

Birdie: The Little Lost Bird Who Lived to be 28

Written by Jean Bartlett, March, 2018



Birdie at 6 months old.

It was Father's Day, June of 1989. Nancy, her husband and their two young sons had just returned home from their outing celebrating "Dad."

"As we pulled up in the car, we saw this little bird in our front yard," Nancy said. "He was so tired from however he had gotten there. He was pecking at the cement trying to find something to eat."

Nancy and her family had not had a pet since their elderly Lab Irish Setter mix, Tom, had died just around the time their first son was born. Neither parent had ever had a bird. They estimated he was at most six months old.

"We had never handled a bird and we were very careful picking him up. We brought him in and put him in a cozy box. We knew he was a Cockatiel. His body was basically grey – in his youth his feathers had a bit of a cinnamon tint – his face was yellow and he had orange cheeks, with a little white behind those cheeks. His crown was yellow with a little bit of grey and he had beautiful black eyes. He always looked directly into your eyes."

There was a quick trip to the local pet store to get some information on Cockatiels. "This was before smartphones," Nancy laughed. "We also picked up supplies, which of course included food and a cage."

Nancy and her family knew he had belonged to someone because his feathers had been clipped. He also quite capably whistled the Mayberry Theme from the Andy Griffith Show – in addition to being an expert at the wolf whistle.

"We didn't want to fall in love with him immediately – though of course we did – because maybe someone would claim him. We posted flyers throughout the neighborhood."

For three weeks the family put a good deal of effort into finding the little bird's original home. But no one called.

"Our sons, then almost 7 and almost 4, named him 'Birdie.'"

Birdie was a chatterbox from the start and when anyone called his name, he chirped with even more vigor.

"He liked to sing a few notes and have you repeat them. Then he'd give you a bigger note challenge. He wasn't above giving my children a lecture. My youngest decided, very briefly, that he was going to be a bird trainer and he moved Birdie from one spot to another in the house and eventually Birdie opened his beak and told his would-be trainer off. In fact, after that he gave my youngest a lecture almost every time he came near him until he turned 15 and then Birdie loved him completely."

Birdie's favorite toy always was his mirror – he loved the bird in the mirror – followed closely by his love of the bell that hung in his cage. He would ring it a lot. When it broke and a new one arrived, he would chirp happily. He also had his favorite treats, particularly cookie bits, and he would sing and sing whenever one of these treats came his way.



Birdie, 18 months.

"Funny. I had never known a bird before. But he was a wonderful little creature that came into my life and he and I became such good friends. I just enjoyed his company, his wonderful personality. I believe that pets are friends, messengers and protectors and I believe they come into our lives for a reason. He was our sons' first pet and he couldn't have been nicer or more fun.

"He lived to be 28. He had a happy long life. He died January 26, 2018. I do miss him, we all do. My heart tugs when I think about him."

If anyone would like to make a donation in Birdie's name, please consider your local Humane Society.



Birdie at 28.



"Occasionally we would open up his cage and he would stand on top of it and then fly around the living room, and then land back on his cage. He did that even when we got our dog Sox. He wasn't intimidated by Sox and Sox liked Birdie. He didn't mind our cat Static either and Static had no interest in Birdie. However, he sized up our cat Smokey and decided not to fly around after that. Smokey didn't appear to pay attention to Birdie, but one time when we came home, we found Smokey napping, really relaxed, stretched across the top of Birdie's cage and Birdie was just looking up silently. We told Smokey, 'You can't do this ever again,' and he never did. But Birdie kept to the comfort of the inside of his cage after that."

Birdie was also quite a travelling companion, heading off to visit his two "siblings," who are adults now with children of their own.

"He was very happy traveling in the car," Nancy said. "He would whistle away and move as close in his cage as he could to me because he knew I would have a cookie for him.

"There was so much to like about Birdie. I liked his personality, the way he sang, the way he chirped. He was such a nice addition to our family and he loved our boys' children and they loved him too.