

Mary,

I told you a few months ago that I would share with you the story of my rescued "Polo" in case you wanted to have something about "rehomed" birds for your newsletter. Sorry it took so long but actually, the timing right now was perfect for sharing that story.

2008 - The Love of a Bird

I find myself today in the position of approaching a sad anniversary. I won't go in to all the gory details here as that is not the point but I want to share a little of the story because it shows so well how much our companion birds can bring to our lives; even birds that have been "recycled".

On April 8th of 2000, the man who was my best friend and love took his own life. I was there in the house when it happened and found him just as his heart beat it's last faint beat. That and events related to it immediately after took a huge toll on me mentally and emotionally, leaving me with a severe case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression. I became fearful of strangers, of being out in public and of all sorts of other things. My return to somewhat normal took over a year but I had help from an amazing source...my Severe Macaw, Polo.

Polo was my first big bird. He came to me when I lived in Lexington, through a friend who did rescues. Polo was wild caught and though it was apparent that he had been loved at some point in his life, he had then been subjected to neglect. He and I bonded immediately and I knew I had a lifelong friend. He is a chronic screamer and aggressive toward other people in spite of all my efforts but I love him in spite of those things. Now Polo is also not one to play quietly outside his cage and in fact, I have yet to find any barrier that he cant climb down to reach the floor. He always stayed within a few feet of his cage though. That is until I went through the heartbreaking situation above.

Almost immediately, when the rest of my world seemed to turn upside down and I felt unable to connect with anyone, Polo's behavior changed. When Polo was out of his cage, there was no place I would go in the house that he did not come and find me and if he was unable to get to me because of a closed door, he would stand outside the door and make a pitiful "wah, wah, wah" sound until I let him in. Once he got to me, he would sit quietly for hours on my shoulder or chair. He never screamed once during those times. There were days when I was in the shower that I would suddenly (and unexpectedly) drop from the shower curtain on to my shoulder. He had walked from the bird room around the house until he found me in the bathroom and then climbed in to the shower to be with me. Other times, when I was taking a nap on my bed, I would wake up to find him standing on my chest, just quietly watching over me. He even -for the first time- accompanied me outside and would sit with me for long periods on the swing in the back yard or go for walks at the local park. No matter what he saw or what noises he heard, he would never leave my shoulder when we were out.

This behavior went on for months and then suddenly one day, Polo stopped coming out of the bird room on his own. He went back to his more "normal" self. It was not until much later that I realized he must have somehow sensed that I had healed and for him, it was enough healing that I no longer needed him to watch over me 24 hours a day. In the 8 years since, Polo has never done anything like that again. He has been back to his cranky, screaming, quite often aggressive self. On days when he drives me nuts, all I have to do is to think about the love of this bird and how he protected and helped to heal me during my time of greatest need.