

Hints for Mating, Breeding and Selection

by Steven Van Bremen

Preface	p 3
1.0 The tools that are available to the modern racing pigeon breeder	p 4
1.01 In the beginning with pigeons from John and Everyone	p 5
1.02 Line Breeding	p 7
1.03 The Technique and Practice of Line Breeding	p 10
1.04 First Inbreeding then Crossing	p 12
1.05 Developing Our Own Strain	p 13
1.06 Building Our Own Strain	p 15
1.07 Preserving Our Own Strain	p 17
1.08 Perfecting Our Own Strain	p 19
1.09 Blending in the successful cross	p 21
1.10 Reproducing excellent breeders	p 23
1.11 What do we mean by line breeding?	p 24
1.12 We're producing many good pigeons. Now what?	p 25
1.13 Line Breeding and Crossing	p 27
1.14 A small loft, few pigeons. Line breeding?	p 29
1.15 Inbreeding	p 32
1.16 Is inbreeding the same as family breeding?	p 33
1.17 The disadvantages of inbreeding	p 34
1.18 What is the most important conclusion we can derive from inbreeding?	p 36
1.19 The different forms of inbreeding	p 37
1.20 How can we use inbreeding?	p 39
1.21 How do we pair?	p 41
1.22 How should we select when using inbreeding?	p 42
1.23 Vitality returns when we start crossing	p 44
1.24 Why do we cross so often with different blood?	p 46
1.25 If a crossing works does it always work the same?	p 48
1.26 Inbreeding plays a significant role	p 50
1.27 What can inbreeding teach us?	p 52
1.28 Crossing always follows inbreeding	p 53
1.29 If you want to use inbreeding or breeding within the family how exactly should we pair?	p 55
1.30 A pigeon fancier must read a lot!	p 56
1.31 It works wonderfully. What's the next step?	p 58
1.32 Cross, cross and cross again.	p 60
1.33 Crossing good X good; Does it work?	p 62
1.34 What use is a Pedigree?	p 64
1.35 Lets take all the tools and start pairing!!	p 67
2.0 The building bricks that form the modern racing pigeon	p 69
2.01 The Attributes of the first group	p 76
2.02.1 Character also called mordant.	p 82
2.02.2 Intelligence	p 85
2.02.3 Speed	p 87
2.02.4 Talent for a specific distance	p 89
2.03.1 The Eye	p 93
2.03.2 The Vitality Story	p 99

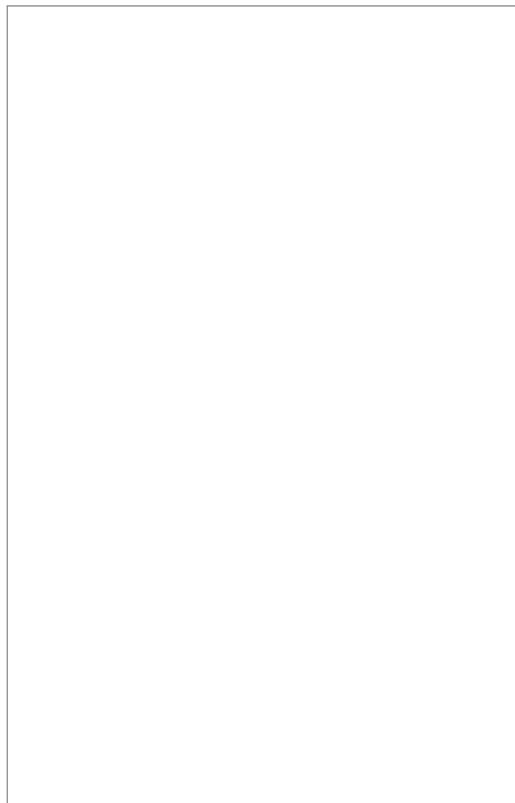
2.03.3 The bone structure	p 105
2.03.4 Balance	p 109
2.03.5 The Quality of the Feathers	p 111
2.03.6 The Pigeons Wings	p 113
2.04 Where there is a will there is a way!	p 116
2.05 Make timely choices!	P 121
 3.0 The architecture	 p 124
3.01 There are important differences in the types of pigeon	p 126
3.02 The type for one night in the basket	p 128
3.03 The type for two nights in the basket	p 129
3.04 The type suited for a longer stay in the basket	p 130
3.05 Choose the discipline and the pigeons that suit you!	P 132
 4.0 Implementing the plan: making up our pairs!	 P 134
4.01 The Next Step: Learn to analyze!	P 136
4.02 When pairing many factors have to be taken into account	p 138
4.03 Would you break up an outstanding breeding pair??	p 141
4.04 What do we watch for when purchasing pigeons??	p 143
 Afterword	 p 147

The Development of My strain (S. v. Breemen)

Introduction	p 148
The beginning with the De Smet-Matthijs pigeons	p 150
An own (in)breeding program	p 153
The construction of the Steven van Breemen Strain	p 155
Two fantastic base pigeons	p 160
The «De Oude Klaren» and «De Goede Jaarling»	p 163
The Red klaren Gold	p 165
The Janssen's came, saw and conquered	p 171
De Bels x De 646 Duif a fantastic foundation pair	p 176
De Goede Jaarling Champ of the Champs	p 181
De Goede Jaarling and Het Schoon Blauw: Top Class!	P 183
De Bonte Jaarling from the old 08 Janssen foundation	p 191
Foundation breeder De 776 duif	p 198
Another fantastic foundation pair	p 205
The Supercrack family	p 209
A new line: the Stichelbout's of Willequet	p 212
My loft setup	p 214
In closing	p 216

Preface

As you already know this book is about pairing, breeding and selecting racing pigeons. If you want to keep progressing and keep climbing the rungs in the ladder to success in the pigeon racing sport you will have to have all the facets of pairing, breeding and selecting at your fingertips. That is the way to success.



Prof. Anker photographed in front of the University of Budapest.

This book "Hints for Pairing, Breeding and Selecting" explains step by step in understandable language how you can walk the path to success.

In Chapter 1 you are given the tools.

After that in Chapter 2 the building blocks are brought out and we can begin to work.

In Chapter 3 you get a course on breeding methods used in the racing pigeon sport.

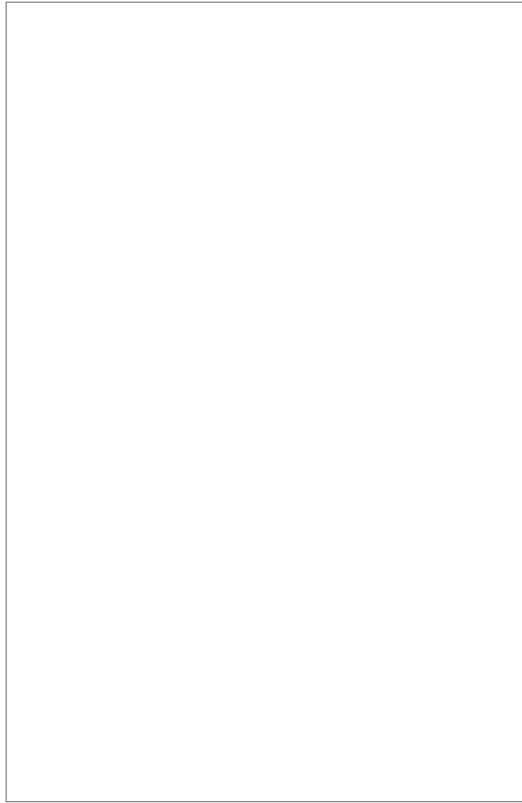
Then you will take your tools, materials and knowledge to Chapter 4 where you can carry out your own plan. In other words you can now with your own breeding material put together a plan for the new breeding season, the first one of the new Millennium.

I hope that "Hints for Pairing, Breeding and Selecting" will be a helpful guide and I hope you find much joy in reading and studying it.

Steven van Breemen.

1.0 The tools that are available to the modern racing pigeon breeder

In this the first chapter we will explain the various breeding techniques. They are the tools with which the pigeon fancier can go to work on his breeding loft. Crossing, inbreeding, line breeding and family breeding are the most important instruments we can use. They will be explained separately and all the details will be given to you. Each one of the four principal tools appear in various forms.

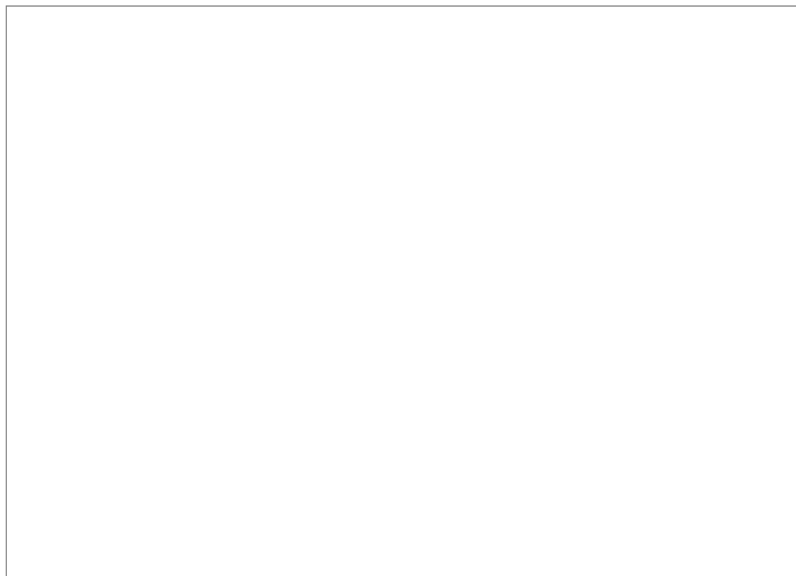


Ton Bollebaker and Prof. Alfons Anker critique a superb blue breeding hen. At that time (1974) Ton Bollebakker and I were very impressed with the breeding methods of Prof. Anker. Ton like myself practiced the methods on his own lofts with great success. Today Ton has to be counted amongst the best long distance fanciers in the Netherlands.

Further you will learn how you can use all these tools to develop a top pigeon colony and possibly in the end build your own strain. This will be done by taking you through my personal breeding methods with the hope that every reader can use the knowledge to successfully develop and keep developing his own methods.

1.01 In the beginning with pigeons from John and Everyone

Most pigeon racing fanciers begin this way, with a mix of various birds. Every beginner has pigeons given to him from every direction. This is how most of us start. When we participate in the races, we discover the better fliers in the area. We then go to these lofts and try to purchase birds from them. Reading the pigeon papers and magazines leads us to the more famous fanciers in the sport. This results in most beginners purchasing better breeding material from them. With all these pigeons we begin to breed, often without a thought out breeding plan. The bloodlines from all these various birds mix with each other, resulting in, what we can call a flock of mixed blood. When breeding further generations from them we can not predict what we will get with any certainty. Success with the offspring of this type of breeding depend heavily on lady luck.



"The Good Yearling(Goede Jaarling)" the world famous foundation cock of Steven van Breemen. As yearling he was 2nd National Ace Yearling in the "Vredesduif" competition. He won amongst other prizes, 1st Etampes against 1489 birds, 1st Dourdan against 974 birds and lastly the first prize from Chateauroux in the N.A.B.v.P against 8139 birds at least 18 minutes ahead with a North East wind. After this he was moved to the breeding loft where he was very successful. As of 1999 his offspring are flying 1st nationals in the 5th generation in five different countries. On my own loft the National winner from Bourges 1999 "De Rode Engel" was a great-great grandson. This is a prepotent breeder

If the beginning fancier is progressive and wants to belong to the champions, then sooner or later he will ask himself how he can advance in the breeding of better pigeons. What can he expect from his own birds in the future.

If the origin of our loft really does descend from "John and Everyone" , that is to say is totally mixed, it will be difficult to advance with any success, or to reproduce any successful crosses. A good example of this is the breeding method used in the well known breeding pair of Marcel Braakhuis from Heer. Their descendents enjoyed the name of the "Zwarte Moordenaars (Black Murderers)" a name they certainly earned. They were known world wide. This breeding pair originated from a combination of quite a few strains, each of which also was of mixed origin. The fanciers that purchased these birds as crossing material for their own loft had very little success in reproducing these same results.

If we want to learn what qualities our birds have, we will have to put them in the basket and test them on the race course, in order to determine their individual qualities. Before we put our

youngsters to the test, we have to be confident that our lofts are set up satisfactorily, that our management is timely and that our race methods are matched to the task at hand, without these we take too many risks of heavy losses during the upcoming racing schedule. These are very important. One good result doesn't give us any answers about the qualities of our pigeons. The overall result of an entire season is more significant. If we have also made copious notes on individual bird, we can at the end of the season draw some interesting conclusions. Each pigeon gets an individual report and we will know which ones were the best and under what circumstances they were able to deliver their best performances.

Now it is getting interesting. Our curiosity will lead us to find out which breeding pairs bred these youngsters. If it is worth while, we can still breed a few late bred birds out of these pairs. These may later help us raise our performance to a higher plane.

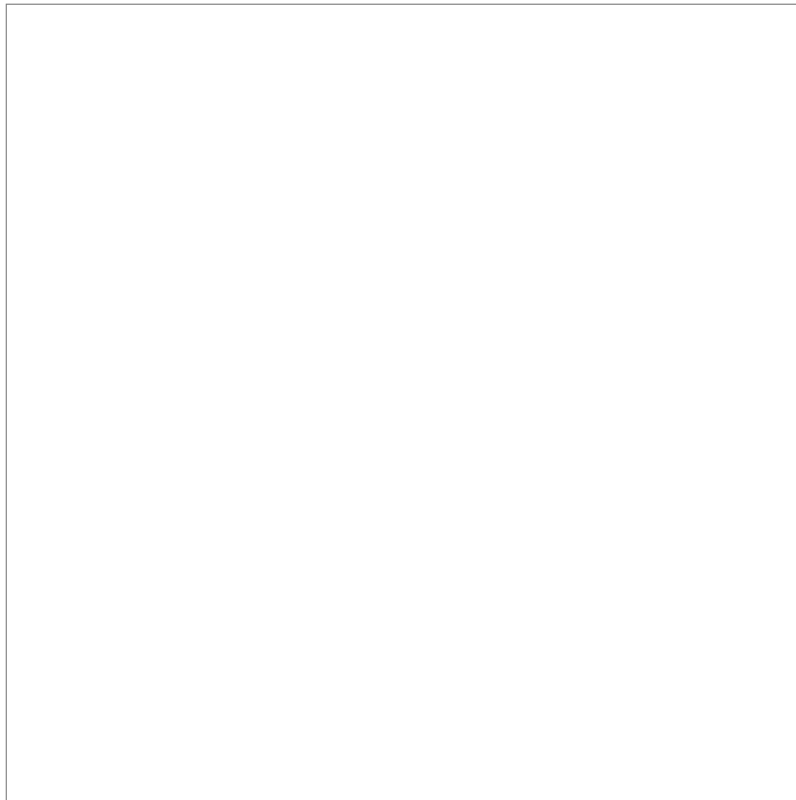
That is why it is important that we put our young pigeons to the test. Not only on short races where they are released with birds out of our own area, but we also have to send them to longer races with larger competition where they have to find their way home alone. This is the best way to learn what kind of pigeons we have on our loft and which pairs were responsible for them. Next year we will concentrate our breeding on those that were best and we have criteria on which to base our first selection. If we carry this method through for several years and we see that our performances are getting better then we have made a big step forward. Through appropriate breeding and selection our good breeding material will increase. If by chance we produce a race who delivers outstanding performance or a breeder that produces many offspring that catch our eye, we can consider ourselves doubly fortunate. We can then take the next step in our breeding program.

If we have indeed come to the point where the birds in our possession have been able to put their stamp at the top of the race results, then we have to try to fix this blood in our flock. This will be somewhat more difficult than crossing. In the science of genetics this method is called inbreeding. Don't use this method too easily. Inbreeding is used to fix characteristics or traits. Good traits and bad traits!! We have to make use of inbreeding when the pigeons in our loft have shown their class in races against large numbers. It is only then that it begins to make sense to start inbreeding. It makes even more sense if these pigeons all come out of one pair. Inbred pigeons are less suited to racing. They are meant for the breeding loft. There they can broaden the source for our best performance pigeons. The first family characteristics will quickly express themselves. The following generations will show these characteristics and traits to a greater and greater degree. Then we will have to use the next step in the genetic development of our flock: line breeding.

If the first chapter of this book has already made you enthusiastic, slow down for a minute. Starting with pigeons from "John and Everyone" makes the inheritance of our birds very uncertain. The offspring are too diverse. To succeed in breeding with this type of bird we need a large amount of luck. The best way to begin in the racing pigeon sport is to acquire birds from a top performing loft where the emphasis is put on breeding. Then our chance of success is much greater and luck and accidents play less of a role.

1.02 Line Breeding

The definition of line breeding is the pairing of animals of the same breed with each other. In the pigeon sport it has a slightly different meaning. We breed further with pigeons of the same breed without bringing in different blood. This method is applied when we have developed an outstanding breeder or breeders from the birds that we started with. This is when line breeding or closed breeding can begin. Step by step the varied flock of pigeons, obtained from "John and Everyone", into a type of strain. No definite plan exists to accomplish this. It can be obtained out of elements of other breeding methods. Let's use some practical examples to clarify what we mean.



"Het Boerke" is the half brother to "De Goede Jaarling" and is responsible for his own line on the lofts of Steven van Breemen. His parents were put together in the fall to accomplish a particular goal. Both parents had the famous "Oude Klaren '46" a Desmet Mathijs in the same generation 4 times in their pedigrees. "Het Bourke" produced like his half brother 1st prize National winners into the 5th generation in 5 different countries. In the 2nd generation the National Orleans winner 1989 of the Bros. Vonk, Nigtevecht. In the 3rd generation the National winner Chiangray of the Bros. Pilunthanakul from Bangkok. In the 4th generation the first 4 prizes National Hanover for John Engel from Hadersley. In the 5th generation for myself from Bourges 1st National in '99 with the "De Rode Engel"

A beginner with a little luck gets some good breeders into his possession. If he happens to have good powers of observation and also has a specific goal in mind, after a period of time a strain of birds all having the same characteristics and traits, can be developed. Often this expresses itself by outstanding results at specific types of races. Through further pairing and selection these birds will have certain races and conditions written all over them. These pigeons after a while will all look the same, this is when the first problems come to the fore. Because, we in the pigeon sport don't really have different breeds, often unrelated birds are brought in from another loft. This is done to freshen the blood of our foundation birds. These strange birds should be of the same quality, or preferably better than our own. If we breed with a specific goal, we have to be careful that the new pigeons don't lead us away from it. This is the path many fanciers follow in breeding racing pigeons. It is the manner in which many famous strains were developed. Famous strains of the last decade such as Bros. Janssen,

Jan Aarden, and De Smet-Mathijs were developed this way. Each became famous at their specific type of racing, by developing the qualities necessary to dominate their competition.

