

Pigeon

Tracks

2011 National Youth Race

By Karen Clifton, AU Executive Director

American Racing Pigeon Union

Spring 2011

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It is hard to believe spring is here and the old bird season is underway. We are also gearing up for the 14th annual Frank Greenhall Memorial AU Youth Race. We have had an excellent response from our junior members. Ninety youth have indicated they will participate! The handler, Dick Doud, has been receiving the birds and is excited to start training. Once training begins, we will send out updates. Good luck to all participants. The winner will be invited to attend the 2012 convention as our guest!



As of April 29, 2011, these are the youth race entries ~

Alex Bemboom
Seema Bemboom
Courtney Bowers
Kaitlin Bowers
Morgan Calerich
Hannah Carns
Ryan Carns
Enrique Castro, Jr.
Julian Chavez
Michelle Dranuski
Richard Dranuski
Carlos Duran
Eric Duran
Gostavo Duran
Hector Duran
Blaze Gale
Justin Gale
Hayden Garfield
McCabe Garfield

Brandon Giddings
Nathan Graham
David Grzeda
Caleb Hindi
Josiah Hindi
Kamal Hindi
Olivia Hindi
Eric Hoffman
jeremiah Hooks
Joshua Hooks
Kylan Jock
Lilli Jaurigue
Sam Joswick
Aaron Kane
Charlize Kell
Sean Kobayashi
Jedidiah Larson
Andrew Lauer
Hunter Macari

Jacob McCool
Emphrem McKee
Samantha McNulty
Diego Medina
Janner Michael
Madison Michael
Arah Molos
Owen Molos
Eric Bowers Minnick
Brittney Nuthals
Tori Olive
Brenden Quick
David Quick
Jason Quick
Hailey Pallin
Broc Perry
Dylan Patera
Jesus Perez
Lucy Peterson

Skylar Reed
Timothy Reed
Tasis Ross
Whitney Sabrowsky
Aliza Ahlen-Salinovic
Julianna Salinovici
Luke Salinovici
Sean Salinovici
Emily Seton
Megan Seton
Molly Seton
Jace Shiroma
Jenna Shiroma
Danielle Smith
Madison Smith
Sage Spakowski
Stirling Spakowski
Ashley Stevens
Carly Stevens

Hannah Stevens
Olivia Stevens
Tim Stone
Thomas Strand
Bradley Tafoya
Jorge Torres
Emma VanHale
Hannah VanHale
Michael Vasquez
Taylor Warwick
Alison Weber
Kristen Weber
Collin Wright
Fred Wright

AU's 2010 Juniors of the Year

Meet the honorees.



Edmond "E.J." Desmarais
Massachusetts

E.J. has done several school presentations and has accompanied his grandfather, Northeast Zone Director, Bill Desmarais, on several club visits. He appeared on WGBH-TV's "Fetch" with Ruff Rudman.



Alan Gregg
Ohio

Alan provides local assistance for general pigeon advice and stray birds. He is creator of NRPigeon.webs.com, a great pigeon information site. He has also been a guest on PigeonRadio.com.

Who will be honored this year?

Essay Writing Tips For Youth Membership Contest On Next Page

Before you write:

Decide what your topic will be.

While you are writing:

Stay focused and minimize distractions.

Write however you feel most comfortable—using a pen and paper or a computer. Let your topic guide your structure. Consider including an introductory paragraph, 3 supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Stay on track: if you find yourself getting off the topic, go back and revise. Remember all writing is re-writing.

After you write, ask yourself:

1. Have I answered the question?

Is my topic clear? Have I said what I wanted to say?

2. Is my essay well-written?

Have I used paragraphs?

Do all my paragraphs have a topic sentence?

Do I fully develop one idea per paragraph?

3. Is my writing correct?

Have I checked for spelling errors myself, without relying on spell-check?

Have I checked for grammar errors without relying on a grammar checker?

Have I checked my facts: dates, document titles, names, etc.?

Other ideas:

Try reading your essay aloud to a family member. Does it sound like it flows easily? Can your audience member summarize your essay back to you in one or two sentences? (If they can't, try going back and clarifying your ideas.)

Try putting your essay down for a day or two and coming back to it and re-reading it. Do you notice anything you'd like to change or add?

