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## *The Alex Foundation Newsletter*

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September-October, 2007

[www.alexfoundation.org](http://www.alexfoundation.org)

Issue 9, Volume 3

On September 29, Dr. Pepperberg will be appearing in Wichita, Kansas, at an *Alex Foundation* fundraiser. She will be speaking about her life and work with Alex. See the **Remembering Alex** section for more details

### The absence of a presence

Alex is gone.

He has been honored on television, in newspapers, on the radio and on the Internet. More people are now more aware than ever of the life of this little grey bird and what his accomplishments meant to humanity. Paradoxically, now that he is absent his presence is felt even more strongly in world—and nowhere is that absence more apparent than in his home, the lab at Brandeis.

The lab no longer hears the commanding voice of a being that controlled it. No more do the students and staff hear orders being shouted out by Alex. No longer do Griffin and Wart have Alex, the taskmaster and cheerleader, overseeing their lessons. No more do they hear him calling out "Good parrot!" at a correct answer, or "C'mon, you try!" at more difficult tasks. They, like the humans in the lab, feel his absence keenly.



But in his absence, Alex is also an undeniable presence. Griff and Wart sometimes speak in Alex's voice. They use Alex's phrasing, Alex's intonation and Alex's inflection in certain words. Although he is gone, they are remembering Alex with one of his most singular characteristics, his voice.



**Wart visits Alex's favorite window**

The ability of parrots to remember the voice of those who have passed is not a new occurrence. It has been noted throughout the human-parrot experience. Centuries ago, an expedition visiting a Caribbean island village witnessed the remarkable. Noticing a village parrot that was speaking, the explorers asked the islanders what the bird was saying.

"We do not know," replied the villagers. "That parrot lived among a people that are no more, and the parrot is speaking their language, a tongue we do not understand." This parrot, the last living reminder of a civilization that had ceased to exist, paid homage to those he missed with his voice.

Thanks to Griffin and Wart, the legacy of Alex's voice will continue to be heard. But even more importantly, the legacy of his work and what his life meant to science and humans in general will also continue to exist. Griffin and Wart are continuing the important work of human-parrot communication. How fortunate they are to have had the example of Alex, a very talented team member and colleague who showed them the miracles that could be accomplished.

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Alex is gone...but what remains is the shadow of having loved and lived. The absence of his presence is a shadow we will hold close to our hearts as we move forward into the legacy that he left.

## Remembering Alex

Now, more than ever, it is important to remember Alex. In remembering what he meant to us, it is crucial that we remember the example he set with his life—that of true communication between humans and parrots.



**Griffin showed us out of sight was not out of mind**

We who learn from animals learn different lessons because we have different teachers. And in the world of African Grey intelligence, we have two new professors that are approaching the podium.

Alex opened a window that showed us the world through his eyes, but now it is time for Griffin and Wart to show us their abilities. They have their own special knowledge, their own particular realities, their own particular truths. And they will have marvelous knowledge to impart.

*The Alex Foundation* would like to ask you to remember Alex with your continuing support of the foundation he helped found. We can do no greater honor to this avian pioneer than to support the work Alex enjoyed with Dr. Pepperberg. Humanity has received an extraordinary inheritance from this remarkable team and we are asking you to honor that inheritance by continuing to support Dr. Pepperberg's work.

Support can be expressed in several ways. Purchasing gifts via The Alex Foundation website ([www.alexfoundation.org](http://www.alexfoundation.org)) is one option. Many of these gifts commemorate Alex in a most delightful way. From coffee cups to tote bags, these lovely items bring Alex into an everyday type of remembrance. And not only will you have a daily reminder of Alex, others will see Alex's image and know that this bird and his achievements are important. In using these items, you'll not only be supporting *The Alex Foundation*, you'll also be raising awareness of the public at large.

Contributions can be made to *The Alex Foundation* via the website or by sending a check to the address listed at the end of this section. If you are employed by a company that offers corporate-matching, your contribution can mean twice as much support for the memory of Alex and the continuing work of The Alex Foundation.

Dr. Pepperberg is also continuing in her efforts of fund-raising. Although she is devastated by the loss of Alex—a family member, friend, teacher and colleague---she feels it is more important than ever to continue the work they began together. Dr. Pepperberg is available for speaking engagements as her schedule permits. Please contact [Alex@alexfoundation.org](mailto:Alex@alexfoundation.org) for more information on sponsoring a presentation by Dr. Pepperberg.

Dr. Pepperberg will be appearing in Wichita, Kansas, on September 29. Attendees will be able to meet her in person at an *Alex Foundation* fundraiser at the Hyatt Regency. Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served at a meet-and-greet, along with a dinner, followed by Dr. Pepperberg's presentation. Door prizes, raffles and silent auctions will also be part of the evening. See the website for ticket prices; children under 12 and students will be given a discount.

In addition, the Bird of Paradise store, also in Wichita, will be holding a book-signing session with Dr. Pepperberg.

For more details on these special events, see <http://www.alexfoundation.org/news.htm>, or contact the event organizer, Kathie Miller via e-mail, at [rogoboju@hotmail.com](mailto:rogoboju@hotmail.com).

Special thanks to Sages in Cages and Millerhaus Distributing for supporting this event!

### **Dr. Pepperberg's appearances in October and November:**

**October 20-21, 2007**

The 4th Annual Parrot Palooza at Bird Paradise, Burlington, NJ. For more info please visit Bird Paradise's website  
<http://www.birdparadise.biz>

**November 11-12, 2007**

Invited speaker at the Central California Avian Society, Fresno, CA  
<http://www.ccasbirds.com/>

Contributions to *The Alex Foundation* can be made on Alex's website, [www.alexfoundation.org](http://www.alexfoundation.org) or by sending a check or money order to the address below:

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All contributions to *The Alex Foundation*, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, are tax deductible.

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"In imitating our words, the parrot seems to take on some of our inclinations and habits...in a house of mourning, it learns to moan; and accustomed to repeating the dear name of one deceased, it reminds sensitive hearts of their pleasures and sorrows."  
--George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Le Perroquet*, 1779

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