This is the way my own strain of pigeons was developed. It started with the old De Smet-Mathijs pigeons. Many dark cheques with those fantastic deeply pigmented grey eyes and that characteristic white tick in the corner of their eyes. Because I did not have access to the base pigeon of this colony "The Klaren 46", I chose to work with his most direct descendants available. These were strongly inbred and then crossed with offspring from the Janssen Brothers strain. The type of birds that followed from the above breeding plan, achieved such outstanding performances, that I resolved to preserve these birds as much as possible. The subsequent search for the correct material with which to cross became a difficult task. One day distance pigeons are complete pigeons, strong and fast, full of fight, intelligent and possess bundles of fantastic muscles. Tracking down appropriate new material that will fluidly combine with my own birds is a pass time that gives me a lot of pleasure. Observing, planning, selecting, testing is a yearly recurring cycle. That is the part of the pigeon sport that I relish.

Searching for material to cross onto your own has to be done painstakingly. You have to be able to judge which qualities are the most important to the bird's ability to perform and you have to learn how these qualities are inherited. This has to be learned first!

It would serve you well if you are able to look at a good picture in the pigeon papers and determine the quality of the birds. Coming to the correct conclusions can save many long and arduous trips. If you think that you have found a suitable loft, then first we assemble all the race results we can get our hands on. This will give us more insight. If possible study pedigrees and a sales catalogue. This should all be done before we visit the fancier to handle and assess his birds. Then you have to use your instinct and decide if these birds handle and behave like the birds you are looking for.

It is easy to be misled by circumstances such as: a perfect loft, outstanding management-method-nutrition practiced by a excellent fancier sometimes also having a favourable location. On races up to 400 km these factors can be of great importance and birds of obviously inferior quality can perform well above expectations. To achieve these same results with them, is something most of us cannot equal. That is why finding real quality is so important.

During one of my many searches, years ago, I landed at the door of the now deceased Chris Koppel in Eemnes, not too far from where I live. His dominant role in the races from 100 km to 1100 km, with the same pigeons, had all the area fanciers talking. Once he won the first three positions from Orleans. It was a hard race with head winds, dark weather, and a large entry. He had entered only 5 birds. That same year his famous "06" won first in the Kring Hilversum from Strombeek, and also flew a prize on the first page on National races from St. Vincent and Dax. Watching these and similar performances made me determined to search out his pigeons. There were two pigeons responsible for these sensational performances. They came together by accident and were called the "St. Vincent Pair". As long as this pair was still producing youngsters early prizes were easily won. After they were gone, the prizes were harder to come by, step by step performances declined, because he was hesitant to invest in quality crossing material. Many champions can thank one good breeding pair for their success. For 6 or 8 years they can profit from this pair, as long as there are descendants from them on the racing loft.

How should we proceed?

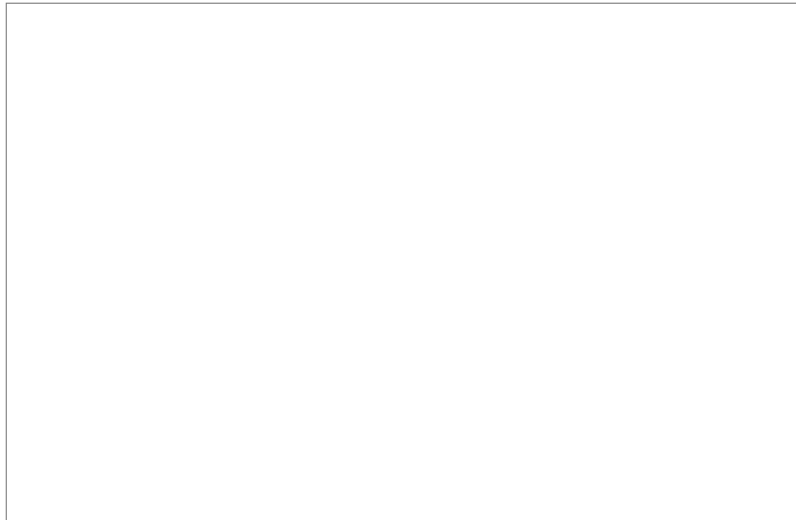
Each year, the wonder pair should have been broken up in the fall and each partner paired with unrelated first class material. One half of the offspring should have been tested on the race course. The other half should have been used for inbreeding in the form of half brother x half sister, uncle x niece, aunt x nephew. When a successful combination was uncovered, then the effect could have been intensified by inbreeding the new material. Then two lines could have been developed to give us material to produce the desired effect at will. This way we could have preserved our success for the following 10 years. Meanwhile the fancier could have searched out outstanding, preferably inbred, crossing material from a family that had shown its breeding value. If the best out of the first cross were always bred back to the original line, then success would have been guaranteed.

In truth it is simple. Most fanciers don't keep too many pigeons. Often only 40 to 70 birds are overwintered. Then it is logical that different birds should be introduced regularly. The moment when and what is introduced, that is what makes the difference!

1.03 The Technique and Practice of Line Breeding

As mentioned earlier inbreeding is automatically followed by the next stage, line breeding. As soon as we discover an extra breeder, we quickly try to bring the best crossed material of the second generation as close as possible back into the line, in order to maintain as much as possible the good qualities. Often the "crossing combinations" come out of two members of our own family. It is important that we only breed further with offspring that show the same characteristics as the extra breeder produced in his offspring.

That is the purpose of line breeding: the increase of the genetic material of the extra breeder. Line breeding is usually not a problem as it often occurs within your own family.



"De Blauwe Engel" was bred by the Danish fancier John Engel and Arne Porsmose. They own a common breeding loft filled mainly with pigeons from the lofts at Leeghwaterstraat, Hilversum. "De Blauwe Engel" was bred out of a son of "De Schone" out of "Het Boerke" paired to a daughter out of "Fabiola" out of the "De Goede Jaarling". In 1994 John Engel entered 4 children out of this pair in the Danish National classic for young birds out of Hannover. He won the first four prizes. Since then children and grandchildren out of the "Guldparret" are responsible for many wins in Scandinavia. "De Blauwe Engel" after an imposing racing career moved back to his roots in Hilversum. He became the father of the "De Rode Engel", National winner 199 from Bourges in Rayon 7 Middle Netherlands against nearly 10,000 birds.

Most often the first part of line breeding plays out within our own family in the form of related pairings. If this succeeds then the second stage, real crossing with unrelated birds, takes place. Then, the crossed material, that approaches in quality, as close as possible the original material, is brought back in the strain.

There is a third stage that comes to mind, where the crossed birds because of their outstanding performances can play a separate role in line breeding. This means that we have to be careful that through related pairings our loft does not quickly fill with the same material. This usually causes decreased racing performances. Loss of vitality leads to lower performance. Then the third phase begins and the crossed products are brought back into the family.

The fourth stage occurs when with the following generations we get further and further away from our original extra breeder. Then we to diligently search for the new extra breeder and our drama will go onto the next performance.

There is a problem that can occur, although it is a luxurious problem. If everything goes smoothly and the line with its branches spread out, we will have to make choices. Our loft will

be full of quality material. If this happens we can loan or give our friends birds with the understanding that at some time in the future we can get back some material. If the friend in his turn becomes successful with them than later his vision can lead to an extra dimension in our loft. The photo above shows what can happen.

Line breeding in animals is practiced in many different ways. There are naturally many different goals and purposes for which line breeding is used. The description of the above mentioned "performance" should be clear to everyone.

1.04 First Inbreeding then Crossing

Crossing or freshening the inbred material can be done in different ways. It can be direct crossing with a completely unrelated strain, or it can be crossing with related material.

Before we cross we have to inbreed our own material. We have to concentrate and fix specific characteristics. This will give us predictable results in future pairings. In other words it will increase the chance that it will "click". We know that characteristics such as character, intelligence, supple muscles etc. are closely related to the bird's ability to perform. These are the characteristics we have to concentrate on in our breeding and when we look for something to cross into our line.

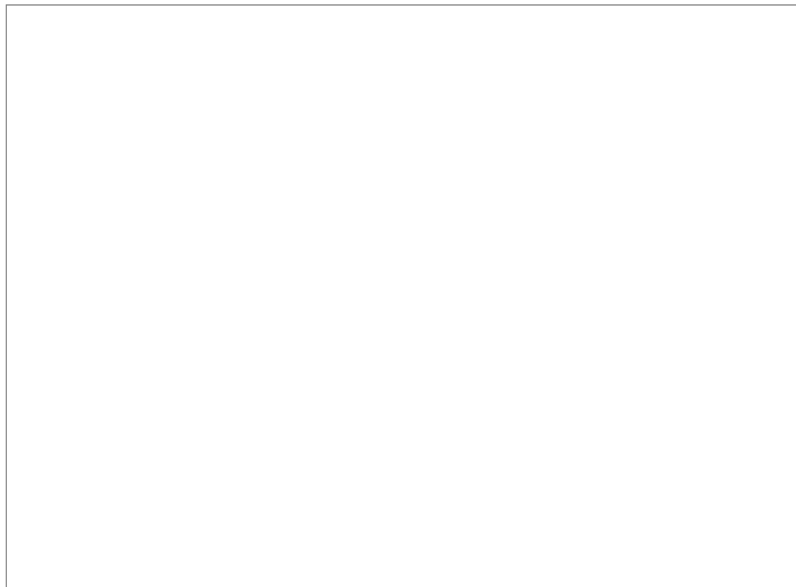
If there is a bird in our family that is a good breeder there are usually others in the family that also breed well. If that is so, then it will be easier to embroder further with our breeding. It is best to do that with material out of another inbred strain. With these we have a better chance that the good qualities are carried on. I don't like just crossing and hoping for a "lucky punch". The chance of profiting further in our future breeding are slim. Think, before obtaining your crossing material "hit and miss". You have to be deliberate.

You should understand that when breeding animals, the title "strain" is not easily obtained. In the pigeon sport it should not be any different. The breeding and accumulation of extra material, with special characteristics and fixing them, is a precise and patient effort. We haven't even talked about attempting to improve our first class material. How often is this pursuit confused by cunning sellers and advertisers that try to pass of inferior material for world class. If you don't have your own plan and the necessary knowledge, they will quickly ensure that you lose your way and your money. Don't let yourself be misled and always base your choice of crossing material on hard facts, if you want to increase the quality of your own family.

1.05 Developing Our Own Strain

Many fanciers pretend to have their own strain under the roof of their loft. But, if you study the pedigrees of their best pigeons, you quickly come to the conclusion that their pure strain favourites are the products of purely cross breeding. This method is by far the easiest and does not require specific breeding knowledge. Establishing and above all maintaining your own strain over many years is something that commands respect. It is extremely difficult and requires a word our eastern neighbours use: "fingerspitzgefühl" (a literal translation: "a feeling for it in the tips of your fingers"). This word describes what is required to manage and maintain a strain at the same high level of performance. Before we reach this point we have to choose a goal: which race distances do you want to aim for and do you actually have the right pigeons to accomplish this in your loft. Naturally you will want to shine at your chosen specialty. This requires something extra: you have to develop a vision of the type of pigeon that will dominate the competition at that discipline. Which characteristics are the foundations of success at a particular specialty?

At my discipline, the one-day distance races the characteristics from the additive group are required: mordant (character), intelligence, muscle quality and the ability to perform successfully at a specific distance. Besides this, we naturally need that crucial whiff of speed. The amount of character and intelligence can be judged by the expression on the face and the manner in which the eyes are set in the head. The wringer types are pigeons with lots of mordant (character). The last two characteristics can be judged by feel, by holding the bird in our hands. Speed is judged by studying race results: can they fly out in front and can they maintain this speed if necessary, one hour longer with wind ahead, then the competition. These qualities along with all the others will be explained fully in the following chapters.



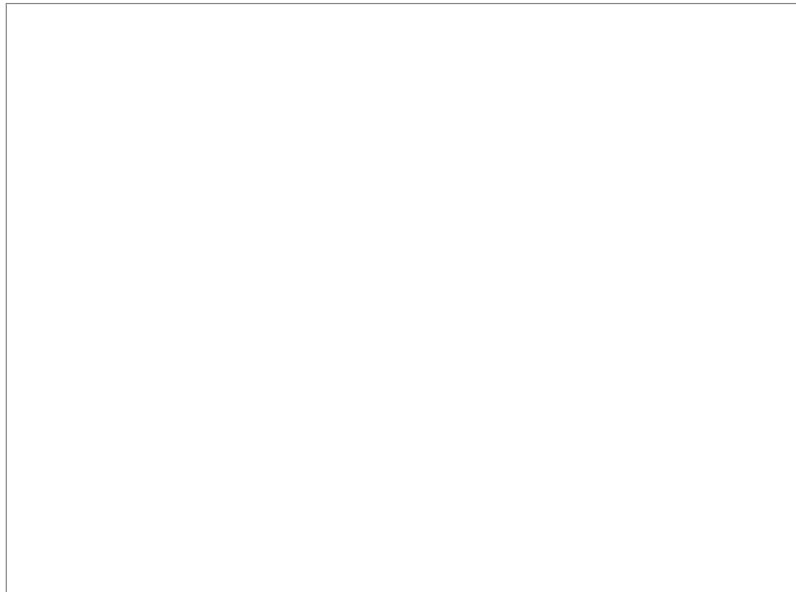
"Het Asgrauw" is a daughter of the wonder pair "de Goede Jaarling"x"Het Schoon Blauw". She was moved directly to the breeding loft and produced outstanding descendants. Her son "Riis" won the 1st prize National Orleans 8 minutes ahead against 15,000 birds and was the fastest of a total release of 50,000 birds. Her grandson won for Jan Witteveen in Hilversum 1st National Orleans in 1997.

If you want to concentrate on the one-day distance races then you will have to ask yourself what the modern one-day distance pigeon looks like, and select accordingly. To breed pigeons that can dominate the one-day distance races, you will need birds that can race 475-750 km at "one" sprint. This ability is essential. A pleasant by-product of this type of pigeon is that they can also out class the competition on a sprint race. This means we need complete pigeons with

no faults. You have to begin with powerful pigeons. Pigeons with an unbendable frame. This frame is where the supple muscles are attached. On races further then 400 km with warm weather and wind ahead, muscles attached to a weak frame will become a hindrance. The frame begins to bend, the muscles can still function but they are unable to do so efficiently. The bird tires quickly. The next step is adding an unbendable character. They have to want to fight to get home, no matter what the cost. Never give up, always fight, from the beginning to the end. Then the recipe has to have some flavouring added to it, with some speed and intelligence. This means that a bit of Janssen Bros., is indispensable. A one-day distance pigeon should also be able to win the sprints easily. A crucial component, that will allow an athlete to excel at the middle distances, is a good oxygen supply. My ideal model for a one-day distance pigeon is one that has a broad chest containing a pair of large lungs. This can cause the bird to be somewhat out of balance in flight. Attaching a pair of wings with a short forearm can solve the in balance problem. This will cause the bird to be lifted somewhat higher when flying; and is an advantage, especially with wind ahead. At speeds faster then 1600 m.p.m. the opposite may be true, it could be a disadvantage. How many one-day distance races are fought out at speeds this high? The type of bird we have describe above, predominate on my loft and have competed against the top competition very successfully over the last decade. You have to realize that dominating performances in a specific area are always the result of a specific type of pigeon combined with outstanding management methods. Nothing else.

1.06 Building Our Own Strain

The concept for developing your own one-day distance strain was laid out in the last chapter. Each distance specialty from sprint racing to two-day distance racing requires its own specific type of pigeon. The necessary characteristics especially the most important characteristics will have to be studied intensively. Muscles, intelligence and character are in my eyes the most important qualities that increase the ability to perform. As long as these characteristics radiate from our pigeons the birds will deliver top performances. How do you acquire pigeons that have a sufficient amount of the necessary characteristics to perform at your chosen distance? An even more important question is: Can they easily pass these characteristics easily to the next generation(s)?



"Black Magic" achieved eye opening performances on National races from Orleans and Chateauroux. Both times in real pigeon weather. He is a son out of "De Schone(direct out of the foundation pair "Het Boerke "x "De 150 hen") paired to a pure Houben hen I obtained from Bart v.d. Kuilen from Barneveld. He is a full brother to my "De Zwarte Baron" (father of the 1st National Etamps) and half brother to the cock of the "Gulparret"(Golden Pair) of John Engel and Arne Porsmose.

I acquired the right birds merely by chance. In the middle seventies when I began to heavily inbreed my old De Smet-Mathijs strain, I did not contemplate racing the one-day distance races with them. The first cross with a different strain was with the Janssen Bros. strain and was meant to improve mine at the sprint and middle distance races. Consciously I always chose pigeons that could fly more kilometers, than I had any intention of racing. The reason for this was that I hoped this quality would ensure I would not easily lose birds on races around the 400 km mark under difficult weather conditions. In the years from 1978-1984 my successes at the sprint and middle distances could be ranked with the best in the Netherlands for that period. Till 1982 when the "Goede Jaarling (Good Yearling)", rung with band number H82-448368, was born. As a young bird he was my best. As a yearling he become the 2nd National Ace Yearling in the Vredesduif competition. As a two year old he began to play at flying first prizes, with ease. I want to emphasize, "play at", because he lost them playing, lollygagging and roof sitting when he arrived home. One race only 100km long against a large entry he sat out seven minutes. It nearly drove me to despair, I tried everything but nothing helped. As a three year old he sang the same song. I decided one day it was time to punish "De Goede Jaarling". Surely he had earned it. He was entered in a race from Etampes (475 km). It was one of those race days we all dream about: warm weather and wind ahead. Again

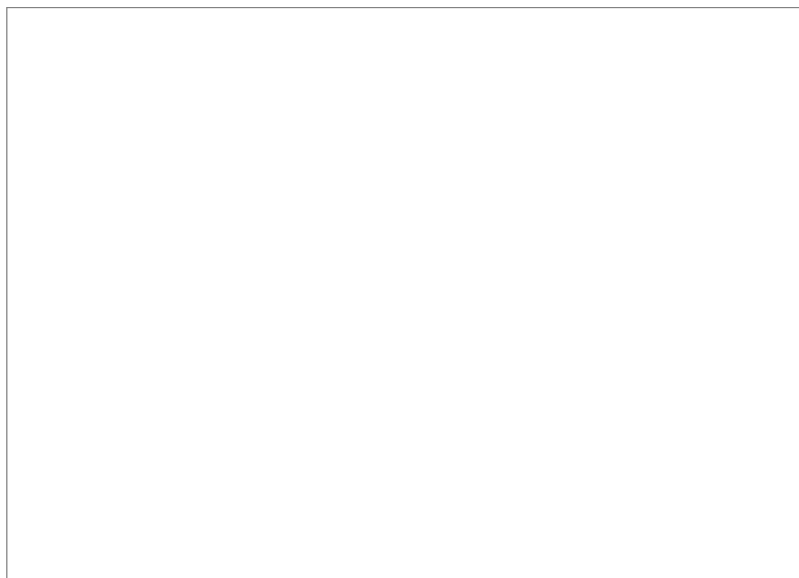
the "Goede Jaarling" played the same game. He flew seven minutes ahead and through his normal lollygagging, roof sitting and chasing neighbourhood pigeons around, he managed to enter the loft in time to win the race with one second to spare! In the Kring Hilversum he was too strong for the rest of the 1488 other entries in the race. Fourteen days later he was entered in an easy Orleans (535 km) and after 9 minutes of roof sitting he decided to visit his hen: 19th against 1506 entered in the race. Two weeks later we had a Chateauroux (635 km) on our schedule. Again hot weather and head winds. This was the first time he looked like he had to work to get home and had almost reached his limit. He trapped immediately with the help of a dropper I had set out for that purpose. He flew eighteen minutes ahead of the 8139 pigeons entered in the NABvP concourse. In September of that same year, he managed to fly ahead of 974 birds entered in a regional Dourdan (470 km) by seven minutes. It was becoming clear to me that I was in the possession of an extraordinary pigeon whose qualities had to be tested in the breeding loft. It was clear that this pigeon could do much more than fly the sprint and middle distance races. Now it was time to analyze which characteristics he had that were important for breeding on. Especially the reason why he could easily fly ahead by minutes and why he had the stamina to maintain this lead, had to be analyzed. Fixing these in his offspring was something worth striving for.

