

JJ

My little parakeet JJ passed away some time during the night last night. Not much of a surprise there; he has been sick for a while, and even though he began looking well again a few weeks ago, he took a turn for the worse in the last few days. He looked so awful yesterday that I knew he wouldn't make it through the night. But there was always hope that I was wrong. He had been on what I called "death watch" before and made it through the night, so the hope was there.

I don't really know what happened – he was only about a year old, and I had had him since January, not even a year. He started showing signs of illness about 2 months ago. I gave him medicine and TLC, and he began to do better, but like I said, I guess it just wasn't enough.

He was "just a parakeet", but I loved his company. I was so excited to see what kind of bird he would become; how he would look and act as an adult and who he would be when he felt healthy, but now I won't know. Honestly, taking care of animals is one of my favorite things in the whole world, so why do I have to be so bad at it? A few months ago, JJ was so happy when we moved his cage into the living room so he had company all day rather than living in the solitude (or was it protection?) of our bedroom upstairs. We kept him right near the Halogen lamp, could there have been a smell or the heat or something that made him sick? On the rare occasion that a bug would fly into the Halogen, yuck, what a smell that made. We tried to get rid of Teflon pans and things like that, but JJ's new home in the living room wasn't too far from the kitchen – maybe cooking smells did him in? He was a fraidy-bird, so I couldn't really take apart his cage to clean it out; maybe it got too dirty? A dozen why's and what-if's, but no more parakeet. At least he is not suffering anymore – it was getting really difficult to see him in his cage looking so miserable and worse for the wear. Poor JJ. Even if he was

just a caged bird, I miss him already. Ugh, and the cold weather is back today... fitting somehow, just feels like a miserable day all around – time to make the best of it.

Best Way To Spend 88 Cents

According to JJ my parakeet, the best way to spend 88 cents is on this little number:



I saw this little bird toy at Walmart the other day, and even though I knew it would scare the heck out of my scaredy-cat parakeet, I bought it anyway. It's a piece of plastic in the shape of an upside-down T – a perch for the bird to sit on, while the part that sticks up hold millet sprays – a favorite treat for parakeets.

I adopted my little guy JJ (short for Jungle Jack Hanna named after my favorite celeb) back in January, and he hasn't ever been interested in playing with any of the toys in his cage. My 2-year-old son used to bang on JJ's cage, and so the little bird became afraid of people, and I haven't been able to pet him in months – he flies away from me. I was so afraid that he led a miserable existence locked away safely in my bedroom – until about a month ago, when I moved him from our bedroom (where he was by himself most of the time) to the living room

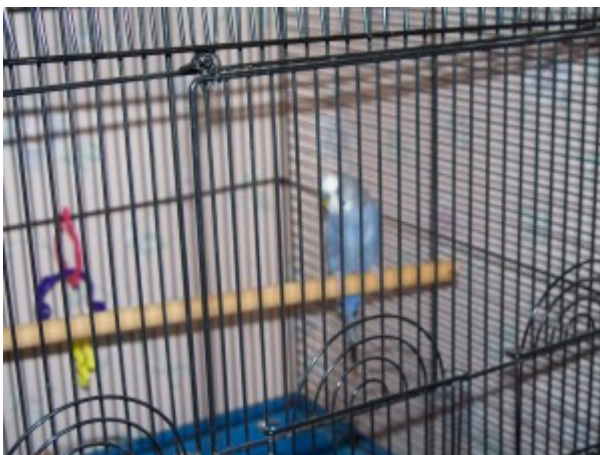
(the centerpiece of most of our large family's traffic patterns). JJ has been SO happy to be a part of the action! I've been happy to see him happy, but he still wasn't playing with toys – until I bought this 88 cent Walmart Wonder on a whim. At first, JJ kept his distance, and I feared I was right – he WAS afraid of everything! I had to leave the house for awhile, and when I returned, the millet was gone from the toy – I was ecstatic!

The next day, I snapped the above picture of JJ perched on his new toy, and ever since, he's been in love with his 88 cent Walmart toy! He sits next to it and preens himself, and he even gazes at it lovingly.

I reiterate – BEST 88 cents spent (on a pet) EVER!!

Introducing... JJ!

As you might have read in an earlier blog post, I received a pet store gift certificate for Christmas from my husband. Today I spent it – I picked out the newest member of our family – JJ the parakeet!



When you adopt a pet parakeet from a pet store, the workers

have to barge into the cage full of parakeets with a towel on their hand to grab your bird, and then they put it in a cardboard box for the ride home. This might sound like a mean thing to do, but in my experience (this is my fifth pet parakeet), the bird recovers very quickly; I wouldn't even use the word recover really; they always seem just fine. And JJ handled his transition like a pro! He actually seemed immediately happy in his cage! I put my finger in there, and he let me almost touch him, just a few hours after he got home! He didn't back away or anything! I am so excited to become friends with this little guy; he is so cute! It's been about 15 years since I've had a pet parakeet, and I've forgotten about how they just exude happiness! Already JJ moves his beak like he's trying to talk and responds to my voice. Hopefully I will make the time to train this little guy to be the little buddy I've always wanted in a bird – I get jealous of my husband's relationship with his parrot. Wait, that doesn't sound quite how I meant to say it...

There's a fine line between training a bird, earning trust, and scaring him off for good. JJ seems very patient and ready to learn, and so am I – but getting to spend time with him while there is a trouble-prone toddler toddling around will be my greatest challenge, I think.

Many people have fun parakeet stories; they really are pleasant little birds. My dad and my uncle had a parakeet when they were kids named Tippy who would walk on their kitchen table. They would hold a hand of playing cards, and Tippy would walk up, choose a card, and then carry it in his beak to the edge of the table, let it go and watch it float down to the floor. I've heard that many (male) parakeets can talk, and of course they will sit on your shoulder and be your best friend. So yeah, I'm excited about this bird, and it's a nice feeling – can't say there's been a lot of that lately. Even if he isn't easily trained (defying all early indications), I've already tremendously enjoyed just looking

at him and absorbing his pleasantness, something I look forward to doing in days to come... feeling a contentment that I haven't felt for awhile...

Just for the heck of it, here is a timeline of my other pet parakeets. I was a kid when I had them, so I don't remember dates or ages – each one lived for around 5-8 years, the usual parakeet lifespan. But it bugs the heck out of me that I can't remember which of my birds liked to ring his toy bell – Tippy, I think? I named him for my dad and uncle's childhood pet... The memories of the bell ringing bird have been replaced in my brain by the obscenely loud parrot we currently own who jangles his bell-shaped toy whenever he starts to get rowdy. Parakeets are actually in the same biological family as parrots and are in fact classified as parrots. So technically, we've gotten ourselves another parrot for our house, just what we needed, right? But Squawky, the scarlet macaw (loud a**hole) parrot belongs to my husband (or my husband belongs to Squawky, depends upon who you ask), and JJ is mine – this is important since birds “mate” for life – I'm so happy to have MY bird!

So here's that rundown of parakeets past:

Spunky – he was blue and fiesty, but we were really surprised when ~~he~~ she began to lay eggs!

Tweety – the only parakeet I had who was of the green / gold variety.

Tippy – named after my dad's childhood bird; he was light blue.

Goat – my sister found him flying loose outside around her work. They took him in, and when no one claimed him, I named him “Goat” in honor of my dream pet at that time. He was pretty tame for a “wild bird”!

J.J. – dark blue, almost a gray to violet hue. And why is he

named J.J.? It's short for **J**ungle **J**ack Hanna, of course ☐