

# The Reflector - June 1, 2005

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staff reporter

The birds keep coming.

Christopher "The Birdman" Driggins keeps answering the call to rescue, heal and care for feathery creatures.

Driggins is founder and manager of Northwest Bird Rescue and Adoption Orphanage.

*The Reflector* last wrote about Driggins in September 2002 when he housed 18 birds at his home in Orchards.

Today, he cares for 113 birds at three locations throughout Vancouver.

More are on the way.

In the past few years, Driggins has been featured on four television news shows from Portland to Seattle. Three newspaper articles and one animal-oriented newsletter have written about him.

A producer from television's *The Oprah Winfrey Show* has called, but so far Driggins has turned down the request for an interview.

"I know we would get too big, too fast," Driggins said. "There's only so much we can handle. This is not about me, anyway. It's all about caring for the birds."

Driggins is helped by several volunteers including Stephanie Tillitt, Cathy Waldow, Brenda Gilliland, Garth Noggle, Nathan and Amy Stonebreaker and Tom Elliot.

Grocery stores, veterinarians, rental groups, mechanics, builders and the Nautilus Group, where Driggins works, have all donated produce, feed, cages, services and supplies.

The work is never ending, but for Driggins, it's a labor of love. Birds come to the orphanage from a variety of places, but he is always willing to take them in.

There's Charlie, whose female owner died. The bird mimicked her voice, but her

husband couldn't bear it, so he brought Charlie to Driggins.

There's Emmy, whom Driggins describes as "the sweetest Crested Cockatoo you'd ever meet." Emmy came from a 911 call. The owner had abandoned the bird in an apartment and moved out of state.

Ricky is a miniature Macaw who came from a pet store. The bird was not getting enough attention so it began to self-mutilate. No one would buy a bird who didn't look perfect anymore, Driggins said, so he took the bird in.

Driggins' goal is to get his birds healed and healthy, and then find good adoptive homes for them.

There is a stringent adoption process that includes an application form, references and a house visit. He won't place birds in homes that have cats or if the owners work more than 40 hours per week.

"Birds need close attention," Driggins said. "There is no other way around it. They are highly intelligent animals and can't stand being alone."

Driggins places about four birds monthly at a minimum. He has placed more than 60 in this past year alone.

Driggins became an animal lover as a boy when his father, William Driggins, bought him a parakeet named Petey. William Driggins raised carrier pigeons in New York and always appreciated the wonder of the animals, he said.

The gift hooked the young Driggins. He became caught up in the "aesthetics and beauty" of the animals, he added.

Driggins' father, now 87, lives with him, and is an active part of the volunteer squad.

The orphanage began about 18 years ago when Driggins agreed to look after a finch for a girlfriend. Word spread, more birds started coming, and Driggins began to do research. The agency grew from there.

Today, Driggins continues to welcome donations of feed and supplies.

Contact Northwest Bird Rescue and Adoption Orphanage at 360 BIR-DMAN (247-3626.)