Like so many other outstanding pigeons in the history of the pigeon sport, the "Goede Jaarling" was also a product of cross breeding, but an special product. His father "De Bels" was the result of an inbreeding program based on the world famous "Oude Klaren '46" owned by Valere De Smet-Mathijs from Nokere Belgium. "De Bels" has in his pedigree the 4 grandparents are 4 grandchildren of the "Oude Klaren '46". Strongly inbred, especially when you consider that the Smet-Mathijs birds were already strongly inbred themselves. "De Bels" was no slouch, in 1978 he was the best sprint pigeon in our Kring and national he would have placed 4th if his boss had sent in the results. His mother "De 646 Duif", was descended for the main part from the Janssen strain via Jan van Erp from Hilversum. "De 08 Duif" that I purchased from Jan was the first Janssen pigeon I had obtained specifically intended to freshen my strongly inbred De Smet-Mathijs family. Her first son was the H77-990312 sired by my "Kapoen". This light cheque cock flew 7 first prizes against large competition plus two first provincials. He placed in the first 4 National Sprint Ace Pigeons, three years in a row. In 1980 he was National Ace in the Vredesduif competition. The "312" had three brothers that didn't take a back seat to him and regularly beat their world famous brother home. With these results we are talking about a successful crossing combination. Because "De 08 Duif" produced pigeons that could fly out front with several other partners therefore proving she had super breeding value, I mated two of her offspring together, a half brother and half sister, in order to fix her special genetic makeup. The mother of "De Goede Jaarling", "De 646 Duif" was a product of this pairing, which was made with the intention of increasing the crossing effect. Therefore "De Goede Jaarling" was brought into this world as a result of a deliberate breeding plan. The inbreeding on the side of "De Bels" was also consciously increased. Mated to "De Rode Duivin" who like her partner had 4 grandchildren of "De Oude Klaren '46" as grandparents, "Het Boerke" was produced in 1978. "Het Boerke" was paired to a full sister of "De 646 Duif", "De 150 Duif" and again, a home run. The red pigeons in my loft all trace back to this pair.

This was how my two base lines were created. Genetically they are almost identical. There direct offspring are able to dominate on races from 100 to 700 km. How do we proceed from here? That's the hundred thousand dollar question.

1.07 Preserving Our Own Strain

The type of pigeon developed out of the crossing of my old inbred De Smet-Mathijs family with the offspring of "De 08 duif", who had many of the famous base pigeons of the Janssen Bros. in its background, were as good and as nasty as I had imagined they would be.



"De Fijnen" is an inbred cock out of the Janssen-08 family. As a young bird he was part of the wonder team that scored 1st through 11th against 3000 birds in the Kring Hilversum on an extremely hard race. On the breeding loft he became a fantastic producer. His son "Magic Orleans" won in one year 3 times 1st against large entries. His daughter produced for Willem de Bruijn in Reeuwijk "Het Nationaaltje" de Best National Young Bird in the WHZB competition in 1997.

As a result of an iron strong frame they come home from most of the tough one-day distance races with few signs of being tired. This was a characteristic of the old strain of Valere De Smet-Mathijs. In their glory days these birds could take on any distance including Barcelona. Birds born in the lofts at Nokere, like the one flown by Opsomer-deMerlier from Maarke-Kerkum winning first International Barcelona, come to mind. For the shorter races they lack pure speed, this also shows up on the longer races that are fought out at high speeds. "De 08-family" has added two qualities: muscles that are extremely supple and swell easily and an extremely short forearm. These two characteristics make it possible for a pigeon to fly fast and keep it up for a long time, even into the wind. The short forearm enables the bird to fly closer to its line with a side wind. Many times fanciers are surprised when I again place a bird in the first 10 National with an unfavourable wind. I blame that above all on the selection for a short forearm over many years. A long forearm makes the wing stroke take place further from the bird's body. When a side wind blows against this type of bird they have a difficult time staying on their ideal line home, they arrive home from the wrong direction. We all know when this happens, they are too late, they flew to many kilometers. Headwinds also have a negative influence on pigeons with a long forearm. They cannot complete the wing beat completely. Wing and body do not form a streamlined whole. They are not completely aerodynamic. The headwind blows between the wing and body constantly because this type of bird has a space between the wing and its body. When beating its wings the bird constantly tries to bring the wing back to its body. This results in the pigeon losing speed and exhausting itself. A long forearm only has an advantage with tailwinds. Such a wing carries more air because it has a larger surface area and often is scoop shaped and round. The muscles we encounter on wings

with long forearms are also longer and their contraction takes relatively more exertion than shorter wing muscles. Watch the pigeons fly around the loft. Which birds make short turns in windy weather and gain speed easily when danger threatens? Watch and compare.

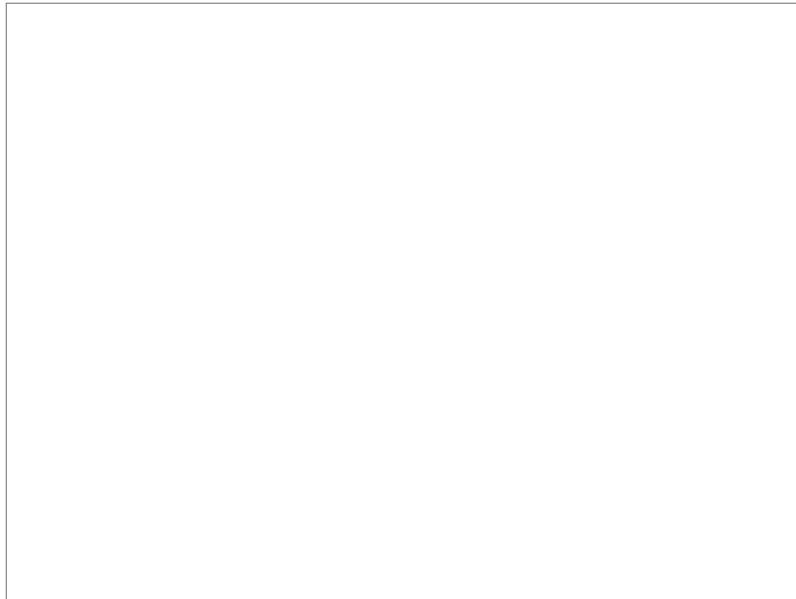
One and all radiate intelligence from their "face". On the loft they appear quiet and get along well with each other, but they all have a personality and have a mind of their own. Despite his many years of experience, Peter van Raamsdonk has difficulty getting good pictures. While most Aces willingly pose for his camera, these won't sit still for a moment. They want to go home at any cost and anything that prevents them from doing so makes them restless. Peter often has "sweat on his brow" before he is satisfied. The characteristic willpower or "mordant" is closely linked to the above. It can also be seen in a pigeon that is difficult to hold. Many fanciers don't like these wringers, for me it is an absolute essential. Whatever the cost, get home!! Gerrie Knetemann one of the best bike riders in our fatherlands history said it best "win or die trying".

We now have a pigeon that has few weaknesses. The results show this in black and white. Naturally we want to preserve and fix them through breeding. The best method for doing so is inbreeding. This special genetic package should be concentrated and fixed.

I have seen this method destroy many so-called strains. Often after one generation you can see the overall degeneration. Piet de Weerd said "a strain can stand inbreeding" and he was right! A guiding hand is required to ensure that when selecting, many differences are brought into the family, only in their race results do they show their sameness, that's how close together they arrive home. This gives us a better chance to concentrate the genetic package without losing quality. This is where craftsmanship comes into play; this is the real art of breeding. It is something that can occupy your mind, day in and day out. It can wake you up in the middle of the night, just for a minute to write down the perfect pairing, so we don't forget the next morning!

1.08 Perfecting Our Own Strain

Perfecting my own strain has kept me busy for many years and I have to admit that it has been a diversion that has given me many hours of pleasure. This is a life long passtime and will never end. We study pictures of pigeons in the papers, what is their expression like, do they have strong eyes or are the washed out, what type of wing do they have? Studying and analyzing race results, taking into account the wind, the loft location and the drag. Using all these to evaluate the worth of the pigeons we are considering. Perhaps we have now found a loft that races extremely well, but will these birds improve our own if we bring them in.



"De Bonte Jaarling" is a late bred and was bred specially for the breeding loft. He is a son of "De Goede Jaarling"(son of "De Bels" x "De 646 Duif") with "De 776 Duif". Both "De 646 Duif" and "De 776 Duif" are products of inbreeding to the Janssen-08 family. He proved his genetic value on the breeding loft. Five of his sons placed in the first five on National one-day distance races. "Arne" the National winner from Altona for Arne Porsmose and John Engel is his grandson.

If you want to perfect your own strain then you have to know the defects and shortcomings of your own birds. Every loft will have some needs: need for more intelligence, need to perform better in bad weather situations, need for more speed, need for more muscle quantity and better muscle quality etc.

Now we will visit the loft that has caught our attention. The pigeons are naturally what we are interested in, although we have to pay close attention to details such as the loft, training methods, feeding methods and the fancier himself. Some people can get top performances from somewhat lesser quality birds because they have an excellent loft and have perfected outstanding management methods. These and other factors have a direct influence on the performance levels of the birds we are interested in. I pay attention in particular to the quality of the birds that I am interested in bringing into my loft in order to improve the quality of my own. Are the best birds closely related to each other? Do they breed well with various partners? Do they breed well for several generations? How many generations before the quality begins to fall off? These are the most important questions. If you are looking for a particular quality and you have found it, then it is important that it passes on easily. Otherwise you will hurt the quality of your own strain that you have worked so hard to establish. You

have to analyze the potential acquisitions. If these pigeons indeed have the required good characteristics in sufficient quantity and don't exhibit too many bad qualities or weaknesses, if these are indeed the birds I have been looking for, then I will attempt to acquire some of them. The first year the new birds are on my own loft I breed them together. This way I can study them carefully for a year and get a better understanding of their qualities and characteristics. I will also learn something very important: how they react to inbreeding. Often the results are disappointing. That is too bad because this type of pigeon can only be blended into your own strain and can't be used to establish a separate inbred line. This would have the advantage of having a cross for our family that can be used after several generations, they can be held in reserve, ready if needed. After 20 years this trick still works well for me using the offspring of the "08 Duif" combined with my old De Smet-Matthijs family. These are ideal pigeons to bring into your loft. But, where do you find them?

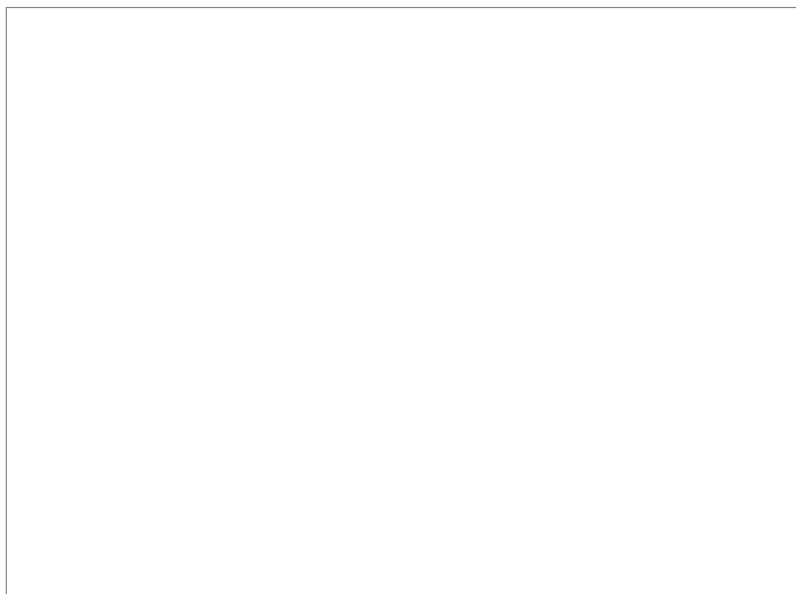
Inbreeding resulted in the two lines on my loft in acquiring, in my eyes, a somewhat too thin or fine an appearance. The ideal one-day distance pigeon to my taste needed to have more lung capacity. At the total sale of Gerrit van Maasdijk from Wijchen in December of 1986, I came across an exceptional hen, that I named "Het Schoon Blauw" (Beautiful Blue). She alone is responsible for that little extra endurance in my strain when the going gets far and tough. Her type is found back in National winners from Chateauroux in '92 and Orleans in '96 on my own loft and the winner of National Gottingen in '95 for John Engel from Haderslev and the Kings Cup winner from Chiangray in '91 for the Bros. Pilunthanakul from Bangkok. However all forms of inbreeding till now have let "Het Schoon Blauw's" extra qualities slip through my fingers like sand. But, every once in a while it reappears like a ghost from the past.

During that same time period I purchased 6 pigeons at the total sale of A. van Riessen from Lippenhuizen, who got his foundation birds some twenty years earlier from the Bros. Willequet from Kwaremont. During overcast and rainy days these birds performed well on one-day distance races for Van Riessen, these races were flown by the birds played to the nest, in other words "naturally". I knew this strain because I had visited the lofts of the Bros. Willequet and had studied the photos in the books written by Piet de Weerd. De Willequet's van Riessen were ugly pigeons and the inbred youngster I produced were sometimes even uglier. For many years I kept them separate from my own family, because I expected they would have to great an influence on the appearance of the next generation. Then the Bros. Pilunthanakul crossed them and it seemed to really catch. The Van Breemen's and the Willequet's produced in Thailand several Aces and National winners. I have to admit that sometimes mistakes are made. The first combination of these two lines on my own loft easily won Orleans in the Kring Hilversum. The type and appearance of cross was not that bad and stayed close to my own families.

Sometimes the crosses are not as successful as we expected. In January of 1987 I bought two Tournier birds bred by the loft of Pieter Beerda from Ter Idzard. As usual I paired them together the first year to see what inbreeding them would produce. The first year they gave me the Best Young Bird in the National Competition "Wie Heeft Ze Beter". The second year they produced the 2nd National Orleans against almost 28,000 young birds. Their offspring I attempted to cross into my own strain, without too much success. They arrived home from the races without any effort and seemed to have lots of energy left. If I had wanted I could have raced them further. It was only because the over-night long distance races did not appeal to the boss that they weren't tried there. Eventually almost all of this Tournier line was transferred to Thailand, where they made history on the very hard races from Me Sai (Burma) 850 Km. Again we make mistakes. Perfecting one's own strain is far from easy. But, in the meantime we have made several successful crosses. How do these birds fit into our breeding concept?

1.09 Blending in the successful cross

You have concentrated top breeding material. You have made the first successful cross. The cross has produced what you consider an almost perfect type of pigeon and has delivered several outstanding races and breeders. You have concentrated these genes even further and you know that if you continue with the resulting offspring you can almost automatically produce top results on the racecourse. The advantage of having birds that can withstand inbreeding is that they can be used in the race loft and the breeding loft. But results on the racecourse will lessen. You are competitive and want to keep getting top class performances. You search out the pigeons to cross with your own. You luck out and get a very successful cross. Now the question arises: How to proceed further?



"De Orleans Lady" in 1989 won first National Orleans for John & Cor Vonk from Nigtevecht. She is a daughter of the foundation pair "Het Boerke X De 150 Duif". After her sensational win she was moved Leeghwaterstraat in Hilversum where she was put into the breeding loft. She was very successful. She bred a super breeder for Karl-Heinz & Jurgen Maydeck from Grevenbroich Germany and a red hen that helped Willem de Bruijn earn top ten successes in WHZB competitions and on the one-day distance races.

We all understand that it is not difficult to book success crossing two inbred lines. The pure Janssen pigeons showed this throughout the world. But we are concerned with maintaining and preserving our own high levels of performance. Usually the lucky and what may seem to be a successful crossing recedes in quality in the following generation. How can we prevent the degeneration of quality in the succeeding generations? It's very difficult. You have to search for better or at the very least the same quality in order to perform at the same level. What is even more important is that the new material does not modify the foundation material too much. It has to provide an additive effect. This is the difficult part. We have to find pigeons that have that bit extra and easily pass on that bit extra. This little extra also has to be preserved after a generation of inbreeding back to our foundation pigeons. It is only then that we have brought the successful crossing into our own strain.

We should blend the successful crossing with a partner inbred to our foundation, an inbred partner showing all the good characteristics present in our family. In the fall of '92 I chose a late youngster out of an aviary containing 40 youngsters at the lofts of Daems & Zoon, Bevel,

Belgium. It was a daughter out of their National Bourges winner. I paired this hen in the fall of '93 to my "Bonte Jaarling", an inbred son out of my foundation sire "De Goede Jaarling". Their son H93-2353516 the "Magic Olympic Grizzle" was a fantastic racer. He earned the right to compete in the Olympiad in Utrecht, Holland. He became the 5th best in the world in the All-round Class and was the world's best yearling. Nationally he became the 2nd Ace in the one-day distance and 2nd Ace General in "De Vredes Duif" competition and was the Best Pigeon in the NPO one-day distance category. His brothers such as "De Witkop" (won the 4th National Orleans and two weeks later won the 2nd National Bourges) and "De Wittentik" (won the 5th National from Chateauroux) also knew how to find their way home. On the above races the best fanciers had sent the cream of their lofts, entries averaged about 10,000 per race. You can confidently assume that you have a successful cross when these types of results are obtained and you can start thinking about how to breed these successful crosses back into your family. I paired a full sister to the above-mentioned brothers to a half brother of her father "De Sturen" who was a son of the wonder pair "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw". Their son "De Jonge Sturen" had to compete against "De Jonge Baron" (a son out of the full sister to "De Bonte Jaarling", "Yearling's Blue Lady") for 1st National Etampes, ending up in 2nd place. Together they were 9 minutes ahead of the rest of the competition. They did the same thing for the Danish fancier John Engel. He came to get a son out of "De Bonte Jaarling" with that little hen from Daems and paired to a daughter out of "De Klaren II" (also a son out of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw") and "Tosca" (a daughter out of the "De Bonte Jaarling"). A son out of this inbred pairing earned for Arne Porsmose, John's partner, in two weeks, two 1st prizes Provincial against thousands of pigeons. One of these was good enough to make him 1st National; he had a gigantic over flight of 200 km. You can understand why I did everything in power to get this wonder pigeon for my breeding loft. He soon showed that he had breeding value.