2011 Youth Membership Contest

ESSAY CONTEST

What is the single most important thing about your pigeons that you would want other people to know?

THE RULES

Write an essay about the topic above. There is no minimum length of essay to write, but you do need to provide enough explanation to make the point of your essay very clear. Following instructions and having the entry in by the deadline will improve your chances of winning.* Membership must be current to be eligible. (*Past AU Youth Membership Contest winners are not eligible to win.)

THE PRIZE

For the ninth year, the amazing prize of a Benzing electronic timing system has been donated by Ed Minvielle and Siegel's Pigeon Supply. Ed & Siegel's want to see youth participation in the sport grow. The AU appreciates their generosity.

THE DEADLINE

The entries must be postmarked by September 30, 2011. The winner will be selected prior to, and announced during, the 2010 annual convention held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The AU "Youth Membership Contest" is open to all AU junior members.* (*Past AU Youth Membership Contest winners are not eligible to win.)

Please provide the following:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ CLUB (if applicable): _____

I hereby submit my entry in the 2011 AU Youth Membership Contest. I have read and understand the rules and certify that I have written the essay myself.

(Signature—Junior Member)

(Signature—Parent or Guardian)

(Date)

Return this entry form with your essay to the AU national office.

It must be postmarked no later than September 30, 2011.

Mail to: American Racing Pigeon Union, Inc., P.O. Box 18465, Oklahoma City, OK 73154

Flying In The Land Of The Free

By: Whitney Sabrowsky, AU Youth Ambassador

The American Racing Pigeon Union (AU) celebrated its 100th birthday in 2010. Over the years since its founding, the AU has developed into an excellent organization under the direction of many brilliant people. The AU is committed to preserving and promoting the wondrous sport and hobby of racing pigeons.

At its humble beginning in 1910, the AU had a mere 737 members who purchased a total of 24,600 leg bands. A century later, the Union now has about 9,000 members who in 2010 bought an impressive 950,000 leg bands. Pigeon flyers from all 50 states, plus a number from Canada, and the islands of Puerto Rico, Guam, and Jamaica are proud members of the American Racing Pigeon Union.

Deone Roberts, the AU Sport Development Manager, describes one way how the Union is working to protect its members, "The AU is so committed to preserving the right to race that they have employed a lobbyist to represent the organization's members in the Nation's capital, Washington D.C. His efforts have contributed to the protection of the privilege of shipping birds through the post office. He continuously monitors legislation that could have an effect on the right to race."

The AU realizes that educating and supporting young people is key to the future of the pigeon sport. It seems that in our fast paced world, things that appear simple, like racing pigeons, can be

forgotten. This being the case, promoting a favorable view of the sport to the public is a priority for the AU. The Union lends assistance to individuals or clubs who give presentations at their local schools or at community events.

Springing from this awareness of reaching out to youth, the AU offers young fanciers junior memberships. Currently, there are about 700 junior flyers under the age of 18. Every year, the AU holds a National Youth Race where junior members are eligible to enter a bird in a youth-only futurity race. The winner of which is rewarded a trip to the following year's AU National Convention.

Another way the Union is supporting youth is through membership contests. For one contest, junior flyers write essays on a given topic in an effort to win a coveted prize of an electronic clocking system. In addition, an art contest is offered for the crafty youth of the sport to submit drawings on a particular subject. Finally, a Showcase Loft contest is presented as an opportunity for all AU members to display loft plans and styles. This effort illustrates to the public various types of housing for pigeons and educates them about the care that racing homers receive.

Many juniors and other novice flyers have benefited from the Help-A-Beginner (HAB) program. HAB was created to be a mentorship program that matched novice flyers with an experienced pigeon fancier.



Close correspondence with a mentor is one of the best routes that a new flyer can take to become a successful pigeon fancier. The program has been instrumental in keeping new flyers in the sport. Karen Clifton, AU Executive Director, says, "We've had several people say that the HAB program was what they needed to really understand loft management, training, etc. Those people are typically very enthusiastic and share that with others so it not only keeps the new flyers in with a level of success, but the enthusiasm also rolls over to the more seasoned fancier."

