



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founded in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

### **Obituary**

#### **Des Dowling (1923 - 2011)**

*(ASNSW The Avicultural Review - March/April 2011)*

**(Paul Henry, Past Editor - The Avicultural Review)**

On the 20th January 2011 we lost one of the gentlemen of aviculture.

Des was born James Desmond Dowling on the 17th June 1923 in the dry mallee country of Gala in South Australia. He was a second generation Australian; his grandfather immigrated from Balluske, County Wicklow, Ireland in 1882.

Des had an interest in birds at a young age and kept the usual novice birds such as Zebra finches, budgies and any birds he could catch such as magpies and pigeons, etc.

This lifestyle was interrupted by WW2. In 1942, aged 19, Des joined the Australian Armed Forces and saw service in New Guinea. There were certainly many birds to see there but at a certain risk. I remember Des once telling me he was fascinated with New Guinea's birds and thought that they

were the most beautiful birds in the world. Within his library one of his favourite books was "The Birds of Papua New Guinea" Volumes 1 and 2 by Brian J Coates. When Des closed his Bird Farm he sold all his bird books including his beautiful hard cover collector's books and I was fortunate to have an early choice so bought many including "The Birds of Papua New Guinea". Sometime after the war Des moved to Sydney, married and started a family. In the early days he still kept some birds but when he later started in business time became too scarce so the birds had to go.

Des first started a mail order tyre service for country people to buy tyres at a competitive price. Later this progressed to Dowlings Tyre Service at Merrylands, a truck division in Auburn and a relugging factory for earth moving tyres in Smithfield.

So for a great part of his mid life business and family consumed most of his time and his passion for birds had to take a back seat.

When Des sold the businesses and retired, in the early 1980s, he then put everything into birds. He went into aviculture in a big way; he bought a property at Kemps Creek and set it up as a bird farm, the "Dowling Bird Farm". This Des referred to as "the best bird house in the west". This was truly a wonderful setup that Des spent a lot of money and time in both designing and building the aviaries. Des went from a full time tyre dealer to a full time bird breeder and dealer. No retirement here.

Des only lived at the farm property for a short time; he then built a new home at Mt Vernon, a few kilometres away. So every day, except Sunday, he went to the Bird Farm from early morning until dusk. His wife Inga insisted they have at least one day together and so after feeding the birds the remainder of Sunday was spent with the family.

Des was always keen to show off his bird collection so there was many an open day for various avicultural clubs at the bird farm. On one such event Des had anticipated about 60 people but 160 turned up. So Des and his family quickly bought extra sausages for the sizzle and all were fed.



Even though the farm was a part commercial enterprise, Des' main interest was in breeding and keeping birds. He kept every type of bird there was from finches and parrots to softbills; including an ostrich.

Des was a tireless worker for bird clubs. He was a member of the Avicultural Society of NSW (Life Member), the Finch Society of Australia and the Softbill and Native Pigeon Society of Australia. Des held many positions in bird clubs over the years, some of the positions included: Editor of The Avicultural Review (a publication of the Avicultural Society of NSW), Honorary Treasurer for the Avicultural Society of NSW and Secretary of the Finch Society of NSW.

When I first Des in 2000 at the Avicultural Society of NSW he had held the position of Editor of their magazine, "The Avicultural Review" for many years and continued until he was nearly 80 years of age. Des was looking to retire from the position but wouldn't quite until he had a suitable replacement; so for the next year he took me under his wing while I worked my way into the position of editor.

Not only did Des contribute his time and effort in supporting all the clubs he was a member of but was not backward in helping various clubs out financially when they were in need. Des was a good man who will be sadly missed by his family and all those who knew him. To Des' loving wife Inga, his children and grandchildren, we extend our deepest sympathy.



Des Dowling relaxing on the lawn at the BBQ  
[Weekend Away - Orange 2003](#)

**Note from the webmaster:**

*Early in 1991 when the Society's committee members voted in favour of entering the world wide web, Des Dowling was the first to come forward with a number of articles to get it all up and running and with the supply of a number of photographs from Stan Sindel and the Society's photographer Glenn Matheson, the encouragement of Allen Fish and willingness of his wife Nancy to learn how to update and chase up other articles for our site, our first presence on the web became a reality.*

**First articles for our website supplied by Des Dowling:**

[Red-winged Parrot \(\*Aprosmictus erythropterus\*\)](#)

[King Parrot \(\*Aprosmictus scapularis\*\)](#)

[Major Mitchell \(\*Cacatua leadbeateri\*\)](#)

[Pale-headed Rosella \(\*Platycercus eximius\*\)](#)

[Port Lincoln Parrot \(\*Barnardius z. zonarius\*\)](#)

[Princess Parrot Princess, Alexandra Parrot, Rose-throated Parrot \(\*Polytelis alexandrae\*\)](#)

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