

Balance in the Exhibition Budgerigar

‘If they disagree with many of the things I say they are free to say so; I do not ask for approval; I merely state views based on my own experiences in the past, I make neither excuses nor please for approval; this book is utterly personal, honest and I hope instructive.’

These words are taken from the book ‘*Exhibition Budgerigars*’ by Dr M.D.S. Armour, a Cage Bird publication I suspect from the 1950’s.

I could not have chosen better words for this or any previous or future articles / presentations that I have written/produced or might write/produce on this wonderful hobby that we are fortunate enough to have embraced.

During this article, a further quote will be ‘borrowed’ from this recently ‘gifted to me’ book to reinforce some of my beliefs.

Some recent (and not so recent) judging appointments and discussions and aviary visits post these appointments has prompted me to reach out to the fancy to revisit the intent of breeding the Exhibition Budgerigar within Australia (or parts thereof).

There were too many birds on the bench and in the aviaries to ignore this subject, it was as if the breeders were encouraged by past performances to bench this style of bird, I do not believe this for one second, I suggest that **they were not discouraged** and therein lays the issue, if the latter were to be true.

The intent is not to insult, but to encourage fanciers and judges alike to view *The Australian National Standard* pictorial, read and embrace the pages that encompass TYPE. It is worth looking at pages 19, 20 and 22 as amended December 2010.

BIG IS BEAUTIFUL seems to be the catch cry for some. Please, please reassess and do not forget the beauty of the bird and its need for balance.

We (the judge) in effect influence the direction the fancy takes thus we need to be serious and responsible. Wrong decisions relay wrong messages and potential confusion. An exhibitor wins one week and the next is given the message that their bird is not a show bird nor should it be bred with. Wow, what a kick in the guts. Worse still, what if the exhibitor is content with the win of the previous week is full of glory and nurtures this style/shape of bird. I will take the kick in the guts any day. I did in my infancy in the fancy, I trooped off to a show in Ballarat with this super group of youngsters (I thought) and got hammered. Reg Pullen, the wonderful man he was, suggested in a nice way the birds were so wrong that I would need to commence again. I could have sulked but did not, it inspired me to review and redirect. I saw this as great feedback and a great experience.

My second quote from the aforementioned book covers a number of areas that I intended to discuss and is worded so perfectly that I include it as part of the article to best explain, in part my dilemma with the ‘change’ that is sadly creeping onto the show bench.

‘By Type we mean symmetry, this proportion between each part and the whole, this balance; without this balanced symmetry no budgerigar is truly an exhibition budgerigar; no matter how wonderful the colour, how big the whole bird, how big the spots; without perfection of outline and beautiful

modelling, no budgerigar can be altogether desirable; this is THE MAJOR SHOW POINT, and no budgerigar which carries perfection of shape is a bad budgerigar. It may have other failings, but it is over 50 per cent perfect if it is the possessor of flawless symmetry. This has nothing to do with size and here is criticism right at the beginning, constructive criticism, however. The Scale of Points, so far as I can ascertain at the time of writing, still couples size and shape, even putting “size” before “shape”, as if it were more important. This is wrong! There is no correlation or interdependence between size and shape. A budgerigar may be perfect in type without being big, and, indeed, I have seen so many big budgerigars which failed in shapeliness that *I even consider that size much beyond normal detracts from the beauty of a budgerigar.*

Remember this was all written back in the 1950's or thereabouts.

What has changed?

What does the Australian written word reflect – check page 23 of *The Standard* as amended December 2010 for that information

I was heavily involved with the drawing / art work of the Australian Standard and the intent all the way through was to keep that beautiful balance – sure the Pictorial could have differed and further modifications made, but it appears to have set a trend for the WBO and the UK as parts of the bird now appear to have been adopted by them, thanks to Roy Aplin that wonderful wildlife artist and Budgerigar Fancier from the United Kingdom for his final imprint on same.

There are magnificently balanced budgerigars around today, world-wide, thus symmetry can be retained with increased size. It is what I am seeing and feeling if you like that is happening in parts of Australia in not so recent times and continues that gives me fear about the direction we are going. If I cop criticism that does not concern me, the initial quote I will stand by.

I judged birds that, as I was informed later, were winners at previous shows, I mean best of Status and or Show and Section winners that should not have ever been placed. Harsh words but true. The fortunate part was that the exhibitors as one were able to see what I was referring to as I asked them to view these sometimes big headed but ugly shaped birds or sometimes fine with lumpy necks or widened pelvic areas that caused hips and therefore wings to elevate. They were able to see where their direction had deviated. I did not do this to humiliate the fanciers', I did not do it for any other reason but to show that we need to revisit our direction. I hope that the message was taken in the spirit it was intended. Do not get me wrong, there were birds at these shows that were wonderful and in particular the last show **the winner was world class.**

Other issues that are presenting on the bench are long flights, long secondaries, missing flights, hinged tails, lumps in necks, lack of width between the eyes to name some.

If we do not correct we accept and that will potentially diminish the hobby further because we were too blasé. The wrong birds will have infiltrated too deeply for correction and I do not want to be party to that. We need to make a stand and retain the beauty that we should all so seriously desire.

Maybe we need to replicate the mindset of Dr Armour?

Nigel Tonkin

Feb 2011