Commenting on other AU involvements, Deone Roberts notes, "The AU is serious about preserving the history of the racing pigeon sport through the efforts of the AU Historian, Jim Greelis. Already having logged in hundreds of hours creating video records of pigeoneers and past AU leaders, Jim

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2011 AU Junior Member Art Contest

Create a picture or composition that best represents how you most like to watch your pigeon/pigeons (standing, flying, on the nest box, on the perch, etc.).

AU junior members can submit their artistic "impression" using a variety of mediums including watercolors/acrylics, charcoal/colored pencils/pastels/pencil, oil, pen and ink or mixed media.

The winner receives 1 year free junior membership.

Art Contest Rules

1. All entrants must be current junior members of the American Racing Pigeon Union to qualify.
2. The composition judged to be the winner becomes the property of the American Racing Pigeon Union and may be reproduced in any manner by the AU for publication, display or distribution. You will be credited as being the creator. Art will be returned if requested on the entry application.
3. The winning entry will be selected on creativity, craftsmanship, and evidence of the theme.
4. Only one entry per contestant.

Enter today! You could be a winner.

Remember, you must be an AU member to be eligible to win awards.

The AU "Art Contest" is open to all AU junior members. Submit your entry postmarked no later than September 30, 2011. The winner will be selected by October 14, 2011.

Please provide the following:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ CLUB (if applicable): _____

I hereby submit my entry in the 2011 AU Art Contest. I have read and understand the rules and certify that I have created the art myself.

(Signature—Junior Member)

(Signature—Parent or Guardian)

(Date)

Return this entry form with your essay to the AU national office.

It must be postmarked no later than September 30, 2011

Mail to: American Racing Pigeon Union, Inc.

P.O. Box 18465, Oklahoma City, OK 73154

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is now focusing attention to the newest project in partnership with the AU Northeast Zone Director, Bill Desmarais. Together they are preparing materials that will be useful in creating an alliance with military veterans organizations. Desmarais' 'Reach Out To Veterans' program is already underway, and includes tribute releases for various veterans ceremonies."

Deone continues, "The AU has taken advantage of social media exposure, such as Facebook, that general public enjoys as well as the racing pigeon fanciers. Support for causes such as cancer awareness is also demonstrated by the AU board's decision that the 2012 AU stocks bands will be pink."

Flyers in America are appreciative of the dedicated work the AU does to make the sport grow and thrive. American flyers are passionate about their sport and with the partnership of the AU, the racing pigeon sport will continue on for another 100 years in the United States.

The landscape and climate of America are diverse; flyers in different locations of the country race pigeons in varying manners. The following are interviews with flyers from each region.

From the North

The state of Minnesota is one of the northern most states in the Union; posing the challenge of a long, brutal winter that spans from late

November until April. Despite the weather, there are many Minnesotan pigeon fanciers who are dedicated to their birds and are competitive flyers.

Tom Fremont has loved birds for as long as he can remember. As a young child, his relatives introduced him to the incredible world of the racing pigeon. Nearly fifty years later, Tom is now a respected flyer to be reckoned with on race day.

Tom focuses on quality pigeons. The space limitation of having two small lofts forces Tom to select and keep only the best birds. His flock only numbers seven pairs of breeders, eighteen old bird racers, and thirty young birds. He feels that keeping numbers down in the loft allows a fancier to personally know and understand each pigeon and more importantly ensures the health of the colony. Tom exclaims, "NOTHING is more important than health!"

The development of Tom's own family of birds has occurred over the years through vigorous selection and intricate breeding. He says, "The base of this family emanates from Fabry (Apollo/Bull bloodlines). I also have Janssen based pigeons that I imported from Serge Van Elsacker of Belgium. I have a new Janssen line that I'm presently incorporating into my family that was bred from Louis Janssen." Tom Fremont is not one to boast, but as the author of this article, I can tell you that the beauty and profile of a Fremont pigeon is above any other. Tom's pigeons can easily be singled out in the shipping

trailer or in a showpen. For photos of Tom Fremont's pigeons, please visit his website at www.midnightbluelofts.com.

