

Animal Welfare

Volume 15 Issue 4

November 2006

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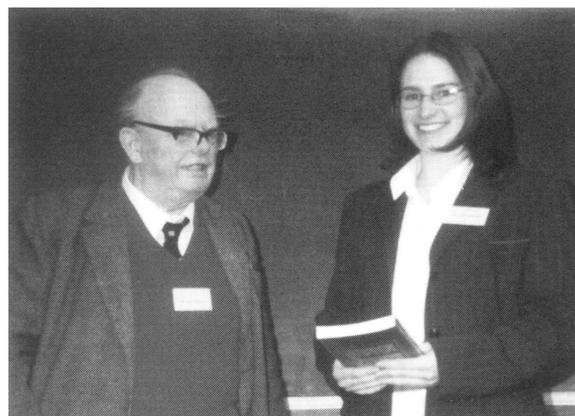
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On the cover: Budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) by Daniel Zupanc, NHPA. For a related paper, see Gebhardt and Steiger, pp 353-358, this issue.

Obituary

Professor William Russell

(1925-2006)



Professor Russell awards UFAW Vacation Scholars' prize to Kirsten Howard (Aberdeen University) at Bristol University in February 2000.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Professor William (Bill) Russell on the 27th July 2006. Bill joined UFAW from Oxford University in October 1954 to undertake a project on the development of humane experimental technique. His assistant, Mr Rex Burch, was appointed a few weeks later. Soon after starting this project Bill gave a presentation at the UFAW AGM on 11th February 1955 in which he said of his study: "I believe it is also one of immense promise for the welfare of large numbers of animals and I can only hope that its outcome will be as gratifying as the other achievements we have heard about tonight". He was quite correct about its immense promise – his and Rex Burch's book *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*, published in 1959, has had a huge impact. It founded and set out the concept of the Three Rs – replacement of the use of sentient animals where possible, reduction of the numbers used to the minimum necessary to achieve the objective, and refinement of care and techniques to minimise the risks of harm to welfare.

Bill won a scholarship to Oxford to study classics but, on returning from a break of several years spent in the army during the war, he switched to zoology and was awarded a first class degree. After then gaining a DPhil in animal behaviour he worked as a Research Fellow at Oxford until moving to UFAW. With his extraordinarily encyclopaedic knowledge (of both science and the arts), his capacity for rigorous intellectual argument and his skill as a writer, he was the ideal person to take on the task offered to him by UFAW's founder Major Charles Hume. *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* was an outstanding and world-changing piece of work that has led to huge benefits for the welfare of animals and the quality of biomedical research around the world.

In an article (Russell, WMS 2005, *The three Rs past, present and future*. *Animal Welfare* 14, 279-286) in a special issue of this journal published just a few months ago to mark the 50th anniversary of the first year of his study, Bill wrote: "At 80 years of age, with a feeling that I have rather done my bit in this field, and with Rex no longer with us, it is a great joy to know that hundreds of fine scientists, all over the world, are pursuing research in and promotion of the Three Rs. UFAW began it all and, despite the demands of the many other aspects of animal welfare science to which it is committed, has quietly and steadily continued to pursue and promote humane experimental technique".

We are most grateful to Bill for his huge contribution to UFAW's efforts for animal welfare and to his original and cheerful perspectives on many other matters also.

James Kirkwood