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ARE YOU STILL DOING IT THE HARD WAY?

NEAL WILSON

A VETERAN RETIRES

by M. Koniewicz

The name Neal Wilson is synonymous with pigeon racing in Western Australia. Neal joined the Swan District Homing Club in 1937 at the tender age of fifteen. It appears that destiny had played its part as Neal won the first race from Meckering.

In those days there were no club rooms, the birds had to be basketed in the back shed of one of the flyers. The birds were then wheeled on a trolley to the Midland railway station. Next morning the birds were railed to Perth (12 miles). They were then transferred on another train to their destination. The release of the pigeons was supervised by the local station master. The same procedure was managed on Sunday night for the Monday toss. This form of racing was conducted for many years in Western Australia, before the introduction of the road system.

Neal's record as a flyer both at Club and Federation level is outstanding. Neal has won from every racepoint at Club level. In fact, it is impossible to list all his fine achievements. It is worthy to note that Neal has won over thirty races from 400-500 miles. Neal prefers races that birds can fly on the day (10 to 12 hours on the wing). Races 700 miles and over witness many fine birds being destroyed.

On questioning his achievements he recalls of a BBH that flew 560 miles from Caiguna, arriving home that night. Another outstanding BBH flew Rawlina three times, Carnarvon twice, it was then injured and placed into stock. Two sisters, a BCH, twice first flying 330 miles, top of the Federation at 200 miles and third at 137 miles. The other sister a BBH, twice first at 330 miles, second at 200 miles and fourth at 200 miles. Both these birds were never tossed but only flagged around the house.

In 1952 Neal had an outstanding year, in that he won fourteen Club races, a record which is yet to be surpassed.

Neal's results with the Mt. Lawley sires race over the last ten years is worthy of note. His sire's birds together with the ones sold at the auction have been no further than fourth in the prize money, bar one year.

The origin of Neal's birds are still dominate in his stock and race loft. The majority of the birds were purchased and exchanged amongst fellow club flyers. A Black Harrison Hen purchased for one and threepence, produced many outstanding progeny. A Red Grizzle Cock was obtained from the roof of the Midland Railway Workshop and also proved to be a successful breeder.

Neal has also assisted new flyers, with birds. Together with birds sold at sire's auctions has seen many of his birds become the foundation birds of new lofts.

The question that needs to be asked is, why has Neal been so successful? Neal was eager to point out that many flyers carry far too many birds, thus it is difficult to gauge the true ability of the bird. An ideal team should number sixty. The use of medicine was scorn at Neal was of the belief that pigeons have a natural immune system which adequately provides them. The importance of wheat as a stable food

for race and stock birds was also stressed. Peas are introduced sparingly as the distances increase. Neal also believes that observing the birds enables one to detect certain behaviour patterns, which indicate that the birds are ready to race.

Neal's dedication and service to his club have not gone unnoticed. In 1979, he was honoured by being made a life member of his club (being a past president, secretary and maintenance man). In 1989 the Pigeon Racing Federation also decorated him by making him a life member.

Neal's wife, Meg, has also contributed to the success of the loft, especially in recent years as ill health has prevented Neal from spending the required time.

I pressed Neal as to who he thought was the best flyer in his time. He paid tribute to the late Jack Burge for his fine sportsmanship and his flying ability.

Unfortunately, this will be Neal's last year. He will be sadly missed by the racing fraternity. It seems that things somehow will not be quite the same, especially at SDHC. A club which has become so much part of his life.

To Neal and Meg from all the flyers of Western Australia, we thank you for your fine sportsmanship and competition.



Meg & Neal Wilson of Swan District Homing Club, W.A.