These are examples of pairings that I usually use to blend the successful cross back into my own family. Pair as close as possible back into the foundation line. This gives you the best chance that the new material will not change the characteristics of your own family to any great degree. But I have to admit that it does not always work out as well as the above example.....

1.10 Reproducing excellent breeders

In the winter and spring we breed birds for the race team. In the summer and fall we breed breeders. Concentrating the genetic material of your best breeders must never be overlooked! We use inbreeding to concentrate these genes. When I plan my pairings to breed for my race team I generally use three variations:

- a) Straight crosses using an inbred bird out of my own family with a strange pigeon.
- b) Bringing back a successful cross as closely as possible back into my own family so that my own blood is about 75%.
- c) Pairing this "three quarter" (75% own blood) to a bird showing sufficient vitality out of my own family.

We can confidently race all young birds bred out of these pairings. If all the other circumstances are in order they will deliver the required results.

If you follow the order as above (a, b, c) in your breeding, after a few years you will have build a good family, without having to use inbreeding. By inbreeding I mean close pairings such as, father and daughter or mother with her son. These types of pairings are meant to fix the extra genetic material of a super breeder. I want to emphasize: a super breeder! Inbreeding means the fixing of characteristics. That goes for the good characteristics as well as the bad characteristics. The motto for inbreeding therefore is: Inbreed only when you have in your possession a super breeder

Usually I make these close pairings in July or August and I observe the resulting youngsters for a considerable time before I use them on the breeding loft. It is enormously important that this breeding material be stringently selected for their quality. If such an inbred bird shows that it possesses good breeding qualities we can consider inbreeding further to the original super breeder. But this should only be done in exceptional circumstances, these circumstances have not yet occurred on my loft. This makes me wonder about fanciers who have gone that step further in their breeding. Frequently you have to conclude that these pairings were made purely for technique without any real reason or value and have resulted in lofts full of pigeons out of these closely inbred pairings. What is the worth of all that effort?????

1.11 What do we mean by line breeding?

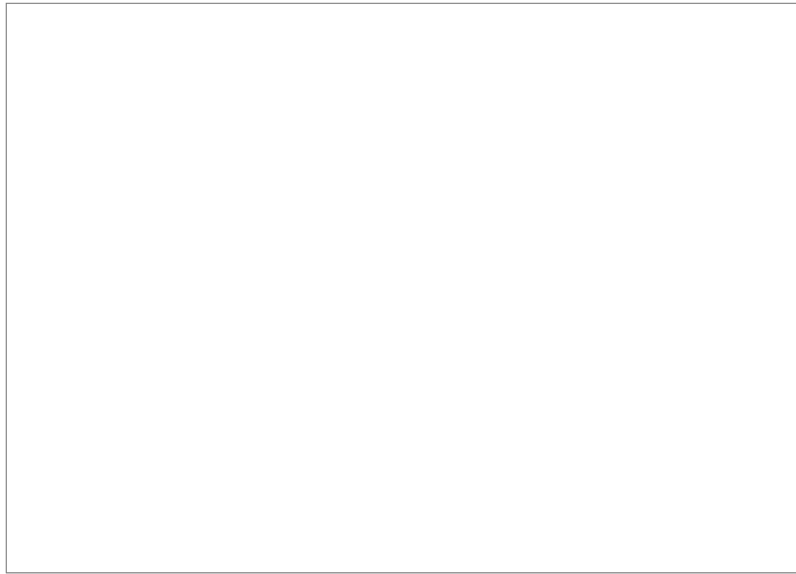
In the last chapter we talked about reproducing extra breeders. The inbred material was in turn crossed with foreign birds, which we expected would add something extra to our family. That's if the pairing clicks. If that is the case then we bring the crossed material as close as possible back into our own line, so that the outstanding characteristics of this line will dominate. This is actually line breeding. Although in my example we are crossing our own inbred material with a pigeon from another loft, from a totally different family. Actually line breeding is the breeding of related pigeons within our own family using other families with the purpose of multiplying the extra genetic material of a super breeder without interference of the genes from the cross.

On my own loft I began in the mid 70's with the genetic material of "De Oude Klaren'46" from Valere Desmet-Mathijs and concentrated the genes through repeated pairings of nephew X niece. From these pairings I developed a line: "Het Boerke". His father "De Bels" was crossed with "De 646 Duif" an inbred hen out of my Janssen family base on "De 08 Duif". This cross produced another base pigeon "De Goede Jaarling". He turned out to be a completely different type of bird than "Het Boerke" and became the second line within my family. Both lines were successfully crossed with inbred offspring of "De 08 Duif": line number three. For many years I have been able to pair these three lines with each other with success. I do feel strongly though that if I keep breeding this way for a long time that all three lines will strongly resemble each other. That will result in less vitality and the resulting race performances will decline. The conclusion therefore is: that we cannot only work on keeping our family as pure as possible, but we have to watch that the level of our performances is kept as high as possible. The three lines on my loft are regularly tested against the clock, again inbred and the offspring brought into one of the other two lines.

Line breeding is a technique wherein we must strive to seek the middle way: the pigeons must keep performing and should be bred as close as possible within our family.

1.12 We're producing many good pigeons. Now what?

Once we have fixed this firmly in place we are a long way down the road to success. We have a loft full of pigeons and good ones besides, but this results in a very large problem: we become lost amongst all those good pigeons. In the Netherlands we know of this phenomenon through the success of our soccer players internationally. We call it the "Ajax problem", that is to say, too much of a good thing. Ajax solved their problem by selling many of their good soccer players to teams in other countries and gave their own, so to speak, "breeding" a chance to play on the first team. This worked splendidly for many years. The team performed well and they lacked for nothing financially. In 1996 this system showed its weak side. No top players were produced and they could not compensate by buying in talent from other countries to fill the holes.



"The Golden Tigre" is a pure Tournier-v.d. Hoek pigeon I obtained him from the champion partnership of Enne & Arie Dijkstra from Buitenpost. He raced near the top on National races from Munchen, Bergerac and St. Vincent. This cock was obtained not only because of his racing abilities but because he could add something extra to my own family, extra kilometers and his unusual type and colour. He produced 2 provincial winners and his grandson "De Kleine Grijze" was 6th National Ace pigeon on the one-day distance races. He flew 7x prize on the first page of the National one-day distance races.

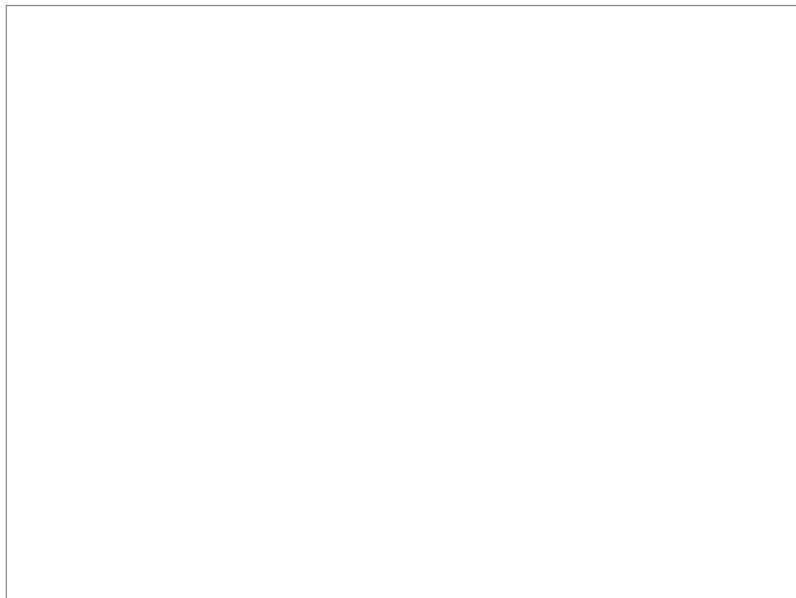
The same thing can happen to us in the pigeon sport if we are not careful. What we can do is get some of our own breed back from fanciers who were successful with our own pigeons. To bad that it can't work for Ajax in same way.

Once we conclude that our loft is full of good material then it would be smart to move some of these birds to another loft, but with some forethought. The lesser "side lines" have to be separated from our "main line". Such a "side line" should be "transferred" in its entirety to another loft, one that is well managed, with a vision similar to ours, but with an environment different than ours. This way these "side lines" get a chance to develop and if they are successful we can obtain some of them to again breed back with ours. These will be pigeons that in large measure have some same genetic makeup as our own family. This type of material usually clicks very well with our own. Usually it only involves getting one pigeon back and we avoid all the original problems when we started.

Actually this example of "transferring" a "side line" is also a form of line breeding, even though another fancier is doing the line breeding, but still within our own family. We can keep the birds on our own loft within the limits we have set for ourselves. This is what we are attempting to do without losing anything. Another example of line breeding within our own family is the following. Mathew Rakes from Bristol (England) several years ago purchased a daughter of "De 151" x "De 646 Duif", therefore a half sister to "De Goede Jaarling". He paired this hen with a cock (a Stichelbout) he had obtained from Emiel De Weerd, Kortemark. This pair quickly showed that their breeding value: a daughter won 1st National and a son was 4th they won a shiny new car for their boss. I asked Mathew Rakes if I could get something out of the DeWeerd X Van Breemen pair. Even though it may sound strange, bringing birds like this back into our own family is also line breeding.

1.13 Line Breeding and Crossing

Line breeding as a breeding method is meant to preserve specific characteristics and traits of our family without having to breed too close. If we keep breeding within the same family without introducing fresh blood from another family, then the sporting value of our family will fall off step by step. When this happens then the solution as we all know is to cross our family with unrelated birds from another loft. The preference is to cross with pigeons with which the owner has also practiced breeding within the family. If you cross with a pigeon that comes out of many combinations of crosses, then we can never predict the results. If you choose to cross with a pigeon that comes from a loft with good performances and the owner also gives the necessary thought to the breeding of his birds, then we know a little more of what to expect, as far as the genetic qualities of these birds are concerned, they show a great deal of similarity. Now comes something very important: if you have success crossing with these new pigeons, then you will almost always have success with the same cross in the future. If this is indeed the case, then it is sensible to develop a new family in our own loft. It is important to study them closely. Study them on the loft where the original birds were obtained and on our own loft. Study and compare to see if we have not changed them too much. If we have not, then in the future we can count on successful crossings.



"De Bourges Duivin" comes from the loft of father and son Daems from Bevel (Belgium). It is the full sister of their Bourges National winner. The same cock flew four years in a row in the first 10 National on the same Bourges. "De Bourges Duivin" together with "De Bonte Jaarling" proved to be a formidable breeding pair. Five of their sons flew in the first five National!!! She also became the grand mother to the National winner from Altona for John Engel & Arne Porsmose in Denmark.

Naturally we cannot keep crossing the same two families. Eventually the crosses will not work anymore. This means that we have to again search for new genetic material that will fit into our plans. The new pigeons should be bred closely within the family. They have to click or fit with the lines we already have on our lofts. If this is the case we can consider ourselves lucky. In the future these lines have to be paired alternately with each other. If we subsequently keep each line as distinctive as possible through the use of close or more distant breeding within the family, then we can make use of the same successful crossing combinations far into the future. A particular pair, if they produce good flyers, can be left together for many years. After 8 or 9 years these proven pigeons can be closely bred back into the family and we can again use the closely bred offspring to advance for many years. We should not do this too soon or else we will

have a loft filled with breeding pigeon in no time. After a few years we still won't know the real value of such a combination.

On my own loft I don't follow the above exactly. I have a number of families in which I have preserved their own distinctive characteristics:

The line of "De Goede Jaarling" (the line of "De Oude Klaren '46") is a line of short blocky pigeons with strongly pigmented brown or gray eyes.

The line of "Het Boerke" (the line of the red half sister to "De Oude Klaren '46") is a line of rough bony birds with yellow/brown eyes.

The line of "De Slimme" (the line of "De Oude Rosten" the half brother to "De Oude Klaren '46") is a line of quite small weightless pigeons with expressionless eyes.

These lines as you may have noticed are all closely related to each other; nevertheless they are quite different in appearance. Besides these lines I have the line of "De 08 Duif" a pigeon originating from the Janssen Arendonk strain. This line has pigeons with short forearms and tremendous explosive muscles, muscles with quality as well as quantity. When this line is crossed with my other lines it produces pigeons that easily fly minutes ahead of thousands of pigeons from short or long distances, from Strombeek (160 km) or from Cahteauroux (650 km).

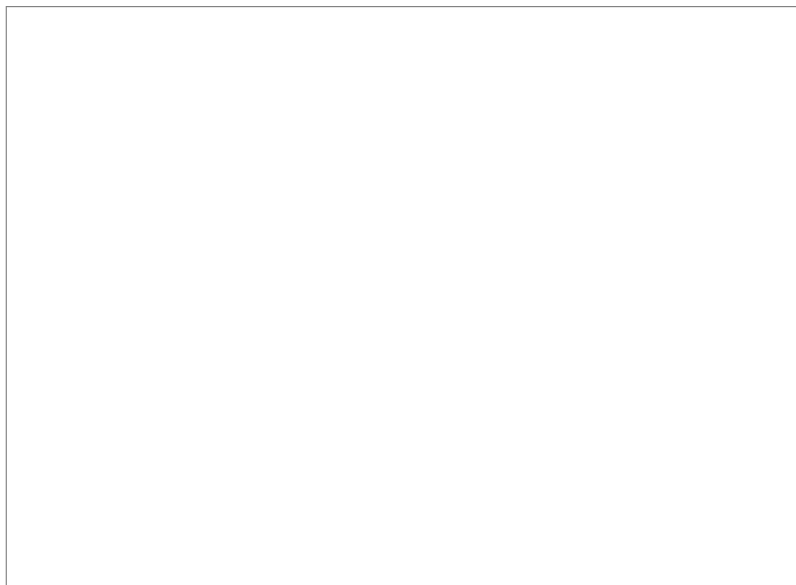
These families cross enormously with each other and afterwards can again be brought back into their own lines.

I also search for specific crosses for each line. They not only have to be super pigeons but their families must also have produced other provincial or national winners and/or have produced national ace pigeons. It goes without saying that such pigeons must have the necessary additive characteristics in abundance.

I constantly search everywhere for such pigeons. This is how I attempt to increase the value of the additive characteristics of the base line and to keep the genetic material fresh. When I look at the breeding and racing performances of my loft over a long period of time then I must conclude that this is not a bad form of line breeding!

1.14 A small loft, few pigeons. Line breeding?

As you can understand from the previous chapter, where I explained my breeding methods using 4 lines, I keep quite a large number of breeders. You can also bring a small loft of pigeons to a high level of performance using line breeding. When breeding with a small number of pigeons it is very important when selecting birds for breeding, to pay particular attention to the additive characteristics: character, intelligence, speed and the quality of the muscles (the ability to successfully race over a specific distance). Before a bird from another loft is brought in to our own its qualities must be studied and weighed thoroughly. It is these additive qualities that can improve our loft. Vitality is automatically improved with the addition of foreign blood to our gene pool. If it clicks then vitality is an extra that we get for free. The best material is brought back as close as possible into the core or nucleus of our own family. It should be clear to everyone that we must use only the best material to breed back into our own family. To use anything else makes no sense, as it will only lower the sporting value of our own pigeons. At the same time we have to make sure that the birds maintain good muscle quality and that their richly coloured eyes are not watered down. In this manner we can maintain a top loft for a long time with very few pigeons. Piet de Weerd formed the Jan Aarden strain using only a handful of pigeons. My loft was built the same way. There is only one common thread: constantly study the good pigeons so that the feeling for them does not slip through your fingers.

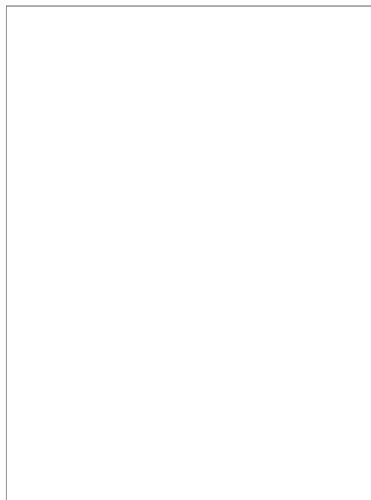


"The Boerinneke" is a direct daughter of my foundation pair "Het Boerke" X "De 150 Duif". "The Boerinneke" is an outstanding breeding hen. She is mother of pigeons such as the "Magic Mealy" 3rd National Ace Pigeon One Day Long Distance, "De Vooruit" the super racer for Peet Kester from Honselersdijk, who won first five weeks in a row and "Gisele". "Gisele" is again mother to 4th and 7th National Ace Pigeons One Day Long Distance and four cocks that scored in the first ten National on One Day Long Distance races.

In the line breeding method mentioned above we can see that the successful introduction of strange blood is essential. All other breeding methods require the same thing. It is the foundation on which all our future racing successes in the coming years are built on. But there are other ways to success.

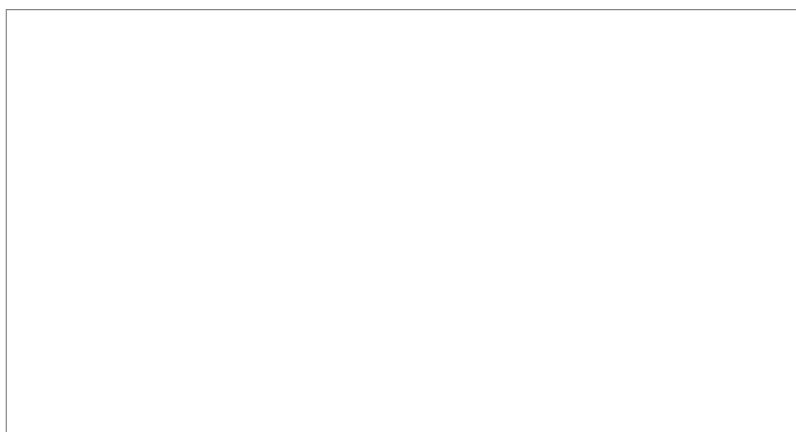
Several years ago I lectured on breeding methods in Tampa Florida, in the U.S.A. At the end of my lecture one of the attendees came up and complemented me. He invited me to come out

the next day to see his methods of breeding. After several hours flying and a car trip of almost 8 hours through the desert and over some hills we finally arrived at his hacienda in Uruapan located in western Mexico. This trip came to me as a great surprise. Maurice Jemal had begun years ago with a handful of extra quality pigeons from Albert van der Flaes. The master of selection, Piet de Weerd, had selected these birds for him. Maurice has bred from these same birds and their offspring for many years; no other birds were ever crossed into his family.



