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2nd Australian National Pigeon Race**

LUFTHANSA AUSTRALIA NATIONAL PIGEON RACE NOCKATUNGA — 1990

LIBERATION: SATURDAY, 22nd SEPTEMBER, 1990

BASKET NIGHT: TUESDAY, 18th SEPTEMBER, 1990

1st Prize: European Trip for two (2) for each State Long Markers

1st Prize: Overseas Trip for two (2) each State Short Markers
PLUS Prize Monies

ANPRI ENTRY AND MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode: Phone:

Federation: Club:

Loft Position:

Latitude: Hours Minutes Seconds

Longitude: Hours Minutes Seconds

or Eastling Number: Northling Number:

Signature:

I the Secretary of the above Club certify
that the above information is true and correct.

CLUB SECRETARY SIGNATURE:

Membership fee: \$30.00

Race Entry fee for Nockatunga: \$50.00 (1-5 birds)

CLOSES 30th JUNE, 1990

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Conversations about the Pigeon Fancy

by Dr. Noel De Scheemaecker
courtesy of The Natural Winning Ways,
edited by National Cy Belgium

*Starting and going on with the fancy A
Conversation with Andre Fevrier*

Before my conversation with my very old friend Andre Fevrier of Wavrin in France — who has been a friend for almost half a century — I must tell our readers that during my long life as a pigeon fancier I have never met anyone with such a good eye for and ability to judge a racing pigeon as Andre Fevrier.

And yet I have known many great champions such as Paul Sion, Dr. Bricoux, Ernest Duray, Georges Fabry, Gust De Feyter, The manager of the Havenith loft, Victor Torrekens, Jef Van Riel, Guillaume Stassart, Ch. Vander Espt and many others. But I contend that, with the possible exception of Paul Sion, none of those I have just named had so good an eye for or ability to judge the pigeons.

I wrote once that often a fancier's pigeons are to some extent the reflection of their owner. Andre's vitality — at his age (81) — his independence of mind, which resisted all attempts at conditioning, combined with a heart of gold revealed only to his real friends: that is enough to describe the person with whom I am speaking, and whom I thus introduce to our readers. So here we are.

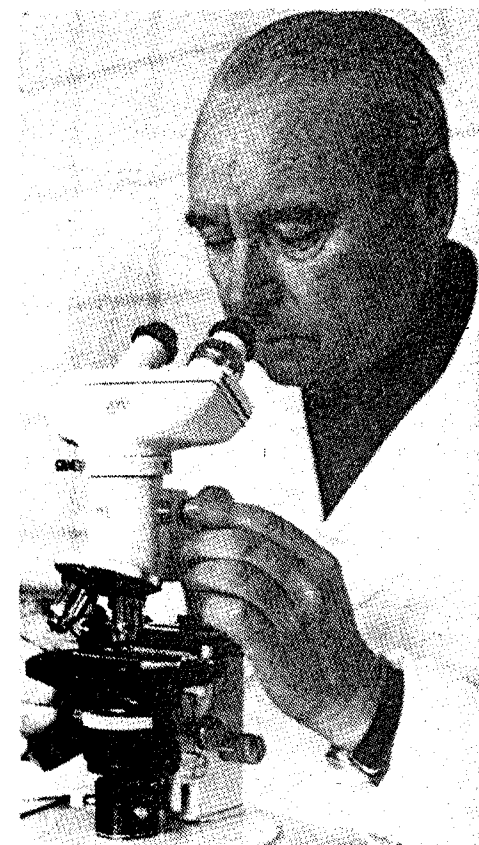
Victor: Let's start at the beginning. What advice would you give someone who wanted to establish a stock of pigeons?

Andre: That is a question which needs to be thought about, because there are several things to be borne in mind.

In my opinion you must first be able to trust the person selling the pigeons. But that's not all. You must choose from young stock. What I mean by that is, from a loft which is winning prizes with 2-4 year old pigeons and not only with 6-9 year olds. For these old pigeons always do well in championships.

Victor: But a pigeon which has had a long racing career demonstrates its great quality.

Andre: That's obvious — but it's just as

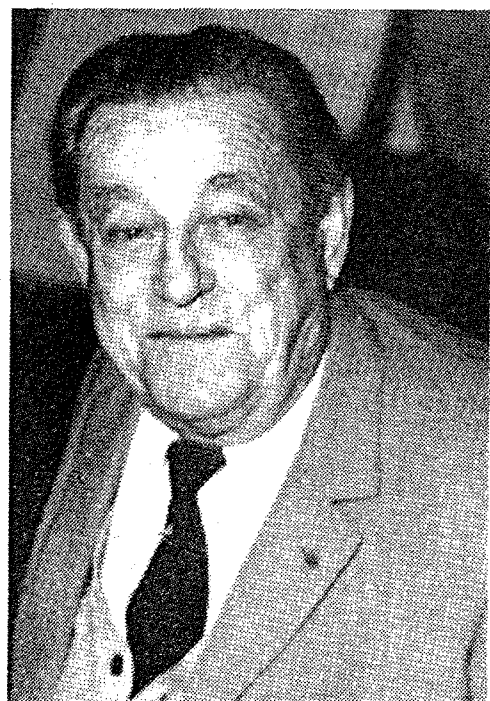


Dr. Noel De Scheemaecker.

obvious that if this champion fancier has nothing with which to replace his "antiques" he is on the downhill path — and you should steer clear of him. A loft without good young birds is a lost loft.

Victor: Which pigeons should you choose — provided you have the choice — to set up your loft?

