

LOFT REPORT

BILL WALFORD

Bill Walford was born in Broken Hill in 1933. His father, Ab, raced pigeons there so Bill was exposed to them at an early age. He had his own loft at eight years of age.

Bill remembers the racing into Broken Hill was very tough. Races were held from places like Yunta, and only a handful of birds would make it home in qualifying time. Bill and some of his friends would ride their bikes 12 miles out of Broken Hill with a hamper on board to train their birds.

The family moved to Adelaide in 1944 due to employment reasons. Arriving at Glenelg they came into contact with A E (Albert) Hall, and commenced racing in Adelaide in 1945.

After shifting to Oaklands and flying in partnership with Albert Hall for two years, they shifted to Wingfield and joined the Woodville Club where they flew for four years with much success. Another shift followed, to Pennington, and Bill found himself in the Rosewater club as part of the Port Adelaide Association which had about 120 members at the time.

After marrying Judith in 1955, Bill rejoined the Woodville club where he remained a member until 1964 before another change of address saw him residing at Angle Park. He became a founding member of the North West club in 1965.

He finally moved to Broadview in 1972 where he has remained ever since, and joined the Hampstead club in 1973 before finally joining the North Suburban club in 1990.

Bill has won 3 Association races and been placed 6 times in the top 20 in the S.A.H.P.A. Aggregate points, with a best position of equal 3rd in 1989.

Race Team & Methods

Bill likes to start the year with about 110 birds, of which about 30 would be old birds. As few cock birds as possible are kept although some success has been gained with them. *"I have never had as much time as needed to manage them in the correct manner."*

The cocks are separated from the hens in August. They are raced fortnightly early in the program and then monthly if they are still there. *"Keep cocks lean and mean otherwise they become lazy and are always looking to mate"*.

Young birds fly the program right out, but Bill will keep a young bird for stock after early tossing.

Old birds are not primed to win short races but Bill believes it is an art to be able to pick your pool pigeons. He has been very successful in pools.

All birds are flown to the perch. When "in form" they are raced fortnightly, otherwise they go monthly.

Tossing is on a weekly basis but if he feels they need it, they will be tossed 3 times a week from 50-80 miles.

Bill believes his birds should be exercised around the loft twice a day. However, early in the season with short days it is not always possible. After the derbies Bill believes it is a necessity that birds work twice a day, up to 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour plus at night.

After the young birds have been broken in and are flying strongly as a group he will give them 2 or 3 tosses at 10-15 miles, then Mallala, Balaklava, and Pt. Wakefield, before putting them on the commercial units.

Their first toss over the hills is Monarto on the commercial units, but only after all the north line stages have been completed. *"Never put all your eggs in one basket when tossing", "never send more than two-thirds of respective north and south teams*

on tosses, always leave some at home".

Race birds are bathed weekly unless it is wet. Stock birds are bathed fortnightly.

The lofts are cleaned twice a day in racing season if time permits, but only when necessary during breeding season. They are not disinfected.

Feeding

The breeding mix is 95% peas and 5% wheat. Greens are fed *daily* either silverbeet and/or lettuce. Shellgrit from the beach at Stansbury is available at all times.

The racing mix varies greatly. Bill stresses the importance of barley for racing pigeons. One month after leaving the nest they receive 80% barley until they are through the moult, it is then gradually reduced while wheat is increased to 50%, peas 35% and barley 15%.

"Barley gives birds Amino Acids, fibre and helps to grow good strong feathers".

Greens are fed weekly for all birds in racing season.

As a tidbit Bill gives his birds a mix of safflower, milo and canary breeders mix. Also 2 good handfuls of linseed once a fortnight with the greens.

Stock birds during winter are fed mostly barley, with peas and wheat as an occasional treat. They are only fed 6 days a week in winter.

Vitamins & Medicines

Bill uses a vitamin called Duphasol twice a week. It is available from vets only. *"Birds will only take in what they want". "There are plenty of good vitamins available, it's all a matter of choice"*. Turbosol is used as a preventative for canker, whilst Amprolmix Plus is used for coccidiosis once a fortnight.

Birds are wormed twice a year, before racing and breeding.

Breeding

Bill usually pairs his birds up at the end of October or early November. Around 30 pairs are mated. He mates his pigeons to the type of the dominant producers in each family.