Mauricio Jemal

The original birds were no longer there and had been gone for quite some time. I noticed that the generations in his pedigrees followed each other quickly. Sometimes there were as many as three generations in one year. He was of the opinion that in a loft where the emphasis is on breeding then the generations should follow each other quickly otherwise something is not right. If a loft is bred around a few ten-year-old pigeons that says something of their breeding value: it is not that great. The climate in which Maurice Jemal raised his pigeons along with his management methods ensured that the young pigeons were sexually mature at an early age. He made good use of this in his breeding. His experience allowed him to select birds at an early age and this was done primarily with a magnifying glass with which he studied the eyes.



Piet de Weerd (middle) visiting the Janssen Brothers with some friends.

He worked with only a few cocks and with not too many hens. The base lines were bred to each other in rotation and as soon as a new star was born it was given ample opportunity to display its talents. He allowed the previous star to quickly fall by the wayside. His selection was always done, as it should be: on the additive characteristics.

I drew my conclusions quickly: this was a method in which through close family breeding the additive characteristics were kept at a very high level. The racing value of these pigeons was

not too high. In fact they were never raced. The breeding value was extremely high. Maurice Jemal's pigeons are known throughout the entire U.S.A. as the "Mexico-Janssen's" and are very much sought after. That I find very understandable.

1.15 Inbreeding

In the previous chapter inbreeding was mentioned often. It is a very useful method of breeding that ensures (when applied properly) that the genetic material of certain pigeons is concentrated and appears more often than that of other pigeons. The breeding value of our pigeons is increased providing we use the correct pigeons in our breeding program. Then we can keep the value of the additive characteristics at the required high level.



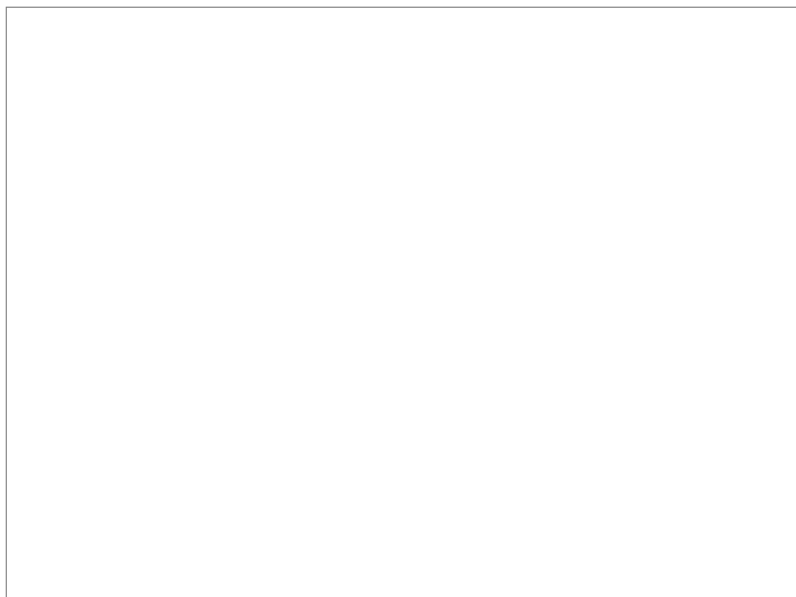
"De Etampes" is a direct son out of the wonder pair "De Goede Jaarling" X "Het Schoon Blauw". As a racer he scored a fantastic honour list. He was as a 2 year old the Ace Pigeon One Day Long Distance in the Distance Club "Gooi & Eemland". On the breeding loft he became the father of a long list of crack pigeons: the 4th, 7th, 9th, 11th Ace Pigeon One Day Long Distance National, plus a handful of sons that scored in the first 10 National, for example: the 2nd, 4th, 8th National Bourges, the 5th and 10th National Orleans and the 6th National Chateauroux.

We have to pay attention the degradation of other characteristics. We call this inbreeding depression. We all know that vitality lessens under the influence of inbreeding. If we are breeding pigeons to be used on the race team then the lessening of vitality is not very useful. But with correct knowledge (think about Maurice Jemal from the previous chapter) we can make good use of the resulting decrease in vitality. We can also note quickly which of the less desirable characteristics are present. Pigeons having these are quickly culled. The inbred pigeons are often not as nice looking and on the small side. Inbreeding does not affect the additive characteristics, if we have paid attention!! I want to make it clear that if you want to make use of inbreeding then you have to have more knowledge than with most other breeding methods. This is the main reason that most fanciers don't want anything to do with this breeding method. Inbreeding can deliver many obstacles.

Still the fact remains that all of the world famous families of pigeons were developed with the use of inbreeding. Jan Aarden (through Piet de Weerd), Valere Desmet-Matthijs and the Janssen Brothers are the most famous examples. Most pigeon fanciers use cross breeding. We all know how difficult it is, using only this method, to stay at the top. You are very dependent on luck. Surely this means it is not a very safe method for building a successful family.

1.16 Is inbreeding the same as family breeding?

The many practitioners of inbreeding often apply these two breeding methods in a different manner. As racing pigeon fanciers our breeding methods have as a goal the raising or at the very least preserving the sporting value of our birds. If this is indeed the case and we make use of family breeding, then we breed further within our family and no foreign blood is introduced. The relationship of the pairs is kept as far apart as possible; otherwise a diminishing of vitality will appear. After all if we want to race the offspring they will need endurance and resistance.

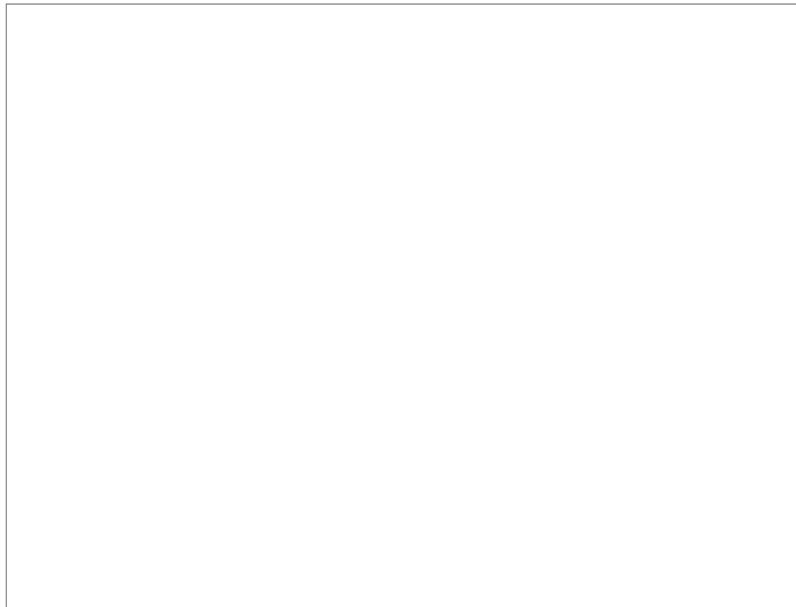


"De Grote Jaarling" is a son out of the wonder pair "De Etampes" X "Gisele" a combination of the base lines of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Boerke". Brothers and sisters of "De Grote Jaarling" were all fantastic racing pigeons at their specialty, the one-day distance races. After his top season as a yearling "De Grote Jaarling" along with his brothers and sisters was moved to the breeding loft.

Inbreeding goes much farther than breeding relatives as far apart as possible. We are inbreeding when a particular pigeon appears several times in the first three generations in the pedigree. We only do this in order to fix the qualities the outstanding pigeon has demonstrated. Inbreeding will not develop new qualities. This means that our base bird or birds must be of outstanding class. They must show top quality in the characteristics of the additive group. From this we can conclude that we only use inbreeding as a breeding method as soon as we acquire excellent pigeons. Only then can we take inbreeding out of our toolbox. It is clear that all the historic big names in the racing pigeon sport used a carefully managed inbreeding program as the base of their success.

1.17 The disadvantages of inbreeding

In the last chapter I discussed the fact that inbreeding brings about a lowering of certain characteristics. This can generally be noticed in the vitality of the pigeon and in the other characteristics in the non-additive group that are closely connected to it: the endurance of the pigeon and the qualities that bring about form. The scientific term for this is inbreeding depression. In other words: inbreeding depresses or reduces the correct action or efficiency of certain characteristics. The reason for this depression is found in the fact that relatively few genes influence these characteristics. The logical conclusion is that these characteristics are the first that react to inbreeding with a reversal. If definite symptoms quickly appear in the same family when only light inbreeding is practiced, then it would make sense not to use these birds in an inbreeding program.



"De Jonge Baron" won in 1996 the 1st prize National from Etampes. He arrived together with his cousin "De Jonge Sturen" (both were bred out off a child of "De Goede Jaarling") who won the 2cnd prize. Both of these cocks flew 9 minutes ahead. "De Jonge Baron" is a son of "De Zwarte Baron" X "Yearlings Blue Lady". This is a combination of the basis lines of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Boerke". His nest mate a hen also won as a young pigeon the 1st prize Provincial from St. Ghislain against 6751 birds.

Professor Alfons Anker has this to say about it:

"If we take a row made up of 1000 pairs of non-additive genes as an example. The normal division is mostly 50%-50% of the homozygote and heterozygote pairs of genes. Through the use of inbreeding the total number of homozygote gene pairs will become greater than 500 and if we keep inbreeding, than that total could theoretically reach 1000. It speaks for itself that this is at the cost of the heterozygote gene pairs. The disappearance of the heterozygote gene pairs and the vitality runs parallel with the increase of the homozygote gene pairs and that is the result of piling up the genes of the pigeon on which we are inbreeding. If this pigeon is extraordinarily valuable then it is precisely its genes we are piling up in its offspring. This causes the vitality to disappear to a greater or lesser degree, but the breeding value becomes greater, and that is the reason we inbreed."

Every family reacts differently to inbreeding. When I began to inbreed with my closely related base material (these birds were based on the world famous "Oude Klaren '46" from De Smet-Matthijs) in the middle nineteen seventies, I could still win more than my share of prizes even after several generations of cousin-to-cousin breeding. This family of pigeons could tolerate inbreeding because the "Oude Klaren '46" was a product of a cross. When most of his the

Klaren's offspring were stolen, Valere DeSmet-Matthijs had no other option then to borrow good hens elsewhere. It was with the following generation that he began to inbreed. It was the manner in which Valere was forced to develop the first two generations of his family that conceals the reason these pigeons could withstand inbreeding so well. Inbreeding with a foundation bird, which is a product of inbreeding and out of a family that has been bred fairly close often has disappointing results. Such pigeons often react adversely to environmental factors such as dampness, drafts, cold, a poor loft, poor diet etc. Indeed if the loft accommodations are not optimal such pigeons become spent and are often culled.

I have always tested my inbred pigeons by racing them. My foundation cock "De Bels", the father of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Boerke", would have been 4th National Ace Sprint Pigeon if I had not forgotten to send in his race results. This incident strengthened my conviction that it had to be possible to achieve excellent breeding results with my best racers. On the racing loft and the breeding loft I work only with the most vital pigeons and very seldom inbreed closely and these pigeons I use only on the breeding loft. The Janssen Bros. also used this same principle, although because the race mostly sprint and middle distance their selection for vitality was somewhat easier. To keep the quality of vitality at the highest level in birds that have to race annually 5 one-day distance races successfully requires something extra. We will discuss this further in the chapter on vitality.

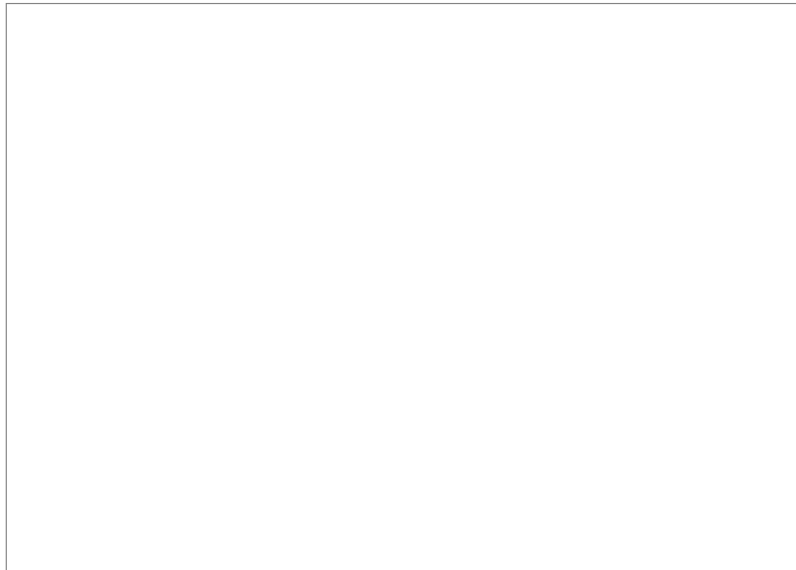
During my trips around our globe I have had the opportunity to hold in my hands many different pigeon families and to study them critically. It strikes me that pigeons from closely bred families react differently to inbreeding. Some fanciers can keep inbreeding for many years without a noticeable increase or decrease in quality. My conclusion is that they have long ago reached the end point. Their families have been homozygous for some time! Inbreeding increase the invisible characteristics, their breeding value increases. It does become more important to strongly select for racing ability. The problems become greater as the distances increase and the circumstances become more difficult.

My choice of the De Smet-Matthijs family of pigeons to help me succeed in the racing pigeon sport was well thought out. Valere De Smet-Matthijs had strongly inbred to one bird: the world famous "Oude Klaren van '46". Out of necessity. During the night that all his pigeons were stolen "De Klaren '46" slept in a wicker basket under his bed and this started the dance! It caused Valere to borrow several hens from his best friends, this meant crosses. After this he inbred, but because of the diversity of the crossed material he started with his birds continued to show a wonderfully high degree of vitality: they distinguished themselves in the races and later in the breeding loft.

These were the type of pigeons I wanted and breeding them in the same way was the appropriate way. The easiest way was to start with birds from the same family, and strongly inbreeding to the base pigeon himself and then search for outstanding crossing material. The crossing effect (hybrid vigor) would provide sufficient vitality for the birds to shine on the heaviest one-day races.

1.18 What is the most important conclusion we can derive from inbreeding?

We have learned that sooner or later inbreeding will cause a depression that will suppress specific attributes. It is important to know which attributes they are and to what degree this can occur. It can be most clearly observed in the following characteristics: the vitality of the bird, the endurance of the bird, how quickly the bird comes in form, how easily the bird stays in form, the fast growth of the youngsters in the nest bowl and the recuperation of the bird after a hard race. These are all characteristics that according to the theory formed by Prof. Alfons Anker belong in the non-additive group of characteristics. It is for everyone to understand that this type of pigeon can only be used on the breeding loft.



"De Klaren II" is a direct son of the wonder pair "De Goede Jaarling" x "Het Schoon Blauw". As a young bird he was a member of the dream team that scored 1st through 11th on a tough Orleans against 3000 birds. All 11 placed in the first 22 National against 25,000 birds. On the breeding loft "De Klaren II" has produced several good offspring.

The group of characteristics that form the opposite side are called the additive group of characteristics. Within this group are attributes such as intelligence, stubbornness, muscle quality and speed. Inbreeding does not have as negative an influence on this group of characteristics.

If under the influence of inbreeding one of the characteristics in the above named group of additive characteristics clearly becomes depressed, then we have to be very careful when using such pigeons for breeding. This means strong selection, otherwise we will quickly go downhill.

Each characteristic will be discussed in later chapters so that you will be able to recognize them easily in your own loft. You can use your new learned knowledge when breeding and enjoy the results in the races.

1.19 The different forms of inbreeding

When I made the decision to preserve the genetic package of "Het Boerke", one of my two base pigeons, for the future through the use of close inbreeding, I paired him to his best daughter "Het Boerinneke". This pairing produced two red hens that were very different from each other. One was coarse, powerful, strong-willed, had fantastic muscles and a beautifully coloured gray eye. The other one was exactly the opposite: small, lacked vitality and the eye colours were watered down. How was this possible?



"La Creche" is an outstanding long distance cock, obtained to add some endurance to my family at the longer and tougher distances. He is a descendent off the pure Aarden pigeons of Marijn van Geel. He obtained his performances on the longest distances to the top of Friesland. Many of his children and grandchildren flew near the front of the long overnight distance races. These are pigeons that are blessed with an enormous combativeness and will.

In principle each youngster inherits half of its chromosomes from each parent. The reason for the differences in the resulting two sisters out of "Het Boerke" lies in the way genes segregate when the chromosomes split. In a pairing the cock, the father, as well as the hen, the mother, bring with them their total chromosome package. When the chromosomes split they carry one half of the genes of each parent and the youngster gets one half of its genes from the father and one half from the mother. The interesting question is: after the chromosomes split which half of the genes do they carry? Which half do the youngsters get from each parent? These two questions explain why there can be so much difference between brothers and sisters. In the example one youngster (the weaker one) received more similar genetic material on the chromosomes than the other. In the case of inbreeding that can happen quite easily.

You now know more of the how and why it is possible to have so many differences between brothers and sisters. Sometimes you read in the pigeon publications about champion pigeons, which do not have any good sister or brother flying on the race team. Often the champion is the result of crossing two different strains. This makes it difficult to determine which of the newly acquired genes will remain after the chromosomes split. If the pairing is based on breeding within the family, then we will have a greater chance that the good qualities will be inherited by the offspring. Returning to that single top Ace pigeon without the good brothers and sisters, it should be clear that its parents certainly have the good qualities on their chromosomes. Otherwise they would never have been able to pass them on. The champion bird in the example is the only one that by chance received more of the good qualities than all the other brothers and sisters.

I think that in the future when you are planning your pairings on all those small and large pieces of paper just like I do, you will be more inclined to make greater use of breeding within your family (line breeding) and inbreeding. These breeding methods will supply a constantly richer source of good chromosomal material. The longer you persevere the easier it will become to breed good pigeons.

