



## Member Profile

# Jean Painter

Interview by Marilyn Harrington

*Jean has been involved with Budgerigars since the 1970s, joining the Budgerigar Society of Australasia (as the BSNSW was then known) in 1975. Since then Jean has become well known as a breeder of Crests and has achieved at the highest level of the Fancy, winning at the National level and becoming a national and international judge. She has made major contributions to the Fancy at all levels, from the Branch through to the National level. In recognition of her outstanding achievements and contribution to the Fancy, Jean was made a Life Member of the BSNSW in 1999. The following article is an extract from an interview conducted with Jean for a collection of stories about women in the Fancy. Its main focus is Jean's experience as a judge and her contribution to the Fancy. The full interview will be published on the BSNSW website.*

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With my late husband Brian, I joined the Budgerigar Society of Australasia in 1975.

Like many beginners we were in awe of the size of the birds on the showbench and all the different colours and varieties. Our favourites were the Yellow Faced Violets, which at that time were the real yellow faced birds against the deep violet body colour. Over the years we had every variety in our aviary at some time or other because I felt it was important as a judge to be familiar with the varieties and the difficulties breeders were experiencing with the 'lesser' varieties like Clearwings, Fallows and Black Eyes.

We had birds representing NSW at the National Championships for many years—Normals, Lutinos, Cinnamonwings, Black Eyed Yellows—until Brian died in 1992. Since then I've had success with Normals and Crests. The highlight was in 2004 at the Australian National Budgerigar Championships, winning 1st and 2nd place in the Crest Class and 2nd in the Normal Grey Green Class.

In 1995 I attended a Budgerigar Society Convention in Scarborough, UK, where Janice and Ghalib Al-Nasser introduced me to John Bird, a champion budgerigar breeder specialising in Recessive Pieds. In 1996 John took up residence with me and we now have a small acreage in Colo Vale packed with different varieties of chooks, ducks, geese, goats, guinea pigs, rabbits, cockatiels, fantail pigeons, doves, finches, three dogs and two cats as well as the wild king parrots who call in daily for their feed in the breeding season.

After his arrival John soon revamped the bird quarters and installed the English style nest boxes (a box inside a box) with larger cabinets and wooden seed storage bins on castors—he is a talented carpenter and loves working with wood. We moved to accommodate the growing menagerie. So instead of my white brick aviary with flight extensions, the

Budgerigars are flying in two garden sheds modified with flight areas at the front. The breeding room has wall-to-wall cabinets (36 in total), louvre windows with heavy duty fly screen mesh in wooden frames on the outside and a very large work table in the centre with the seed bins underneath. The show cages are stored on top of the breeding cabinets. In my retirement I have plans to rearrange things so that all the bird quarters are together in one area instead of the flights being some distance from the breeding room.

### **BREEDING CRESTS**

I started breeding Crests thanks to my friend Anne Finnigan who gave me my first Crest and Crest-bred to pair about six years ago. I had great show success with them because there wasn't much competition at the time but enough, Australia wide, to get me really keen on improving what I had.

This variety is definitely a great challenge because it is so hard to get a perfect full circular crest on a decent Budgerigar and to breed full circulars in any quantity. For example, last year I put my National full circular cock with a tufted hen bred out of a full circular. In the first round I got four chicks—one full circular and three Crest-bred. In another nest, where I had a full circular cock (that ran 3rd in the National Championships a couple of years ago) with a Crest-bred hen, they produced nine chicks in their first round and seven of them were Crest-bred. However, there are now more people breeding Crests than ever before thanks to the National Championships. The Crest birds are definitely improving.

Read more about Crest Budgerigars. See Ghalib Al-Nasser's article at <http://www.bestofbreeds.net/al-nasser/article4.htm>.

