

Nurses feathered friend

Family allows a bird into its heart

Lois Anderson is the first to admit that the title of her book is a little corny.

But she and her husband agree that there is "A Bird in Our Hearts."

Her paperback book tells the story of a wild bird the couple nursed back to health last summer. The abandoned chick was found on their lawn chirping in fright.

"We were there and he needed us," said Anderson, who shares his wife's fascination for birds and animals.

After finding the little bird beneath a bush on their Farmington lawn, the couple were faced with the task of keeping it alive. They estimated the chick had only a half hour of life left if they had not heeded it's call last August.

As soon as Anderson brought the tiny bird into the house, his wife fed it oatmeal. It was a cross between a guess and motherly instinct that prompted her to give the bird such a meal. Later she discovered that she had done exactly as any veterinarian would have advised.

FOR THE remainder of the summer and into the fall, they were engrossed in watching the bird grow and learn. Soon, they became aware that they had unknowingly slid into the role of foster parents.



Chipper, the Cowbird, perched on Chester Anderson's arm when he wanted a sip of water.

Although the bird, dubbed Chipper, was among a long line of stray animals Mrs. Anderson brought home, he was different. Unlike the dancing terrier or chameleon that Mrs. Anderson brought home, Chipper was a wild creature who became tame enough to trust the couple.

"It was a rare experience to have a wild animal trust you that much," said

Anderson. After feeding it using tooth picks and tweezers, the Andersons were put into the position of dealing with circumstances that would be natural out of doors.

Feeding was a large project. They discovered that the food should be placed far back into the throat of the bird before he could swallow it. As Chipper began to grow, they realized that he was hopping on the ground more than he should. The cow bird had to be taught to fly, so Anderson rose to the challenge.

"I taught a bird to fly," he chuckled. "He held out his hand with Chipper on it and then dropped it," explained Mrs. Anderson.

"CHIPPER would panic in mid air and then began to flap his wings," she remembered.

"I had him flying in two evenings," summed up Anderson with more than a touch of pride in his voice.

The operation evidently upset Mrs. Anderson almost as much as their novice reeler.

"He told me that if I couldn't stand it I shouldn't look," she remembered. Eventually, Chipper took to flying with the natural plan of an eagle. He swooped between the couple during the evening. The Andersons called to him and he flew towards them.

Once he was confident in his flying abilities, Chipper began to make solo flights. Soon he was returning to the Andersons just to eat.

"He was like a teenager," Anderson joked.

Chipper became adept at divebombing the Andersons as he worked on the lawn of their apartment complex. If Anderson forgot to hold out an arm as a convenient landing pad for the bird, Chipper chose to alight on the man's head. Often he rode around in the peak of Anderson's cap.

While they enjoyed the experience, the Andersons' caution that they took the bird in because it was dying. They remember that while Chipper was a lively little companion, he was also a wild bird. They weren't shopping for a pet.

THE BOOK, which details their experience can be found at Lucy's Oldies but Goodies, Village Mall, Grand River and Farmington Road or at Jerry's Book Store, Farmington Road.

Masonry Institute appoints engineer

Robert Cantanzarite, 31, has been appointed structural engineer of the Masonry Institute of Michigan, Farmington Hills.

He joins the institute after five years as staff engineer and branch manager for Michigan Testing Engineers, Detroit. With that firm, he was involved in engineering evaluations, construction procedures and materials testing on a variety of building projects.

Cantanzarite is a 1973 graduate of Wayne State University, with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. He is a registered professional engineer, a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a member of the Michigan Society of Professional Engineers.

A native of the Detroit area, he lives in Livonia with his wife Kathy and their three children. He is a four-year veteran of the Marine Corps.

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Strawberries are just about everybody's favorite small fruit, yet if you want the real mouth-watering strawberry flavor and true fragrance, you must grow your own. Because only fully ripened strawberries are the real thing. This doesn't mean you need a large garden patch or even several 20 foot rows in order to produce a harvest-crop in a very small area. And a matter of fact, you can grow them in a BARREL OR WOODEN TUB. There is nothing really new about these methods—people have been growing strawberries in barrels for ages in Europe and to some extent here.

You can even grow a crop on a small apartment terrace, provided you have plenty of sun and water and feed your plants regularly. Early spring is the best time to set in a crop of strawberry plants. There are some fine new varieties of rapid-cropping strawberries that give more than one harvest a season. Strawberries are perennial plants, so they will last for years. And you can root baby plants that diggle from runners, using them to replace the parents when bulging declines in a few years. Further, even between harvest, strawberry planters are decorative assets to your garden.

BARREL AND TUBS: A WOODEN BARREL IS BEST. For a metal one is likely to heat up too much in summer's sun and this is bad for plant roots. You can use an old barrel except one that contained pickles, vinegar or sawdust. Old barrels are obtainable in a hardware store or shop catering to home-made wine hobbyists, such as American Hardware. Before you use an old one, scrub out the interior with a stiff scrubbing brush and two or three washings of strong detergent, then rinse well. (Salt or other materials might have been in it that will kill plant roots.) Bore a row of 1½ inch holes 6 inches up from the bottom, spacing them 6 to 8 inches apart. Measure first and make a mark where the center of each hole will be, so they will be evenly spaced, for the barrel circumference changes on each row. Make a second row about 6 inches above the first, then a third row, and so on till you reach 4 to 6 inches from the top. Stagger each row of holes so that they center between those of the row below.

In the bottom, bore ½ inch holes for drainage—eight to 16, according to the size of the barrel or tub. Then roll the barrel to its permanent site and set it up on three or four bricks to keep it off the ground. Filled with soil, barrels get too heavy to move easily. Cover the bottom with a layer of coarse gravel 3 inches deep. On the top of the gravel center a tall 1 pound coffee can with both top and bottom removed and fill it with gravel or sand. Then fill the space around it with soil, gravel or sand. Then fill the space around it with soil, packing it down till it reaches about the center of the first row of holes.

Trim the roots of the strawberry plants (see sketch) and remove all dead or yellowed leaves, leaving three to six healthy ones. Working from inside the barrel, plant one strawberry plant in each hole till the junction of roots and crown barely reaches the inside of the barrel. Place each plant near the top of its hole to allow for settling of the soil. Spread roots fan-wise, pack soil over them till the hole is covered.

When the whole row is planted, water the soil gently with a fine spray till it is soaked. Let it settle for a few minutes, then with a gentle twisting motion, lift the coffee can until its bottom nearly reaches the level of the soil. Push the can with sand or gravel, then pack soil around it as before. Plant a row of strawberry plants in the holes at that level. Proceed with planting one row at a time, lifting the can and filling it. When the can top is level with the barrel top, leave the can in place and do not fill the top 4 to 6 inches with gravel.

The sketch of the cut-out barrel above the column of gravel that has been created through the center of the soil. This will be the place for watering, a kind of "watering column." If you like, you can plant a colorful annual plant in a pot that fits into the can, removing it when watering is needed. Plant a row of strawberries 6 inches apart in the top of the barrel.

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