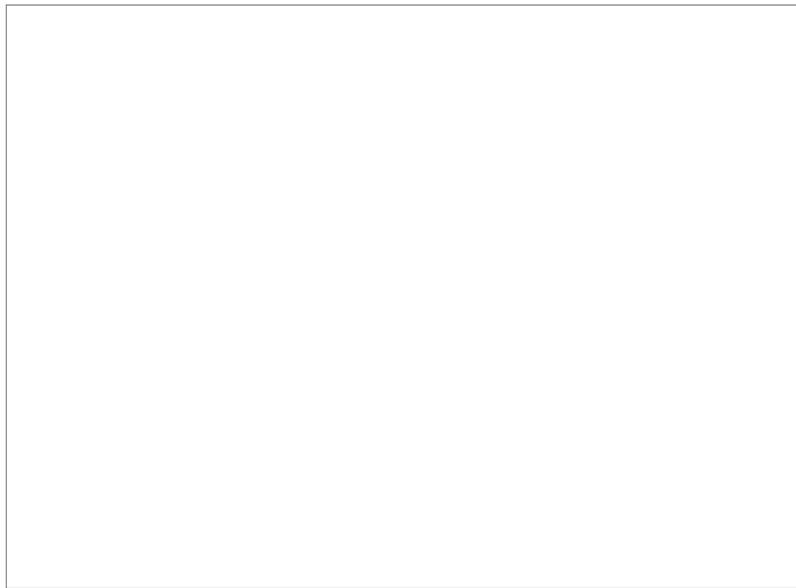
There are two ways of doing it. Close inbreeding and the somewhat wider or more distant line breeding. To explain this I will go back to the beginning of this chapter and the two very different daughters out of "Het Boerke" and his daughter "Het Boerinneke".

The one that appears somewhat more depressed can only be used for breeding and only for crossing. If we inbred further with it then we would perhaps begin to breed hens that would not easily lay eggs or maybe no eggs at all. This would require that we set up a separate breeding loft. With the more vital appearing pigeon we could go as far as racing it. We would not expect great results, but there are enough examples of birds such as this performing tremendously. For the small fancier without a large breeding loft the path to follow is line breeding in order to fix the good qualities and be able to recall them in the following generations. The chances of climbing a step or two higher on the ladder of success increase the longer we stay on this path. Indispensable on our path is the tool "strict selection". If the opportunity allows we should "breed large numbers" test them as much as possible and then use the tool of "strict selection".

In this manner the breeding of racing pigeons becomes more organized and manageable. Your family will regularly produce good racers and every once in awhile a super crack will appear. Other fanciers will find your birds useful for crossing and you can in turn regularly bring in a quality pigeon to cross in with yours and perhaps reach new heights in the pigeon sport!

1.20 How can we use inbreeding?

The title of this chapter asks the question: how? Inbreeding can be used in several ways. To explain it simply we'll divide the possibilities into two groups: close inbreeding and remote inbreeding. When we discuss inbreeding most often we are talking about closely related pairings such as a father with his own daughter, a mother with her own son, brother and sister and half brother and half sister. Each of the three named possibilities are regularly cited in the racing pigeon media and applied by racing pigeon fanciers. The intention is always the same: we have an outstanding breeder and we want to preserve its genetic material for the future. This is the intention, however each of the three possibilities mentioned above work in a different manner.



"Magic Blue Turbo" is one of many extra pigeons bred by the wonder pair "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw". As a youngster he became the 7th Ace pigeon in the Kring Hilversum and as a yearling won the 1st Ace pigeon One-day distance in the Fondclub "Gooe & Eemland". As a yearling he won 1st National Chateauroux 8 minutes ahead. After this he moved to the breeding loft.

The purpose of inbreeding is to fix the genetic material of a outstanding breeding pigeon for the future. The emphasis lies with "emphasis" on the word outstanding. Not just any pigeon that finds its way to the breeding loft is a suitable candidate.

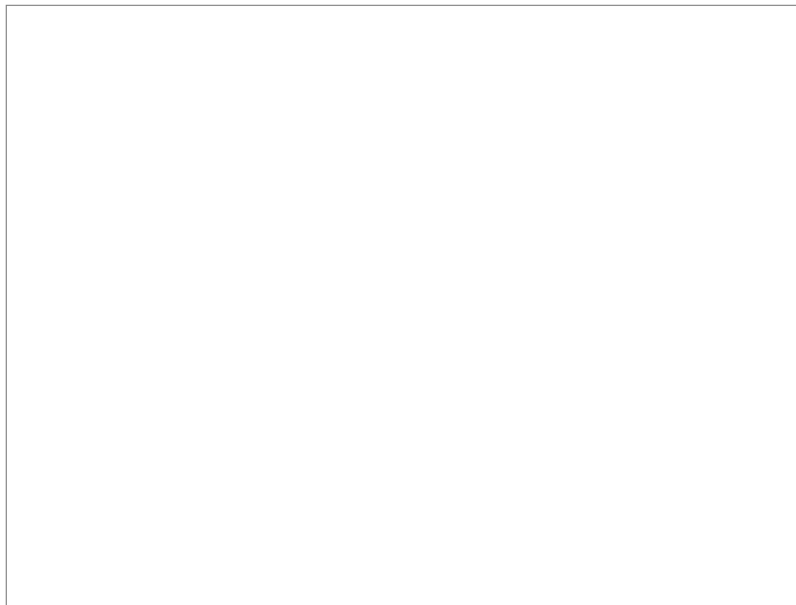
If we have this extra breeder in our possession then the best method is to pair it to one of its children. Lets use the example from the last chapter again "Het Boerke". If we pair him the his own daughter "Het Boerinneke" ("Het Boerke" x "De 150 Duif") then we theoretically get 75% "Het Boerke" ("Het Boerke" x "Het Boerinneke" ("Het Boerke" x "De 150 Duif"). This results in the concentration of "Het Boerke's" genes in his offspring. If we repeated this again then we would get: "Het Boerke" x ("Het Boerke" x "Het Boerinneke" ("Het Boerke x "De 150 Duif')). Now it is possible that the concentration of "Het Boerke's" genes is 87.5%. Theoretically we can keep repeating this till we reach close to 100%.

It is clear that when using this method that we can concentrate the genes of a super breeder in its children. When pairing brother and sister the results are quite different. The genes of the

super breeder will remain at 50%. It makes sense to use this method if both parents are from the same strain (family); if the parents come from different families (strains) then it makes less sense. When pairing brothers and sisters we are breeding towards both parents at the same time. In my personal experience it is always one partner of an outstanding breeding pair that brings in the most value. We will have to discover ourselves which partner that is. Until this becomes clear then pairing half brother x half sister makes much more sense than pairing brother x sister. Pairing half brother X half sister theoretically gives us; 50% super breeder, 25% hen or cock A and 25% hen or cock B. We have navigated our way through inbreeding: we know what to expect. We can strengthen our inbreeding even more if we have paired our super breeder to another hen or cock (C). From this we can deduce that it would be sensible to regularly repair a good breeder in order to preserve its genetic material for the future.

1.21 How do we pair?

This is a question that I am often asked, to which I usually give the same answer: it all depends. I'll try to explain. If you have a good family and you don't want to bring in other birds then you will not breed close relatives together. This works easier and better in relationship to the size of the flock, the larger the better. If you are a small fancier with few pigeons, then the pairing possibilities are more limited than if there is no restriction to the amount of space you have to work with. The fewer pigeons you have the faster the pigeons will become closely related to each other and that will cause a loss of vitality etc. If you are a small fancier, you will be obliged to bring in new birds sooner. If you are a larger fancier then you can keep your family in a larger line (read numbers). The close relationships will take longer to develop and there will be more possibilities to keep vitality in the pairings, because we definitely need vitality if we want to keep clocking at the top of the race sheet.



"Magic Olympic Grizzle" as a young bird and yearling earned a fantastic list of honours. He won the first prize from Bourges in Rayon 7 Middle Netherlands arriving together with "De Bourges". Both cocks flew 6 minutes ahead. "Magic Olympic Grizzle" could be admired at the Olympiade in Utrecht where he was declared the best yearling in the world. He is a son out of the super pair "De Bonte Jaarling" and "De Bourges Duivin" who produced five sons the flew in the first five in tough National one day distance races.

In both instances whether you are a large fancier or a small fancier it is important to preserve the good qualities. Pairing the good offspring to a close relative does that.

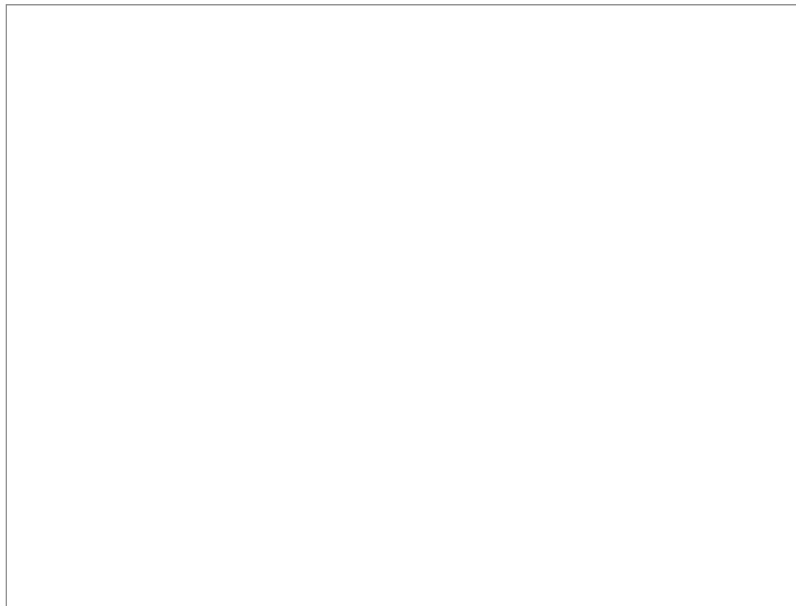
If you have an extraordinary breeder, then you must sooner or later mate it to a closely related family member, with its own daughter or with its own son. This is done in the fall purely to preserve the good blood, not in the spring because the type of pigeons produced are not usually suitable for racing. For competition we don't pair as close so that we keep producing the kind of birds that can be raced successfully.

I would like to give you a tip. If you want to develop your own family, then start with good base material. This will save you a lot of time. Start with a family that can withstand inbreeding. I have successfully stayed for decades with the family I started with, my old De Smet-Mathijs family. Time after time pairing close relatives with repeated success. In principle you should be able to do this without bringing in unrelated birds.

1.22 How should we select when using inbreeding?

When I am asked this question usually I also ask a question: Do you want to select pigeons for the breeding loft or the racing loft? If you want to achieve good race results then you will need vitality. We need pigeons that easily come into and keep form for a long period of time. These pigeons in general are not the inbred ones. They are mostly the ones out of crossbreeding, because this supplies a full amount of vitality. Vitality is what we need to have early pigeons on the race result every week. With pigeons that are bred from close relatives, we can also expect success when we race them; naturally the vitality will be somewhat less. This means we have to select carefully. Not all the material bred is as useful for the race team as the crossbred birds were, and that is what makes our job more difficult. Selection regardless of the type of animal we are breeding is one of the most important tools in any breeding program. But, the selection has to be done in different ways.

I presume that you understand what I mean when I write that crossed, line bred and inbred pigeons have to be selected in a different manner. It is important that you imprint the pedigree of the pigeon you are selecting in your mind and listen to the information that your fingertips and eyes are sending you. If you have some difficulty doing this then interpreting the race results of the pigeon we are selecting will also work. Did this pigeon earn a high percentage of prizes? Were the early prizes flown week after week? Did it fly well with wind ahead or only at high speeds with wind behind? Many fanciers select this way, although to become a real breeder we have to know much more. You have to study the characteristics one by one to learn what we can expect in the offspring. You have to know pigeons inside out. The longer you work with a particular family the easier it becomes. Understanding this total package is of crucial importance in developing a strain of pigeons that will produce good flyers and excellent breeders over a long period of time. It is totally in the fanciers' hands. It almost never happens by circumstance!



"Magic Orleans" is a son out of the base pair "De Fijnen" and "Jessica". Within a year he won three first prizes against large competition, each one well ahead. He was moved to the breeding loft as a yearling and became the father to birds such as the 3rd National Bourges in '99. He is a full brother to Willem de Bruijn's (Reeuwijk) fantastic breeder. "Magic Orleans" is a product of inbreeding to "De 776 Duif" out of the old base pigeon "De 08 Duif" a Janssen from Jan van Erp.

Now lets go back to the selection of inbred pigeons for the breeding loft. We have learned that inbreeding functions as a sort of piggy bank for saving the chromosomes of an extra breeding

pigeon. We have also learned that sooner or later the loss of vitality and the characteristics that go with it (regardless of the form of inbreeding we use) will be depressed when we inbreed. To keep it simple we will only discuss close inbreeding and that we want to use it to increase the desired chromosomes in our loft. This means the pairs of genes on the chromosomes will become more homozygous and that unmistakable will lead to a loss of vitality. When selecting we will have to keep this certainty in mind. Strongly inbred pigeons will show depression in characteristics such as vitality, that is a given. These pigeons are suitable for breeding and are not suitable for racing with. The selection of these pigeons is therefore totally different. When we in turn cross breed with these pigeons the resulting increase in heterozygous gene pairs will provide for a return of the vitality necessary for the offspring to perform well on the race team. This is also true for a breeding pair made up of two depressed partners of different origin. Inbred pigeons have to be selected for those characteristics that are influenced the least by inbreeding. These are the so-called intermediate characteristics. That is to say that each parent brings a portion of that characteristic and it is divided in two to be reassembled in the resulting offspring. It is the fancier himself through selection that determines the qualitative level of that portion. An inbred pigeon is not necessarily similar in direct proportion to the pigeon to which it is inbred. Of importance is the level of quality of the portions of the characteristics in a pairing brought together by the fancier. He must therefore constantly study the necessary traits and do so unceasingly.

In short:

Will and desire are closely related to the size of the pupil.

Character is often related to birds that are stubborn and strong wringers in the hand.

Endurance goes hand in hand with the quality of the muscles.

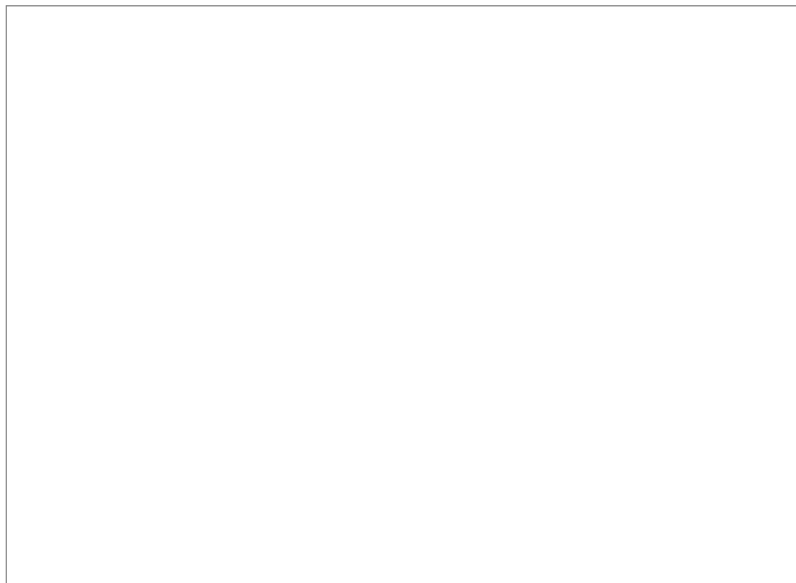
The facial expression, often the most difficult to assess, can be used to judge three characteristics: intelligence, will and character.

You will do well to study the chapters that follow on each characteristic, where each one will be discussed in greater depth.

1.23 Vitality returns when we start crossing

Pigeons carry genes. Good pigeons without question carry valuable genes. Every pigeon fancier does his best to preserve his quality pigeons and wishes to step into the gallery of famous fanciers that can attach their name to a strain. To preserve our valued genes we have several tools at our disposal: inbreeding, line breeding and breeding within a family. In the most favourable circumstances, through proper selection and suitable pairings, we can succeed in retaining the genes that were available to us. If we can do this we have achieved much. We can preserve attributes but it is not possible or almost never possible that new attributes will suddenly appear.

If we have a large number of pigeons with diverse families and the resulting differences in characteristics, then we can keep our racing performances at a high level for many years. But, if we have a small loft of pigeons then we will have to look for crossing material much sooner so that vitality can be retained. Vitality naturally opens the door to the top of the race results. Vitality as we have explained it in an earlier chapter. If we want to improve our race results, if we want to improve the overall quality of our pigeons, then we have to search for crossing material that will improve the quality of the important characteristics such as, character, mordant (will, stubbornness a fighting quality), intelligence, muscle quality etc. This means that if we learn and study all the facets of our sport and birds that we are constantly on the lookout for breeding material that will improve our flock. These preferably are obtained from fanciers that have brought the quality of their pigeons to a high level through the use of inbreeding, line breeding or breeding within a family and naturally race at the top of the sheet. We can expect good results when adding these birds to our breeding program. Naturally it still depends on having judged their value properly and that they will click with our pigeons.



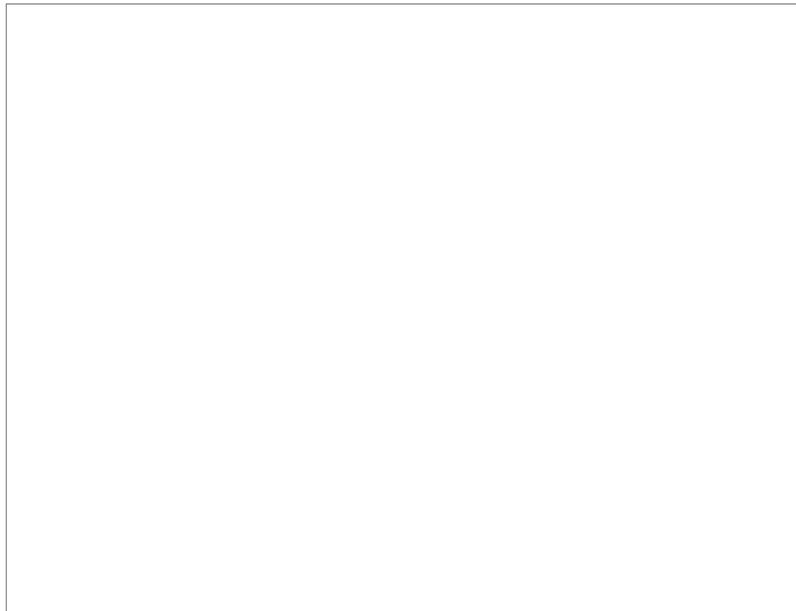
"Magic Whiteflight" top-notch racer. He is a product of inbreeding to the "Goede Jaarling" being bred out of one of his sons "De Bonte Jaarling" and "Het Asgrauw". He is a half brother of "Rijs" who won 1st National Orleans in '96 with a large lead. His full sister is the hen in the foundation pair of Jan Witteveen from Hilversum who won 1st National Orleans in '97.