Fremont is a fervent believer in flying naturally. Old birds hold a prestige unequal to young birds for Tom. His thoughts on the natural system are, "I fly ONLY to eggs, never to youngsters. I believe that the best possible condition a pigeon (cock or hen) can obtain is when they are on six to fifteen day eggs. There is no time in the pigeon's yearly cycle that the health is more abundant. All of the natural antibodies are built into the pigeon at this time because of the readiness and preparation for raising youngsters. The 'brooding patch' that both the cock and hen have is in full operation and gives the pigeon many added nutrients and energy at this time. No, not even the best widowhood cock or hen, or any other pigeon from any other system can acquire this natural state of health that the cock or hen possesses on the egg from about six to fifteen days!"

Next to a carefully selected flock and natural health in the loft, Tom's next biggest factor in his pigeon philosophy is the relationship between the cock and his nest. To quote Fremont, "Never, never, ever forget this one concept within the confines of your loft; EVERYTHING revolves around the cock and his box and his territory. The cock must have his kingdom within the loft, he must have room to spread his wings,

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and strut about. He should not be constantly fighting or stressing for territory. The cock calls the hen, the hen responds, and comes to HIS box. The hen is always happy and satisfied with her mate's choices and territory. Once she sets up home with the cock, the hen will often be even fiercer in defense of the territory. Territory, nest, and home are what motivate pigeons. The final motivator is the love and connection to the master fancier."

Old birds are raced from May until July in Minnesota. Race distances range from 150 miles to 600 miles. Besides his club races, Tom flies in a statewide series with stiff competition from over 100 fanciers. Fremont specializes in 300-400 mile races.

Young birds are flown naturally. Tom does not take young bird racing very seriously and feels that the purpose of young bird racing is just to prepare the birds for their induction onto the old bird team. He does not care for either the dark or light systems. "Both systems were developed to get the maximum performance from our young birds for the sake of winning prizes. But very little thought was given to the future of these pigeons who might otherwise excel in Old Birds where the True master fanciers, and champion pigeons coexist!"

Living in Minnesota presents a challenge when it comes to breeding. Without a heated loft and artificial light, breeding early is impossible. Pairing occurs in mid February and means that Minnesota young birds are not as mature as birds from other parts of the U.S. Tom prefers to

work within the bounds of nature instead of fighting with the cold.

While being a serious competitor, Tom still remembers what is most important- - to love and enjoy the hobby-sport, "Pigeon racing indeed does hold a great importance to me. It represents many of my childhood memories and traditions. It has always represented a certain kind of freedom in my life. When I'm with my pigeons in the loft, or loft flying (my favorite aspect) or training or waiting on them in a race, I have a sense of wonderful bliss and escape from the sometimes hardships of the world. It now puts me into a world I can fully understand and even love. I keep a very small team, and do become very attached to each pigeon. They become family to me, and I to them. Also, the camaraderie and relationships with my fellow fanciers is very important. It's all interwoven in a remarkable hobby/sport."

Fremont remarks, "We as pigeon fanciers have a special gift and calling in this unsettled world. We have a peace and tranquility that few others ever experience. Cherish that and be thankful to your Creator for this gift."



Tom Fremont of Midnight Blue Lofts

From the West

Fourteen-year old Krissy Omalley-Rapp loves pigeon racing because it is a hobby where she can be independent and enjoy spending time with her pigeons. She has been around pigeons her entire life; Krissy says that she was in the pigeon loft before she could even walk! Her grandfather, a life-long pigeon racer, got her actively racing two years ago and lends his support with her pigeon flying endeavors. Prior to racing, Ms. Rapp had been into showing parlor rollers.

Krissy Omalley-Rapp is from the western state of California. She flies pigeons with the Rogue Valley Christian Invitational Club. The Rogue Valley club is a recently formed organization dedicated to mentoring novice flyers. Young and old alike join this club so that they are able to learn the ins and outs of the racing world. Friendly competition and long lasting relationships abound in the Rogue Valley Christian Invitational Club.

Rapp's four lofts allow her plenty of space to keep birds. In her breeding loft, she works with eight pairs. Krissy says that she has bred a family of medium to large sized

pigeons from the lines of Devriendt, Lumachi, Vernazza, and Janssen. She uses this family for

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both sprint and long distance races- - the longest race flown of the old bird season is 600 miles.

Unmated hens are flown during old bird season to the perch. The old bird racing season is from mid April until the end of June. Young pigeons are flown from August into early October.