Since bringing in Allen Goodger's birds in 1972 they have taken over the loft. Bill rates a BCPH, called "Allen's Hen" from his good friend Allen Goodger, as his best ever stock bird. This hen, a full sister to Allen's Tarcoola SAHPA winner and half sister to the Oodnadatta winner, bred Bill's Topar SAHPA winner in 1980, 4th SAHPA Young and at least 20 birds to be placed in the first 30 in SAHPA races. Included in this tally are 3 sisters who in a Mitiamo 3-bird special were placed 15th, 25th and 28th Association. These 3 hens were all placed in the Derby the year before.

He rates the sire and dam of his 1989 Emmdale Association winner as the best currently in his stock loft. This pair having bred 1st Emmdale, 17th Cobar, 3rd Moree LDC, 28th Booroorban twice and 3 or 4 lots of pool winners. Their young are also producing with the Emmdale winner herself having bred 11th Association Morundah, 17th Mitiamo and 29th Morundah.

Bill has also figured in the SAHPA results with imported birds, (Janssen and Cobut) and believes the imports will be successful however they are raced, be it pure or crossed.

"Attention to detail is most important with the imports. They are very quiet and sensible birds."

LOFT REPORT (Continued)

When I asked Bill if the imports would eventually see the demise of Australian families to the point where our lofts are dominated by the European strains, he replied "Our lofts have already been dominated by English and European strains because that's where our pigeons originally came from".

Bill is not in favour of introducing some new blood each year as he says, "I have ample pigeons to last many years".

Theories

When checking his birds for fitness Bill looks for clarity of the eye which is more pronounced when a pigeon has peaked. Feather sheen is brilliant in many colours, bloom in the feather is abundant even after bathing. He also likes the birds to be buoyant and full bodied, flesh colour pink with bloodspots on the keel.

Bill believes eyesign is an essential part of the makeup of a good pigeon but there are many types of eyesign and colours. "Never mate 2 eyes the same together".

When asked if he believes in any wing theory he replied, tongue in cheek - "Yes, they must beat fast". "Although the last 3 flights should be slim and tapered which will help them to beat fast".

Flying pigeons in Adelaide

I asked Bill for his thoughts on a few issues concerning the sport here in Adelaide.

Lines of Flight

Bill believes the north east line when flown as a single line would still prove successful, however, when fanciers have a choice of 2 other lines they will usually put birds they do not value on the north east line.

"The west line was introduced when the east line was planned, this was to give equal overfly to all fanciers. However, like most lines of flight the disadvantaged missed out and the advantaged were successful. Discontent came quickly. Remember, however, that group flying was only in the middle distance races and if the deep thinking people that fly pigeons could hold a forum, programs acceptable could be decided".

"A carefully planned race program is most important for successful flying".

Bill believes for many reasons there should be one line of flight per season. A 20 race program preferably with one race per week or, if 2 races, then both be from the same race point but released separately.

On-the-Day v's Overnight Racing?

"I prefer on-the-day racing. It is a true indication of a pigeons' ability".

Limit Racing

In regard to limit racing he believes it wouldn't be necessary if costs were on a sliding scale - the more you send the more you pay. Large flyers keep big numbers of pigeons therefore they must send them to races.

"Thirty bird limit racing has only really affected the smaller flyers because the large flyer usually has more time to train and select his birds, and his race team each week in Association races is the best he can possibly send".

Lack of Prize money

"As a non profit organisation with a membership fee of \$45 a year, good profits from ring sales and profit from transport of pigeons, prize money should be automatic. Nominations by owners would also assist. This would need the races up to 400 miles to maybe be club or

group and association, all other races be Association events only with a restriction of prizes to be won per owner".

Bill reminded me of the line in the rule book which states one of the objects of the Association is to "provide prizes, challenge cups and shields to be competed for by members of the Association".

Falcons

The Peregrine Falcon has been in existence since Egyptian times. It is one of the few things on earth which has not changed in any way. I would suggest they would survive whatever. And.....yes, there is a problem".

Obstacles to improving the sport & recruiting new flyers

"Lack of thought for others is biggest obstacle in trying to improve the sport generally".

"Costs and time taken to tend birds 12 months of the year are possibly the biggest obstacles to recruiting new people to the sport. Multiple membership racing from the one loft may obtain new members, who would gradually establish their own lofts".

Finally

Bill Walford's services to pigeon racing over many years have been exceptional. He has served the Association in the roles of Chairman, Clock Chairman and Release Officer, culminating in his being made a Life Member of the Association.

He was also a key factor in establishing the Pigeon Fancier's Gazette in 1979, and is also highly regarded as a pigeon auctioneer, one I rate as the best I've seen.

AARON HODGSON.

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