## Jean's Crests today



Photographs by Janice Al-Nasser

Jean's winning Crest  
Australian National  
Budgerigar Championships  
2004



Judging at the Royal Easter Show



NSW Team Carers 2004  
Tim Tasi, Jean Painter, Ian Hanington  
with (at left) Gerd Bleicher, Chairman, DSV, Germany

## **BECOMING A JUDGE**

Dr Harold Cooper, Ross Cooper and Kevin Kelly were instrumental in my becoming a judge—they all encouraged me in different ways. Harold (or Dr Harry as he's known on TV) is very clever and has a photographic memory. He always explained things fully and carefully when I asked questions. Ross has a great eye for a Budgerigar and a profound knowledge of all different varieties of birds, which he always shared. Kevin taught me to accept that things don't always go to plan so have a backup plan.

I really don't remember the exact year I started training as a judge but it must have been around 1984. I became a judge for a number of reasons. I wanted to learn what the judges were looking for in an exhibition bird and I wanted to prove to myself that I had the ability and eye to become a judge. I also saw it as a challenge because there were no women on the Judges Panel and I thought that if I had the ability to become a judge then the Society would benefit. Finally, and importantly, I felt I would enjoy it.

After I passed the Australian National Budgerigar Council's (ANBC) exam in 1991, I was accepted onto the NSW Senior Judges Panel. Trainee judges all complain that it takes too long to become a judge. But, believe me, it's quicker now than it used to be, especially if the trainee is committed to attending training days, knows the ANBC Standard and is confident and correct in their practical exercises.

## **JUDGING BUDGERIGARS**

I'm sure that the exhibitors would agree with me that judging decisions are now much more consistent and the winning Budgerigar in a show is a quality bird. What all judges must look for in a class of birds is the one that stands out from the rest. It will hopefully have outstanding features and showmanship. It can be on the floor of the cage when placed in front of the judge and stand out because of its head qualities, but the judge will have to get it on the perch to make sure that the rest of the bird is something to admire too. I like to see a bird with substance because if it doesn't have enough size it will get lost in the line-up for major awards at the end of the day.

I don't really have a favourite variety of Budgerigar, although I love to see a good Normal Green bird. It's great to have an excellent class of birds put in front of you and I would probably take longer to judge that class for three main reasons. There's every chance that the major award winners could come out of this class and so the first and second placings are most important to get right. Because the birds are close to the desirable features of a show

Budgerigar, they need to be given every chance to show their best—I always strive to give birds in any class the chance to do this. Finally, I like to enjoy the time I can spend with such a class. Although I can quickly assess faults in the Budgerigars in front of me, like poor deportment, bad condition, narrow head, wavy backline, short body, scissors wings, short mask, etc. (and that's without mentioning variety faults or disqualifications), I am a positive judge. I am always looking for the good qualities even if the bird doesn't win on the day. You will sometimes see me write on a cage sticker something like 'nice bird', just to let the breeder know that I have admired their bird even though I didn't give it a first place on the day.

One year, some time ago, I was judging at Junee and had this phenomenal Normal Violet bird in front of me. It had so much feather that you couldn't see its eyes and it sat up on the perch like a statue—everyone was discussing the impact of this bird. However, my suspicions were aroused when any movement in front of its cage didn't perturb it in the slightest. I then realised the bird was blind in both eyes and had to be disqualified.

Another bird that comes to mind is a Fred Cardona bird. It showed as a Normal Green or an Opaline Blue and had some judges foxed as to why it had been entered in the Non Standard Variety Class, until the judge turned the bird around. It was the most perfect half-sider I have ever seen!

## **INTERNATIONAL JUDGE**

I still enjoy judging very much and my judging credentials have enabled me to judge in the UK, Germany and New Zealand, which I have greatly appreciated. These appointments have given me an insight into what is happening in the exhibition part of the Fancy overseas and how it differs to our own.

Judging in Germany was a challenge because I was the only judge for their Derby (Young Bird) Show in Berlin. There were 400 Budgerigars. Since I could not read the schedule I was relying on the show manager to ensure that the classes brought before me were correct. None of my stewards spoke English and I had no fellow judge to collaborate with—Gerd Bleicher was extremely busy organising the show. It wasn't until I wrongly classed a few birds in the Normal Blue Section, when the exhibitors started complaining, that I found out that they allow Yellow Faces to be shown in all Blue classes. The exhibitors are very competitive and after judging took me to look at some of my decisions they were not so happy with, like a bird I had placed sixth in the class which they felt should have been fifth. But no one challenged my first place decisions, which surprised

me as I'm sure a few people were expecting a Cinnamon with a very wide face to win the show—it didn't because it had a very short body. In spite of the challenge I would love to judge in Germany again because they have some beautiful Budgerigars and I did not have much opportunity to visit aviaries while there. However I did go to Gerd Bleicher's home and had the chance to see some very good Budgerigars, including the 'Anthracites', as he has aptly named his new variety. They are certainly different and the nearest to black in body colour I have ever seen.