We should be very careful when bringing in "strains" that have earned the label strain only because the owner had easy access to a good public relations publication. They use advertising gimmicks such as "look at all those beautiful blues" that's strain. Look how streamlined they

are, see those richly coloured eyes. You can tell just by looking at them that they belong to strain "X", the strain everyone is looking for right now. Often they were not even raced and no selection on the characteristics that are so important has taken place. They were only obtained because the strain was in fashion. Big demand means they will bring a good price and that attracts matter of fact business type people. Be careful when purchasing pigeons from the so-called breeding stations, especially when they themselves have not obtained good performance records with full brothers and sisters. You now understand why. The performance value is often minimum. But, if we have done our homework and studied the most important characteristics thoroughly, then it is possible every once in awhile to come across a surprise or two.

1.24 Why do we cross so often with different blood?

Youngsters bred as a result of a cross are best suited for the race team. This is something every racing pigeon fancier knows and that is why crossing is used so often as a breeding method. Under the most favourable circumstances a whole set of mediocre traits suddenly become outstanding traits, and the youngsters that carry them will make our dreams come true. You can already notice it when the youngsters are in the nest, one day they are too small and the next day you can barely band them: their development is formidable. They have an iron constitution and they don't easily get sick. You can see it every day on the loft, especially when they come home from a difficult race. You hardly have to treat in order to keep them in top condition. This is a direct result of crossing; in the field of livestock breeding this is known as heterosis. Everyone should understand that the above scenario does not happen in every crossbred pigeon. Some crosses result in our worst nightmares coming true and others seem to result in very little change. It all depends in how the lines fit. Sometimes you true to duplicate good results with brothers and sisters of the original successful cross and the results are not the same. This also happens. But, mostly the average result is quite high and we have to make use of the opportunity.



"Orleans Star" is a daughter of "De Zwarte Baron" and "Yearlings Blue Lady" thus directly out of the base of the Van Breemen strain. As a young bird she was an outstanding racer. She should have placed 2nd National Orleans but was scared by her boss as a result she lost many minutes. Her nestmate "De Jonge Baron" as a yearling won 1st National Etampes well in front of the rest of his competitors.

When I brought in the first birds for crossing the end result was 77 NL 990312. This extraordinary pigeon place in the top 4 short distance pigeons in the country 3 years in a row and in 1980 he was the top Ace Pigeon in the National Vredesduif competition. He also flew 7 firsts against large numbers, amongst them 2 first provincials. When racing if he didn't win first it usually was one of his brothers that beat him. Even if you're not paying attention, sooner or later a little light starts to burn: Hey! This is something special. I quickly repaired the mother of "De 312" several times with the intention of making future pairings of half brother X half sister. The offspring of his brother "De 411" paired to his half sister, twenty years later still provide with a lot of pleasure. My foundation cock "De Goede Jaarling" whose offspring have produced National first prize winners for 5 generations, was bred out of a daughter of "De 411" X "De 309 Duif". The crossing effect was replicated and the result was

the same, perhaps somewhat better, because, besides being a unique racer "De Goede Jaarling" was an even more unique breeder.

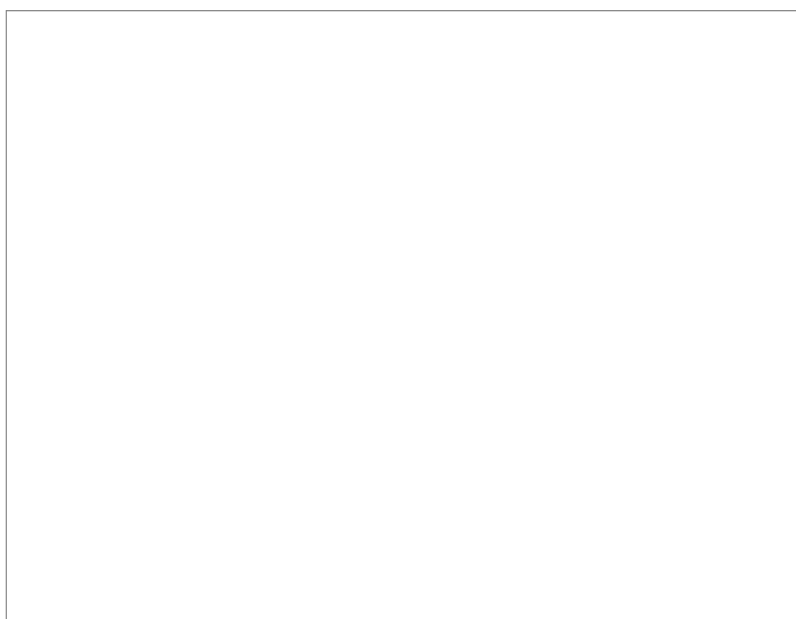
Specific lines of pigeons cross tremendously. It is generally known that the Janssen and the De Smet-Matthijs pigeons are two such lines. It came as no surprise that they crossed very well for me. The crossed offspring are bred back into the predominately De Smet-Matthijs line this allows another good Janssen to be again used as a cross. The crosses out of the newly inbred pigeons out of the line of the mother of "De 312" ("De 08 Duif") still produce great results. A crossed daughter off "De Goede Jaarling", "Het Asgrouw" was paired to "The Blue Diamant" and the result was "Riss" who was the fastest pigeon from Orleans in 1996 racing against 50,000 pigeons. National he won his Rayon against almost 12,000, winning his first prize 8 minutes ahead.

When a crossing combination works this well there is no doubt something special has happened. Specific pairs of genes are of such high quality compared to others that they tend to dominate. This is called super dominance or epistasis. This exceptional effect occurs only in very narrow circumstances. There are very few examples known where such repeated combinations work as well and produce as many champion pigeons. This must be very carefully cultivated, because success this often and this good requires a little more than mere luck!

In principle crossing produces an extra portion of vitality to the offspring. That is why everyone uses it so often. The pigeon press almost always reports extraordinary performances. It becomes very useful to study these results carefully. If a specific cross works well somewhere else, then it should also do so when we try it.

1.25 If a crossing works does it always work the same?

If only that was true! It depends on the traits of the two individual pigeons fitting seamlessly together. The traits of the parents have to blend together in a way that raises the quality of the offspring to an optimal level. If the value always averages near 50 then results are not achieved. If you can increase the value of a group of traits or characteristics of an extra pigeon, then we have gone up another rung on the ladder. For example if you can achieve $30 + 70 = 100$ then after meiosis (chromosomal division) we have 50 left. If we can achieve this in a few more birds then we can achieve results beyond our dreams, the cross has clicked!



"Riis" is another star out of the lines of "De Goede Jaarling" and "De 08 Duif" out of the Janssen lines. These lines have produced many outstanding performers. The "Riis" was bred out of "Het Asgrauw" a daughter of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw" paired to "Blue Diamant" obtained from the loft of Boegem-v.d. Laan from Hilversum. "Blue Diamant" was a pure Janssen-Van Erp, who as a yearling was 1st Ace in the Fondclub "Gooi & Eemland", as was his son "Riis" in 1999. "Riis" was then paired to "Orleans Lady", two National Orleans winners!

Often I attend sales where valuable pigeons are offered for sale, in order to analyze the characteristics of these pigeons, down to the bone, with my eyes and finger tips. Sometimes the computer in my head begins to hum and projects a partner in my mind's eye, one that lacks the traits that the bird in my hand has a surplus of. Such a pairing often works out well, sometimes in a special way and sometimes it doesn't work at all. What I am trying to point out is that you should always keep the strong and weak points of your birds in front of you. This should become automatic for each of us. Birds we handle that send us the right message, we should try to obtain whatever the cost. It should be just that pigeon, not one of its brothers or sisters that the smooth talking auctioneer tries to convince us is almost as good. It has to be that pigeon all the others are wasted money, time and effort!

I'll keep telling you the story till you get tired of it: intelligence, character, stubbornness and muscle quality that's what we need. We have to learn to recognize this kind of pigeon, even from photographs. This can be difficult, but it will save us time in the long run. Now you know: these traits are affected very little by inbreeding. Improvement is hidden in the manner we make up our pairs. We have to fit together particular traits in such a way that these same traits are improved in the offspring. If we have been inbreeding we will automatically get an

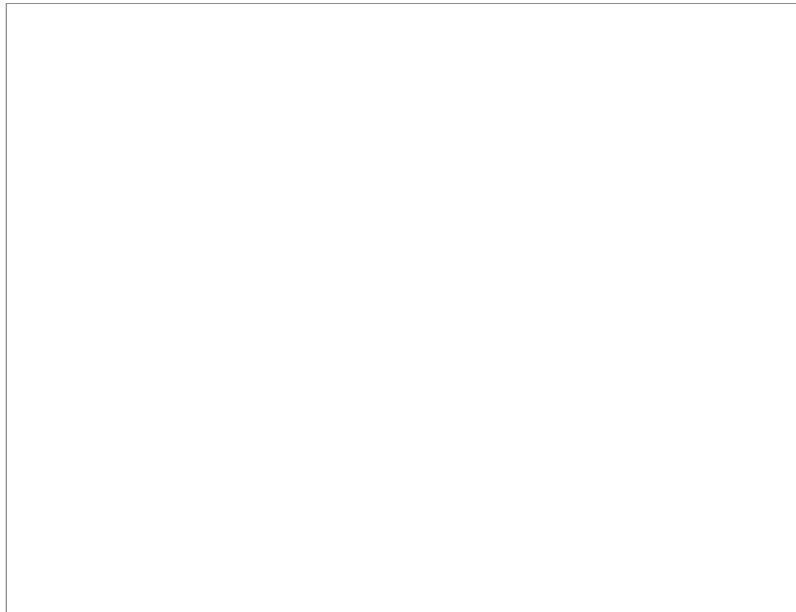
increase in vitality when we cross. That is a given. If we pair two Janssen pigeons together, then their youngsters will not race much faster. That is a waste of time. You don't gain anything and you don't lose anything. But, as soon as you pair a De Smet-Matthijs pigeon with a Janssen, then the offspring will be able to keep up the speed for a longer period of time and fight harder to win. That was my own starting point when I build up my own strain and that I succeeded should be clear to everyone. You have to have a picture of what your end result should be. Then you can search for the right ingredients, the additive traits. These traits and proper planning can make our dreams come true!

Let me return to the end result. Is important that we know our goal before we start. If you want to fly long distance, then you have to know what type of pigeon should predominate in your loft. They should weigh little. Every extra ounce they carry takes extra energy to stay aloft. They need simple muscles that don't use a lot of energy. They shouldn't have too much mordant (stubborn, strong willed, fighters mentality). This type of pigeon uses too much energy in the basket on the way to the race. But, if we keep pairing long distance pigeons to each other, then the following generations become gradually slower. We will have to bring in speed otherwise the performances will suffer, top performances for sure. You will have to be able to go elsewhere to select pigeons that are suited to your goal. If you breed too much character and mordant into your long distance pigeons, then they will fight too hard on a tough race and will run out of gas 50 km short of the home loft and their candle will be blown out. They won't be near the top of the race sheet and perhaps worse.

The same happens with short distance pigeons. If we select too much for speed and intelligence, in our attempt to dominate the speed races, then the pigeons will generation after generation slowly lose their stamina. A short distance fancier is therefore obligated every once in awhile to bring in a pigeon that can handle more kilometers. Here also we have to know what to bring in. We will look in the category where we often find the all round pigeons. These are the type we will need. These will not decrease our quality they only bring gains! Knowing in which traits we have lost ground and quickly replacing the lost quality that is how we stay on top of the game. Make sure you don't lose too much ground in the additive characteristics. These are inherited intermediately and that means the road back takes longer. Losses should take place in the non-additive group of characteristics. Losses in this group can be regained in one blow. It is a constantly repeating pattern in the pigeon sport: inbreed, cross, inbreed and again..

1.26 Inbreeding plays a significant role

You can rest assured that inbreeding does indeed play a very significant role. Once you have in your possession an extra special pigeons then the trick becomes to preserve their qualities into the future. Inbreeding is the tool that allows us to most easily achieve that goal. But, you do have to have a thorough understanding of the consequences of inbreeding. That is, it will result in breeding pigeons that show defects in the group of traits that are closely linked to vitality. You must realize that these are not the pigeons to cull. We must not expect too much from inbred pigeons if we race them. They are bred for the breeding loft and we should only breed them this way with that goal in mind! In the group of non-additive characteristics we will quickly notice a reduction in quality but it is this group where we can also quickly improve. Let's make use of them then, are they bred to be breeders? Then breed out of them!!



"De Zwarte Baron" was such an outstanding racer as a youngster that he was moved directly to the breeding loft where in his first year as a breeder he fathered the super breeder "Giselle". His father was "De Schonen" ("Het Boerke" X "De 150 Duif") and his mother was a Houben hen obtained from Bart v.d. Kuilen from Barneveld. He is a full brother to "Black Magic" who earned a 2nd and 3rd National and a half brother to the famous foundation sire "Guldparret" couple 5 belonging to John Engel and Arne Porsmose. "De Zwarte Baron" is also father to amongst others the 1st National Etampes '96 the 1st Provincial St. Ghislain '95 and of the mother to the 2nd National Ace Young Bird of Willem De Bruijn from Reewijk.

The other group of characteristics does not show any negative consequences of inbreeding like the non-additive group. First we have to make sure that we have the quality required in our loft. We have to have birds arriving from the race one right after the other. We have to dominate the races. Only then do we have the required quality on our loft. Only then can we begin even thinking about inbreeding. We can only begin using it when we have discovered a super breeder whose offspring have put their stamp on the race results for several generations. Only then, not one minute sooner.

Naturally that is what we all want. I don't want to lead you into a fairyland. I only want to

attempt to make you think. It will quickly become clear to you that progress will lay in the group of additive characteristics: intelligence, character, mordant, speed and the quality of the muscles. These we have to accumulate and hoard. We have to develop pigeons with as many of these characteristics as possible, always more and more. This means that we have to know how to select, we have to know something about breeding and we have to know how to pair our birds. This means we will have to do some studying and thinking. Acquiring this knowledge doesn't come easily! Every fancier can make use of this knowledge. There are very few excellent pigeon fanciers and the really good ones make use of every opportunity to learn.

1.27 What can inbreeding teach us?

We can fix the good qualities of our pigeons through the use of inbreeding. It speaks for itself that this should be done with good pigeons. It naturally makes no sense to inbreed with pigeons that lack quality. The more you succeed in concentrating and fixing the good qualities the more it will become more visible. The attributes in the additive group will increase at the expense of the non-additive group. Simple because inbreeding diminishes them.

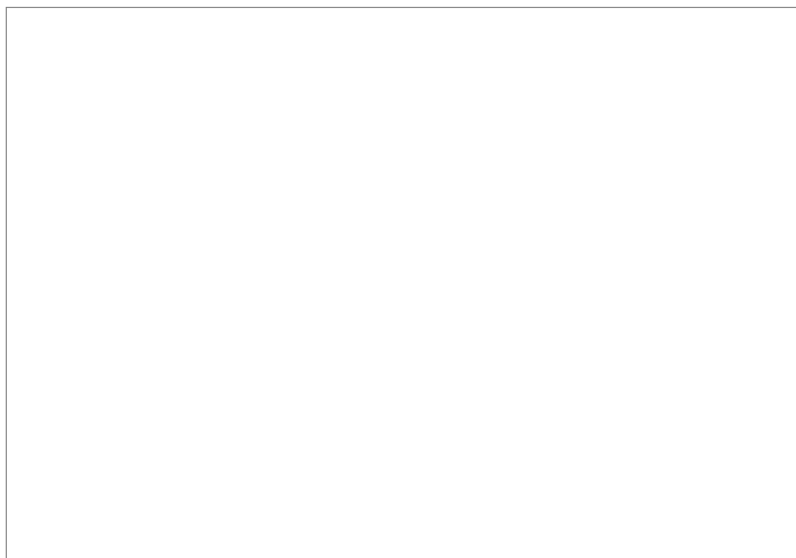


"Yearlings Blue Lady" is a daughter of the foundation pair "De Goede Jaarling" and "De 776 Duif" this means she goes 75% back to one of the best breeders in the Dutch pigeon sport "De 08 Duif". Her offspring won hundreds of races against top competition all over the world. "Yearlings Blue Lady" is a full sister of "De Bonte Jaarling" also a formidable breeder. She produced first prize winners with 5 different cock birds.

When I paired "He Boerke" with his own daughter "Het Boerinneke" they raised two daughters. One was big and robust the other was small and fragile. The small one often sits all hunched up and the robust one always shines and lays eggs by the bushel. These eggs don't all produce good birds. The small hen only lays an egg once in awhile, but what comes out of these eggs is always something special. Should we cull her because she only lays eggs when she feels like it? I don't think so. Clearly we don't want a loft full of birds like this, that wouldn't get us anywhere. We are obviously after the results she produces. The small fragile hen delivers a high percentage of quality when compared to her stronger nest mate and that is what the reader has to learn from this example.

1.28 Crossing always follows inbreeding

Intense inbreeding, as we wrote about in the last chapter, or any other form of breeding within the family will sooner or later result in increasing the uniformity of the birds in our loft. This is the first signal that we are on the down slope of the mountain. As uniformity increases chances of progressing by breeding within the line will markedly decrease. The longer we keep breeding within the family the more the vitality of our loft is decreased mirrored by our rapidly decreasing race performances. The solution is to bring in fresh blood. Crossing!!



"Arne" is the Altona National winner for John Engel & Arne Porsmose who had an over-flight of approximately 200km on their competition. He was inbred back to the base of the Van Breemen strain. His father is out of "De Bonte Jaarling" (Goede Jaarling) and the "Bourges Duivin" and his mother is a daughter of "De Klaren II" (Goede Jaarling) and "Tosca"(Bonte Jaarling). "Arne" proved his roots and quickly showed that he was also a formidable breeder.

Crossing is the only method that gives us the potential to increase the quality of our material. That is why the choice of the material we bring in is so important! We have to search for strange material, for pigeons where the traits mordant, character, intelligence, speed and the quality of the muscles are at the very least is as good as ours, but ideally it should be better. Therefore we have to search for pigeons to use as a cross, which after crossing in will bring our loft to a higher level of quality. We should no be easily satisfied when we are in search of our new crossing material. We have to constantly search for the very best. That is the only material that will help!

If we go about our business properly then we will have developed a feel, a perspective off our pigeons. This will have repercussion for our pigeons, in the way we select and pair within our loft. Pairing closely related birds will also lead to repercussions, in this case a negative effect. The good characteristics accumulate but vitality takes a step back. We have to be able to see this negative effect at the right moment and use an appropriate cross to again reestablish vitality within our flock.

