPS here in Tacoma, planning to major in physical therapy. Nick is taking a year off of basketball, and he and Carly continue to get A's in school. (I

Bits 'n' Pieces

wonder how it is that my grandkids are so smart? Hmmm). JoAnn and the kids have moved from the suburbs of Paris into the middle of the city. That has been quite an adjustment for them, but they seem to be settling in to their new life. Leonor's Addison is now four, and a real kick, as four-year-olds can be.

Our cats continue to allow us to be their people. We get an enormous amount of entertainment from them, and I think maybe they are entertained a little bit by us. It's kind of hard to tell with cats. They don't talk much!

This is our first year with an artificial tree. I was afraid it just wouldn't seem right, but, you know, it is pretty, clean, and easy to set up (we'll see about taking it down in a couple of weeks!).