One of the challenges of living in northern California is that the pigeons have to fly over the Sierra Nevada Mountain range. The racers are trained to fly through the snowy mountain range as young birds. Amazingly, more pigeons are lost to hawks than the snowy conditions.

Krissy's favorite memory of being with her pigeons was when she got her first bird- a parlor roller. She remembers caressing the little roller everyday while standing beneath a maple tree near her loft. One of Krissy's most cherished pigeons was a petite white hen marked with a few blue feathers. Do not we all treasure the special bird that dazzles on the perch? Unfortunately, Krissy's beautiful hen was lost during the 2010 old bird season.

Because she is only fourteen years old, Krissy thinks that she does not have a lot of advice to offer other flyers; but her opinion is that pigeons need to be on a schedule, eating and flying at regular times. Additionally, Krissy says that if your pigeons are afraid of you, they will not want to come home and trap into the loft. This is pretty sound advice from someone so young!

Lastly, Krissy would like to add, "Flying is something you can enjoy your whole life...and throughout the whole process you get life lessons..."



Krissy Omalley-Rapp and her beautiful silver pigeon.

From The South

A pair of fantails in a pet shop window caught the eye of nine-year-old Tony Melucci. He scampered home to ask his mother for money because he just had to buy the beautiful pigeons. With mom's approval, Tony purchased the fancy birds and soon filled the garage with various types of pigeons. Being a baker's son, Tony had the job of delivering baked goods to customers. It was on a bread delivery expedition that Tony Melucci met a racing homer breeder who sparked Tony's interest in racing pigeons. In 1943, the boy, Melucci, flew his first race. Today Tony Melucci is one of the most successful fanciers in America.

Tony Melucci is a resident of Spring Hill, Florida, a location known as Little Belgium. He flies with one of the most prestigious clubs in America; the Gulf Coast Homing Club (GHC). GHC is home to some of the country's greatest fanciers and thus offers an elevated level of competition. The

membership alone of the club is higher than that of entire combines in other parts of the country. Racing can be fierce in a club with 80-90 flying members. Melucci has traveled extensively in Europe and other parts of the world searching for winning pigeons and meeting the greats of the racing world. He handled many pigeons when he performed auctions and bird sales for European fanciers.

When asked about his family of pigeons, Melucci said that he does not have one particular family. He noted that some might call them "Melucci pigeons". Rather, Tony's loft is a melting pot of many winning pigeons that he has obtained from multiple sources; this is how he has developed his "Melucci pigeons". The name behind the pigeon does not mean a lot to Tony. If a bird has successful racing merits and handles well, he considers introducing it into his loft. Melucci is credited with importing some of the first Janssen pigeons into America.

Mr. Melucci is a long distance flyer that prefers medium sized pigeons. He is not fond of short races as he feels that location, winds, and trapping order play too much of a role in the race results.

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Long distance races reveal the pigeons that are truly superior to their competitors.

This Florida flyer has achieved amazing results whether racing his own pigeons or flying in futurities. His pigeons have won nearly every futurity race in the area.

The state of Florida is located in the deep south of the country and the temperature, particularly the heat, plays a role in deciding the seasons in the racing loft. Pairing occurs in November and December for most Floridian flyers, but Tony prefers to mate his birds on January 1st. He feels that this is plenty early for the young birds to hatch and mature as the young bird races begin in September and are flown through December. Melucci keeps twenty pairs of breeders from which he raises eighty young birds. Fifty to sixty pigeons make up his old bird team.

Tony Melucci has a philosophy that some fanciers may find unique; he says that fanciers think that they can motivate their pigeons and tweak them to obtain optimal racing results, but Tony disagrees with these motives. He feels that a good pigeon will be motivated on its own simply because it is an athlete who wants to perform. This viewpoint influences his old bird racing system of flying separated sexes. He has achieved better results with this system than with his experiments with flying natural and widowhood.

Tony's opinion of young bird systems is that your location will

dictate what system to fly. In the heat of a Florida summer, flying young birds on the light system is healthier than the dark system as the birds have access to more ventilation. He does not like to pull flights on his birds.

