

Writer's World looks at adorable offspring

By Hildegard Wylde

Conversation in Leisure World is frequently an exchange of stories about "my adorable grandchildren." That leaves me out. No babies in my family.

Ah! But this summer all is changed. Several darling babies were born at my house—baby mourning doves, that is. Now my friends are given the story (many times) of how Mama and Papa Dove made their home amid the leaves of the fatshedera vine on top of my patio wall, scarcely 6 feet from my door.

It all started in late May of this year. The prospective parents visited the wall several times before deciding on a particular spot. Both brought in small twigs to form the nest. Then Mama Dove sat and sat and sat. She must surely have left to get food. Or perhaps, Papa Dove brought it. I never saw him come, and Mama was always on the nest blinking at me no matter what time of day or night I looked out.

Then one day I saw a tiny head below Mama's breast. And next day there were two tiny heads.

Soon the heads were not so tiny, and I wondered how three doves could be in that small nest.

I believe it was exactly a month from the day I first saw Mama and Papa building their nest when I opened the drapes one afternoon to see a youngster on the patio floor with Mama watching from the nest. The next morning I heard Mama calling her soft Cooooo-cooo-coo-coo.

I peeked out to see her approaching both youngsters, huddled together on my door mat. I watched quietly as she began to feed them. Then, unfortunately, I moved the drape and frightened her so that she took off and flew over the patio wall. The youngsters tried to follow, but only one was able to make it. The other managed to jump to a ledge.

Later that day I discovered the whole family under the bushes beside the house. Here Mama fed the young for several days before they all disappeared. They disappeared for a month, that is. Then in August the whole process was repeated.

I can still hear Mama's cooooo-cooo-coo-coo. And even as I write, she is here on the wall.

Back in the 1930s, long before there was a Leisure World, I was studying the fossil birds found in the Rancho La Brea Tar Pits. I recall that there were several bones of mourning doves in the ancient tar. If I had known my Leisure World babies at that time, I am sure that I would have handled the bones of their forty thousand year old ancestors more tenderly.