Andre: That's an even more important and harder question than the one before. You must start off by picking pigeons without defects, in order not to waste your time and money, for the very good reason



Andre Fevrier passed away in peace. He was 83 years old.

that it takes two to four generations to correct a defect. You must be especially wary of pigeons with stiff wings, those which have a hollow between the back and the tail and those which have drooping, narrow, weak and thin bones with a breastbone like the blade of a knife. Avoid, too, heavy pigeons. Trying to correct these defects is a waste of time.

Victor: Anything else?

Andre: Don't rely too much on the pedigree, that is to say, the ancestry. Pasteur, Victor Hugo, Einstein, Edison, Napoleon etc. — None of their descendants has been as famous as they were. Look at Merckx, Anquetil, Bobet, Coppi Kaers, Rik Van Looy, Rik Van Steenbergen. Were they the sons of champions? If you don't wish to examine the pigeon itself, or don't have the knowledge to do so, don't just latch on to a famous 'name' whose publicity is to be seen everywhere. A pigeon flies by virtue of its own abilities. If it doesn't have these

even if it has famous ancestors and provided it really has them (there are so many lies contained in pedigrees), the pigeon is worthless — and even dangerous!

Victor: I agree with you completely on this. If 1984 was the year of George Orwell, who envisaged man evolving under the burden of more and more total conditioning, we can say that in this field the pigeon fancier can be quoted as an example. For most fanciers no longer judge a pigeon's virtues or vices, but what "the others" have made them believe.

Andre: I have often been taken for a revolutionary — and I am one to some extent. I've never allowed my head to be stuffed with the innumerable bits of nonsense emanating from theorists. But so be it! Let's move on!

If I had to start my time as a fancier over again, I would only have young birds in my breeding loft — year old cocks, two year old hens. Out of the 100 youngsters I bred, 80 would be good ones.

But if in their place I bred 100 young pigeons from my good old birds, even from my champions, I would only have 20 good ones. But fanciers are conservative and don't like selling or putting down pigeons which have given them great pleasure — and I can understand this!

Victor: Very few fanciers would be inclined to follow what you are suggesting there!

Andre: Let them do what they wish. In any case, that's what I think. Just the same and when I tell you there are lots of good pigeons but few real champions. We may breed two or three in our lifetime, but sometimes not even one. And experience has taught me that eight times out of ten they were bred from pigeons which had had a change of environment or had themselves changed their environment.

For example: assume you lost a pigeon and you leave it with the person whose loft it has entered: nine times out of ten it will win prizes there and will be one of the best pigeons, if not the best one, for the new owner. There are hundreds of instances of this. Or yet again, you use one or two

strange pigeons to make up a pair and five times out of ten you will breed a good youngster.

Why? Is it a mystery?

In the same context, we note that a fancier who is going downhill has never been known to recover using his own pigeons — especially if these are fine, well-built birds. They cannot be put right, on the other hand these pigeons — in another loft — can give good results (change of environment).

This leads me to the belief that it is absolutely essential to bring in every year one or two pigeons from another environment if you want to keep up. This can have quick results if, for example, you buy a pair of pigeons and pair the cock with one of your hens and the hen with one of your cocks.

"Most fanciers have stopped judging the virtues and vices of a pigeon but only what the 'others' have made them believe."

As soon as the cock you have bought has caused your hen to lay, you separate them and pair the cock again with another of your hens. The first eggs will have been passed on to a rearing pair. By proceeding in this manner with several hens you can have around ten young pigeons in the same year. You will soon be able to recognise which are the better ones. This is a better system than buying young pigeons which you may lose — and which also make you lose time.

Victor: It is obvious that the chances of success increase with the quality of the pigeons brought in, but according to you a change of environment is an extra trump card, in addition to the quality of the pigeons.

Andre: Exactly! But look, I'm 81 and I know that in the pigeon fancy you mustn't try to create difficulties where there is none. As you get older you recognise more and more the mistakes you have occasionally made, and how much time they have caused you to waste. If only the readers of "Winning Ways" can get a few

gains of benefit out of what I have just been saying.

Victor: To close this interesting conversation, old friend, I must say that I feel as though I am the novice.

Andre: Console yourself — we will always be novices in the fancy even if we live a thousand years.

Victor: If only that could be true!

On the risks of Crossbreeding

Novice: I read your conservation with Andre Fevrier with great interest and should like to ask you a few questions about it.

I saw that your friend mistrusted pedigree and the famous names credited to pigeons when they were to be sold. We are obsessed with the so-called 'nobility' of their ancestry and the defects in the pigeon are not discovered.

In your view, what are these defects? I have a friend who has offered to sell me cheaply two surplus hens to cross with my pigeons.

Victor: I can't understand that someone you call a 'friend' wants to sell you two 'surplus' hens! They are probably his least good, or his worst, hens. Take great care and have a close look at them before you buy. This is where I should like to answer your question on those defects to be particularly watched for when you bring in a pigeon to be crossed with your own. Although this can bring in an improvement to your stock, you must realise that more often it can bring you additional defects.

Novice: I know that these hens are on the big side, and as your friend Fevrier said, I must beware of weight in a pigeon. Could you tell me a little more about this?

Victor: This is a very interesting quite a difficult problem. The first question to ask yourself is, is the wing capable of supporting and propelling the weight of the pigeon without fatigue? To judge a pigeon's weight, you must be able to distinguish between dead weight and muscle weight. Fat is dead weight, and it is rightly said that it is enemy number 1 of the racing pigeon.