

About 20 years ago one of the first cockatiels that I bred was a Black-faced Pied hen that I called Felicity. I hand raised her and kept her in the house along with a number of other pet Cockatiels.

All of my pets had to have 'table manners' because Cockatiels love to eat whatever you are eating. Therefore, to avoid 'dirty bird feet' in the milk of the cereal bowl, I trained them to sit only on the side of a cereal bowl and not to step onto a dinner plate but eat from the edge. They picked this idea up pretty quickly but bread and butter plates confused them!

Felicity learned her 'table manners' very quickly. She also developed the habit of coming over to the table when we sat down to eat and tapping on the back of my heel to get a 'lift' up to the table – she could not fly because one wing was clipped.

After a year or two she paired up with a cute, good-looking Cockatiel cock named Bobbie and out they went into the aviaries to have a family. About 10 years later I brought her into the house with Bobbie to retire. She had not been back inside for all this time.

The following morning I let all my pets out, about 20-30 by this time, and sat down to breakfast. A few minutes later I felt a persistent 'tap-tap' on the back of my heel. I looked down in stunned amazement – there was Felicity giving her signal for a lift up! She could have flown to the table as her wings had not been clipped again but she remembered her old habits and all her 'table manners' as well. To have remembered all of this after 10 years was absolutely astounding! I was floored. I doubt that most human beings would have as good a memory!

It goes to prove that a parrot can remember both good or bad things for a long, long time. Try to give them all good things to remember!

Footnote: Felicity is fine but arthritis is taking its toll. However Bobbie is still as active as a young bird!