One of the handicaps of being a resident of the Little Belgium of America is that there are simply so many pigeons in the air. In Tony's district, there are about one hundred fanciers in one square mile. Young bird training can be a challenge as the birds may end up over at the neighbors loft. Florida summers are hot and humid, averaging in the 90 degree F (32 degrees C) range. With this kind of weather, "young bird sickness" can be a problem.

The love of the hobby commences from the thrill Tony feels every time a pigeon appears on the landing board. For him, the enchanting sensation of seeing a pigeon return from a race is as real and exciting as it was sixty odd years ago. But homing pigeons would be nothing without the fanciers that guide them. One of Tony's favorite

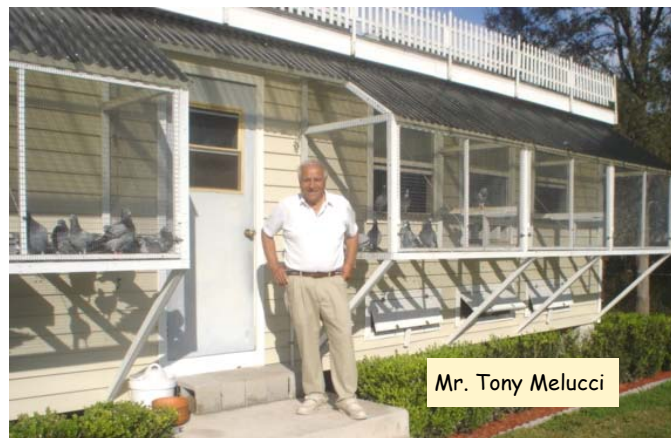
aspects of pigeon racing is sharing close friendships with the great people of the sport. His advice, "Love the sport and don't take it too seriously."

From The East

Keeping pigeons was commonplace in the New England area of Fall River, Massachusetts. Little Bill Desmarais and his neighborhood buddies all had pigeons. Some kids kept fancy birds while others tamed a few common pigeons from the streets, but Bill had his eye on some real homing pigeons and he had made up his mind on how to get these magnificent birds; Bill thought that by working for a neighboring flyer he could win the friendship of the fancier and be rewarded with a couple of birds. Eventually his effort of tirelessly cleaning the neighbor's loft paid off and Bill Desmarais was given his first homing pigeons.

Pigeon racing was placed on the back burner for Desmarais as he grew older. Bill tells the story of the bird who brought him back to the sport in the 1970s, "One winter when I was staying home in my

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Mr. Tony Melucci

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house, and dealing with a period of Vietnam PTSD depression, a white pigeon came to my back deck sliding doors, trying to get in.

I took the bird in, and then gave it to my friend, Mike Peckham who lived in my third floor apartment." After the bird continually tried to escape from his friend, Bill finally decided to keep her. "I kept her in a cage. She kept me company every day and we bonded as I fed and watered her, and I had one-way conversations with her.... Her and I became even closer, as she would come sit on my desk, and eventually my shoulder. I soon realized that this hen had actually mated to me, as she would peck at my ear and neck. I would coo to her and she would coo back. After awhile I began to think about the days when I was young that I had a pigeon loft....This white pigeon, that we named Angel, had awakened that longing in me. I called a local racing pigeon club, The Fall River Racing Pigeon Club... Before you know it, I am building a small 4x6 foot loft in my back yard. That fall, in 1976, I was going to fly my first official pigeon race."

Today Bill Desmarais serves as the American Racing Pigeon Union Northeast Zone Director. He still resides in Fall River, Massachusetts and flies birds with several New England area racing clubs.

Bill Desmarais describes his pigeons as, "The core and main family of my loft is Gaby Vandabeele homing pigeons. Back in 2003 and 2004 I set out to obtain some of these birds, as I had learned about how successful Gaby was, and how successful others like Mark and Dickie

Evans Myrtle Loft in England had become breeding and racing Gaby's birds. I have Gaby birds in my loft from the Myrtle Loft, from Desert View, Quest Syndicate and of course from Gaby Vandabeele himself; birds line bred and crossed from some of his most famous birds."

Being in his lofts with the pigeons bring Bill endless amounts of pleasure, he notes the design of his lofts, "I have one special small breeding loft of birds who have bred some of my best winners. I also have a large loft with birds who have promise or bred me some great birds. My flying loft is a second story loft, built on top of my large breeding loft. Because my yard is sandwiched between my house and my neighbors, this provides for easy flying and landing of my birds. The large breeding loft and the flying loft are 8 feet wide by 12 feet long, and 9 feet high at the roofline. The roofs of my lofts are rubber covered on one half, and clear Plexiglas on the other half, with ample air in take and out take at the bottom and top.

