



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

My feathered foster son, Part II

In all the years Owl and I knocked 'em dead at school assemblies around the Northwest, I think, in some owlish way, Owl knew he was good looking. When we'd walk into a school, him perched on the shoulder of my pinstriped sports coat, the teachers and school secretaries would exclaim, "Oh, look, isn't he handsome! Look at those eyes, aren't they something to behold," and other swell compliments.

All the time I thought they were talking about me, but when I looked at Owl he seemed to be holding his head in just the right way to give the ladies his best profile.

When not performing in a school or assembly, Owl

would sleep on a special padded perch on my desk. One day a salesman stepped in on his way to the main offices and said, "The guy that stuffed that owl sure didn't know what he was doing. Look at those eyes, they should be open; owls' eyes are beautiful."

I gave Owl a gentle push and he opened his eyes and wings, glaring at me.

"You'd better be careful how you talk about the guy that stuffed him, he's pretty big business," I said to the salesman who was standing there with his mouth open.

I had made Owl a promise when we went to work with OMSI and later running the Children's Zoo: "Stick it out, old pal, behave yourself and when we go back home I'll turn you loose."

When John Gray hired me to come to Sunriver and put his landscape architect's plan into motion with the residents and construction crew, I left the zoo, and with my wife and our two sons, moved into an old home built years before on the banks of the Deschutes.

One night, after feeding Owl his nightly lab rat I felt it was time to live up to my promise, so I left the door open to the mews and said, "OK, Owl, you performed your part of the adventure

beautifully. My promise to let you return to the wild starts tonight. I'm leaving the door open. If you want to go exploring and look for a new home, there it is..."

And I walked away and into my own home.

The next morning the mews were empty, but I left his breakfast sitting on his padded perch in the event he came back hungry.

The lab rat sat there all day, so when nightfall came I left it there. The next morning it was still there and no sign of Owl, and it went on like that for a week, even though I called him often.

Exactly one week later, Owl returned from his adventures in the lodgepole pine and flooded meadows. When I came out that morning to check the mews, I thought he wasn't there until I heard him make a very quiet grunt behind me, and when I turned I got the shock of my life: he had one good eye and one bloody eye.

You can imagine my concern. I started talking to him, telling him everything was OK, but it obviously wasn't. He allowed me to pick him up on the glove and that gave me a better look at his eye, which was worse than I thought — nothing but a bloody mess.

I took him to town and



PHOTO PROVIDED

Jim A. and Owl doing their thing at a school lab back in the OMSI days of the 60s.

the vet said the eye was so badly damaged he couldn't tell what was going on, or what to do. But he gave me a hint of how it got that way, "I have a hunch your pal got into a tussle with another

owl. I'd like to know how the other guy looks." Then he added, "I'd have an ophthalmologist look at it."

And three days later that's

See OWL on page 25

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