In England the rings of all winning birds have to be checked by the judge and his/her chief steward. When I was judging the Specialist and Rares Show in Coventry the only place we could go to do so in safety was the men's washroom! There are never shortages of stewards because that is the only way people can watch the judging. It's the same in New Zealand—shows are closed to exhibitors and the public until judging is completed.

#### **GETTING INVOLVED**

Brian and I became very involved in the management side of the Fancy, as well as breeding and exhibiting, because we wanted to learn as much as we could, meet lots of fellow exhibitors and breeders and socialise. In the 1970s and 1980s the Fancy was a very social hobby with picnic days, lawn shows, mini challenges at exhibitors' homes and dinner dances.

When I've been asked about my positions and involvement in the Society and Fancy over the years, they are difficult to list because I've loved what I've done and am doing, and I am not one for recalling dates. However, as Society members will know, I presently hold the positions of BSNSW Vice President and Chairperson of the Judges Panel and have been on the Judges Committee for a number of years.

Since joining the Society in 1975 I have held many positions. My positions at the Branch level have included Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Show Secretary and Branch Delegate to Management. In addition to my present positions, my Society-level positions have included Secretary; Trophies Secretary; Show Committee member; Nationals Registrar; and member, Secretary and Chairperson of the Judges Committee. My National positions have included member and Secretary of the ANBC's Judges Panel and Committee and NSW Delegate and Team Carer. I have twice adjudicated at the National Championships—in South Queensland and Perth. One year I attended the World Budgerigar Organisation's meeting in the UK as the New Zealand Delegate. With Henry George

(Qld), I devised the Penalty and Disqualification clauses that we use in our Standard today. In 2003/04 I prepared the current rules for the Team Carers' duties. In 1979 I was one of the guest speakers at the Society Silver Jubilee convention weekend with my talk, 'Women in the Hobby'. In the 1980s Brian and I organised whole day Society seminars with prominent guest speakers of the time like Harold Cooper, Kevin Kelly and Neville Seage.

In 1984 we organised a tour of New Zealand with fellow fanciers from interstate and Griffith and were guests of honour at the National Bird Show in Dunedin where Dr Harold Cooper and I did some stewarding so we could watch the judging. I've given many talks at meetings about Budgerigars; attended a great weekend in Tasmania to evaluate the Standard and penalty clause; chaired a seminar of our best avian veterinarians, including John Baker (UK); and been a member of panels at special meetings.

Since 1994 I've organised the annual auction of Kelwyn Kakoschke's birds, initially with the assistance of Macarthur Branch members and now with Bruce Bradford, the Society's other Vice President, plus a wonderful team of Society volunteers. We do this to provide a much needed bank account for the next time NSW hosts the Nationals in 2011. It will be a great help.

In 1999 the BSNSW awarded me life membership of the Society and the plaque has pride of place in my house—I am greatly honoured. The enjoyment I have experienced in my life through my love of Budgerigars and involvement in the hobby has helped me through difficult times, brought immense pleasure and still provides me with challenges and interests as well as bringing me invitations to judge shows Australia wide and in other countries.

Newcomers to the Fancy have a great deal to learn. They only need to ask experienced breeders to receive heaps of advice and tips. I like to tell novices to listen carefully to all and select what they think will work for them and try it. Results will soon demonstrate if they're on the right track. And get involved. The wonderful world of Budgerigars will bring you pleasure and pain, but they will undoubtedly get under your skin. And the friendships you make can last forever, like mine.

What more could I ask for? Oh well, maybe a Grand Champion Crested Budgerigar!

*Stop Press: Jean's work continues! She has just been elected a NSW Team Carer for 2009.*