"A unique feature of my flying loft is that it is connected to my second floor open deck. This deck is just 10 feet across the hall from my bedroom. This provides for quick access when catching birds for training, and its great to sit on the deck when waiting for the birds to come home. For my situation where houses are so close together in the city and with space at a premium this works out just right."

Bill speaks of a few of the challenges of being located in a Massachusetts city, "My home and loft are located about 1000 feet from

the nearby highway system that the birds fly down on their way home. My loft is about in the middle of all the other competing lofts. Depending on the winds, we stand a good shot at the birds getting home in a quick amount of time. The tough part is that when they get home; I am surrounded by trees three to four times higher than the surrounding houses. The time wasted circling and angling for a landing is a detriment to clocking quickly once the birds arrive home."

Desmarais touches on his flying system, "For old birds I really don't put a lot of road training in, but don't exactly fly any particular system. I haven't flown old birds in two years, but the last year I flew I only trained my old birds out to 10 miles, and then loft flew them the rest of the time by flagging them. Each day they loft flew; I increased their airtime and their feed. My wife and I feed these birds mainly barley during the week and added mixed grain towards shipping night. I really don't want to disclose everything about this feeding method, but needless to say we liked the results. We won 1st place in two races, a 2nd and other top performance position by feeding and training this way. Saved a heck of a lot of gas as well." Old bird season begins in April.

Bill is unique in the respect that he prefers flying young birds. "Old birds are a lot easier to fly than young birds, but I really do enjoy the

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young birds more. Seeing what you get from particular breedings, watching their antics as they learn to fly, and as they take baths. Finding out if your predictions of greatness in a birds come true or not. The tough part about young birds is when you lose one in training or a race that you've sort of chosen as your favorite." Desmarais participates in young bird futurity



Paula & Bill Desmarais

races; flying in smaller local races and also in more popular races such as the AU Convention race. Bill begins flying his young birds in September.

Desmarais would like to express some of his thoughts on the sport, "Being part of the racing pigeon sport is important to me because of the peace and contact with nature that the bird provide me personally. But I also enjoy the friendship and relationships I have gained as a result of racing pigeons. I can sometimes be a character and in the pigeon sport we have all kinds of characters. We come from all walks of life, occupations and backgrounds, but we love our birds and to compete. The thing I enjoy the most is watching my birds swoop around the loft, and then take a bath on the landing board. Their antics are simply amazing."

"I would like to say to anyone contemplating joining our sport, that we welcome you with open arms. Being a racing pigeon enthusiast today is very unique and rewarding... You'll get a lot of personal satisfaction and comfort in breeding and raising homing pigeons, and will get excited

by the racing competition. Although to the birds it is just flying home, to us it is about who has the strongest homing instinct and whose birds are the best cared for, are the strongest, and in best health. You'll also meet and gain many new friends, locally and across the country through the pigeon sport. This sport is very affordable as compared to any sport and it is something that you and your family can do right out of your back yard."

In closing, Bill thanks all of the great fanciers who have made the sport what it is today. The Greats of the pigeon world have set the high standard of being generous, caring individuals and Bill wants to reflect their values and be a part of the effort to carry on old traditions and keep the sport alive for future posterity.



Editor's note: The author, Whitney, was asked to write this article for the British Homing World. We are pleased to share it with you.

The Independent Homing Club Report—Junior Member Recognition

By Joe Rostocil, IHC President

The Independent Homing Club would like to recognize our junior members for their great effort in the 2010 Young Bird season. We have a total of 8 junior members now. These five flew this past YB season. Olivia Bowser, Michelle Dranuski, Richie Dranuski, Fred J. Wright Jr., and Colin Wright. Fred and Colin fly under the loft name of

The Buckeye Boys. Dad is a graduate of the Ohio State University. Our newest junior member is Braeden Jeske who will be flying this year. Michelle Dranuski won 2 races and the Buckeye Boys won a total of 6 races. Here's hoping they continue to learn and fly many more.

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