I have always had a portrait in my mind of the type of pigeon I am trying to develop, a pigeon that can win under any and all circumstance from 100 Km up to and including races at 750 Km. Pigeons that can win in head wind or tail wind, under clear skies or cloudy skies, in dry weather or in rain that is what makes a complete racing pigeon. By trying to develop this type of pigeon I have given myself a very big problem. The problem, always increasing quality, which can only be solved by the use of crosses, increasingly becomes more difficult as the

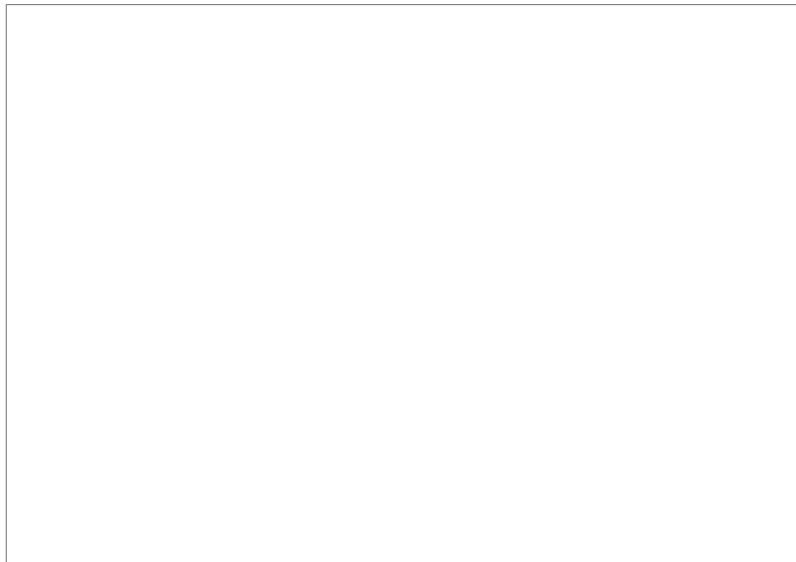
quality on my own loft gets better and better! This means I have to search for the best of the best, search for unique pigeons. Any others are just wasted time and effort they will only hurt the competitive qualities of the pigeons very rapidly.

If possible I only purchase proven breeders whose direct offspring have shown their worth on national competitions. In this way I acquired "Het Schoon Blauw" at the total sale of Gerrit Maasdijk from Wijchen, because her sire by racing hard, had earned himself a ticket as an Olympiade representative, because her children could compete with the very best at the provincial and national level. These are the white ravens and a chance to purchase one doesn't come along very often. Sometimes I take a chance on purchasing a fully mature young pigeon from a loft where close family members have performed at the highest levels. "De Bourges Duivin" I picked out of an aviary containing approximately 40 young pigeons at the lofts of Daems & Zoon in Bevel, Belgium. She turned out to be a full sister to their "Bourges man" who flew in the top ten positions National 4 years in a row. Her first youngster when paired to my inbred "Bonte Jaarling" was as a yearling the best in the world when he placed 2nd in both the National competitions for Ace Pigeon and One Day Distance and also placed 5th at the Olympiade in the All Round Class. What I am trying to say is that when we are at the top then we have to constantly search for the very best. We have to quickly walk away from a pigeon that has less quality than our own.

My exemplar Valere DeSmet-Matthijs did exactly the same thing. He was only satisfied with the best of the best. He collected "De Goede Zwart" from Gilbert Vandeweghe from Olsene right after he won the International Barcelona. This resulted in "De Kapoen". He obtained a sister to "Het Nootje" owned by Remi Spiers who lived in Leupegem, "Het Nootje" was the best pigeon in that district at the time. This resulted in "De Shonen". He did this repeatedly. The results were easy to read in the vitality of his pigeons. If the offspring from these new pigeons when crossed with his own, did not immediately provide a sufficient increase in vitality then they and all their offspring were ruthlessly eliminated. That is the way it must be done! Only by being thorough and ruthless in our selection will it be possible to stay at the top!!

1.29 If you want to use inbreeding or breeding within the family how exactly should we pair?

The basic principle has been explained several times. First the race results have to be of the highest caliber and these must be obtained from birds that can be traced back over several generations to only a few birds in our breeding loft. Only then can we begin to contemplate.....



"De Gebroken Slag" is a daughter of "De 151" who in turn is out of the line "De Slimme" and "Het Bruinoogske", the old line of "De Oude Rosten" the halfbrother to the world famous "Oude Klarne '46" Desmet-Mathijs from Nokere. Her mother is the fantastic breeding hen "Het Schoon Blauw". Her brother and sister as young birds were 3rd and 7th National Ace Young Birds in WHZB competition. Her sister, for Matt Rakes in Bristol(England) is mother to many top racers such as the 1st National Guernsey. Her son is the cock to the famous "Guldparret" pair 5 for John Engel and Arne Porsmose in Denmark who produced 4 children that as youngsters won 1-2-3-4 National Hanover.

Inbreeding sooner or later leads to loss of vitality. The quicker the physical attributes become uniform the sooner we are bothered by the lessening of vitality. If we can move that time just a little further into the future, then we will have the opportunity for several more generations to breed birds that can be used both on the race-course and in the breeding loft. If we have limited space to house our pigeons then this could be very useful.

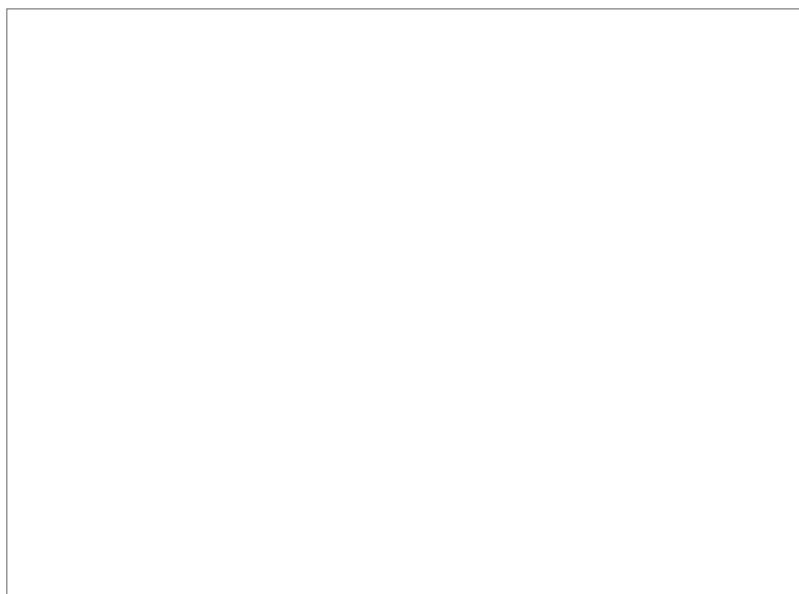
Pigeons that over a longer period of time are bred within a family often become very similar, similar in shape and size, similar in colour and shade of that colour. The first one: similar in shape and size is difficult to overcome. The second one: similar in colour and shade of colour can be overcome. That is where your starting point is of great importance. If you started with birds that originate from different lofts your job will probably be somewhat easier. Usually this means that you have birds with varied colour, the same counts for eye colour. You have to make skilled use of these variations. My experience has taught me that contrasting these when pairing can lead to a slowing of the deleterious effects of inbreeding.

We should try to pair with the aim of keeping our valuable blood together as much as possible in the pedigree, concentrating on inbreeding to one base pigeon. Further I try as much as possible to not have the same colours and eye colours present in the same pairing. Possibly my type of pigeon has always been able to withstand inbreeding very well, but perhaps this type of pairing has also helped in keeping the vitality in my birds. I have pigeons that possess an extraordinarily concentrated blood flow system as can be seen in their vitality. Breeding and racing value go hand in hand.

1.30 A pigeon fancier must read a lot!

To begin with every racing pigeon fancier should become as familiar as possible with the different breeding methods. That is the base from which we start. If he has taken all the steps along the way and has begun using the tools of inbreeding and breeding within his own family, then he knows crossing will follow. But, what type or sort of pigeons do we obtain to cross with our own? Before we take this step it would be wise to do a lot of reading.

Pigeon newspapers and magazines can teach us a lot. What we are trying to find out is what type or sort of pigeon we should chose to cross into our own loft. Sometimes we read that a particular crossing always produces good pigeons, we should put that away in the back of our minds for future reference. Naturally we could try something on our own; there is nothing wrong with that. But, would it not be clever to use something that someone else has already invented? Why reinvent the wheel? In our case it would be wiser to see if we can make it turn better. In other words we can use what has already been learned and try to improve on it.



"De Groten" is a cock out of the old Desmet-Mathijs foundation line. He flew a handful of first prizes and put his stamp on the breeding loft by producing several winners against large competition. He is also woven into the famous Scandinavian "Guldparret" pair 5 of John Engel & Arne Porsmose, which produced innumerable winners. In his old age he went into the breeding aviary of my friends Leo van Leeuwen & Hans van Grieken in Aalsmeer where he also produced winners for them.

In the fifties half of Holland had Delbar pigeons. At the beginning of the sixties when the Janssen strain was on the rise several fanciers began crossing them with their Delbar's. They clicked like butter and bread!! If we read in loft reports several times that such a cross works, then we have to imprint that on our brain, especially if we have one or more of the strains in our possession. Such a report should become a signpost for our breeding journey.

Nowadays everyone knows that the Janssen's are the easiest pigeons with which to cross. Because of their uniformity in appearance and descent they make an excellent cross with just about any other family they are paired with. Now that most of the architects of this fantastic strain of pigeons are with the Eternal, the value as a cross of the modern Janssen's is becoming noticeable less and good fanciers are diligently looking for other strains with which to cross. The Janssen pigeons have demonstrated that inbred pigeons result in the best crosses. That is the main reason that they crossed well with just about everything. If you buy a pigeon from a loft where the owner does not breed as intensively than the chance that a

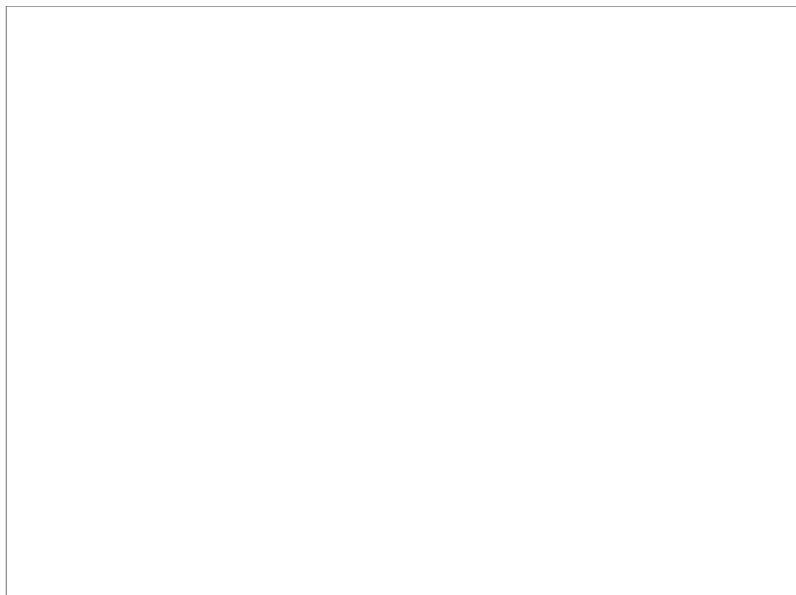
cross will work will be markedly less. Then we have to pay more attention to the individual qualities of the particular pigeon we bring in. With the Janssen's in the sixties you could do this blindly. Everything worked. When I had inbred my old DeSmet-Matthijs foundation family to the point where I was ready to cross I did that with offspring of the Janssen strain. That worked very well, especially with one pigeon in particular: "De 08 Duif". In her all the famous Janssen base pigeons flowed together: "De Oude Merckx", "De Geeloger", "De Bange", "De Oude Witoger" etc. They were pigeons that became world famous because their direct offspring made such fantastic crosses. That is also a quality that you can fix in your own pigeons. I have made sure that the extraordinarily valuable blood of "De 08 Duif" has been concentrated in the lineage of nearly all my pigeons. This makes them very well suited to serve as a cross with just about anything. Once in a while they fail as a cross, but most often they do not. This saves you the financial risk that you take when you purchase expensive birds to serve as a cross. Ensure that you have laid the foundation as skillfully as possible for these crosses. You can steer yourself in this important direction.

In fact it is doubly important because pigeons that are intensively inbred often have specific strain characteristics and often keep them after the cross. You have to watch that the pigeons you bring in don't have these same characteristics or have a particular characteristic that dominates. It is also important that you bring in a different strain each time. This will allow you to keep the specific attributes of your own strain and ensure that you are always ready to bring in a new cross and have a good chance of success.

1.31 It works wonderfully. What's the next step?

The fancier has done his homework well and his cross has been very successful. Logically the next step would be to attempt continue this success and repeat the good results. If we can repeat the success with the crossing then we can automate our breeding for continued success, therefore this is what we should aim for.

The cross has worked fantastically, but we have stop and ask why? All we have done is bring two pigeons together in a pairing. The degree of success depends on the value of the characteristics coming together, character, mordant, speed, intelligence and the quality of the muscles. Again, we see that familiar list. The blending of these characteristics has provided a unique combination that allows the offspring to play a dominant role against their competition. This doesn't happen often, but it does occur. In this case luck has given us a helping hand, but we can wait a lifetime for luck to bless us again. How can we give luck a helping hand? That's the answer we are looking for.



"Jessica" is the permanent mate to "De Fijnen". This pair is inbred to "De 776 Duif" who in turn is out of the world famous "08 Duif" out of Janssen lines from the late Jan van Erp, Hilversum. She was bred out of a full brother of "De Bonte Jaarling" with "De 111 Duif", an excellent racer who was bred out of the golden pair "De Donkere Supercrack" and "Het Ganske" belonging to Aart Greikspoor from Nieuw-Vennep. This pair helped lay the base of the fantastic loft of the De Wit brothers from Kouderkerk, Rijn. "Jessica" bred a long list of class pigeons, among them were the golden breeding hen for Willem de Bruijn from Reeuwijk and the "Magic Orleans".

Those characteristics on the list, that are so important in the pigeon sport, their pieces fit together perfectly just like a puzzle. That's a goal we want to achieve again. That's what we have to strive for. We know that inbred families combine very easily with other strains. The practice of inbreeding concentrates specific characteristics in these families. This knowledge gives us a path to follow. We have to begin inbreeding with both partners of the successful pair in order to concentrate those genes that combined so successfully. This we can achieve by close inbreeding in their individual lines.

After much thought I paired "De Kapoen" from my old DeSmet-Matthijs stain with a hen with a lot of Janssen blood in her veins "De 08 Duif". It worked wonderfully. Then I brought together

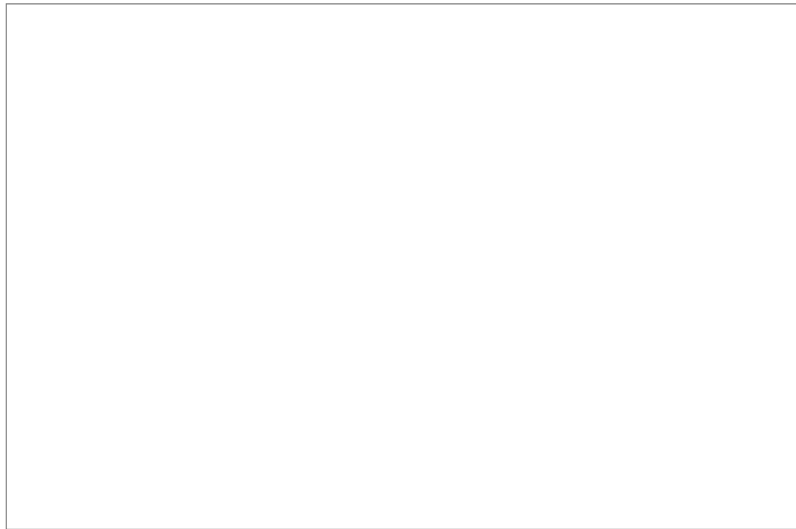
two children of "De 08 Duif" in a half brother and half sister pairing. Out of that pairing came two sisters. "De 646 Duif" I paired to an inbred cock out of my DeSmet-Matthijs family "De Bels" and this pairing resulted in a long list of quality pigeons from which "De Goede Jaarling" was head and shoulders the best. The other sister "De 150 Duif" I paired to "Het Boerke", inbred one generation deeper, he is a son of "De Bels". This again resulted in above average offspring. Their daughter "Het Boerinneke" also passed on her qualities readily. Subsequently what I did was to reproduce these outstanding crossing combinations and give lady luck a helping hand. In later generations I tried to concentrate the inbred blood of the "De 08 Duif" in the pedigrees. The DeSmet-Matthijs type is very dominant in the appearance of her line. It is clear that both types produce the qualitative pigeons that regularly can be used to cross with each other. I have profited for many years from the high degree of success of this crossing.

Something else that is important: this system frequently gives me both good breeders and good racers and regularly delivers an Ace at the national level. That is something I have done by design. When I looked at the history of strains that easily crossed, they were always strains where the architect of the strain used inbreeding extensively. If you inbreed too long then your strain will automatically lose their ability to race well. But the other side of the coin is that their value as breeders increases. Your brand of pigeons will become more attractive for others to use as a cross. They can increase the racing ability of pigeons on other lofts. If we think about the Bros. Janssen in Arendonk, then we know why. Who has not profited directly or indirectly from their work. In the Netherlands I would think that more than half of the pigeon fanciers have, and that is a fantastic achievement!

If you are fond of both racing and breeding, then plan your pairings in such a way that the results have a dual purpose. You should plan for some pairs that are crosses because these will most easily produce the best racers. In turn these good racers can be used to bring the quality of our own strain to a higher level. You would also plan some pairs that are related within your own family to each other. With their offspring you can both fly and breed. In the summer you pair some of your best breeders to birds to which they are very closely related. Their offspring you observe over a longer period of time before you introduce them to your breeding loft. Everything we do is done with a purpose. I don't very easily put a pair of pigeons together at a whim. Usually this type of pairing will water down the offspring to 25% or less of the original line, that is something we have to guard against. Everything should be done with a purpose. If a well planned pairing succeeds then we already know the next step. That's the only way! Often we will discover several successful pairings and the new line expands quickly. Which at first glance would seem like a good result. But it does mean that we will have to make some choices on our breeding loft: another line that has not developed as well has to be removed, and removed in its entirety. They have become ballast for us but they can help other fanciers to get ahead and by removing them we help ourselves raise the performance of our loft to a higher plane. This is often difficult to do if we are attached to certain birds, but regrettably there is no other way. We should constantly try to increase the good qualities of our flock. That is the only way ahead and selection plays a big role.

1.32 Cross, cross and cross again.

Most racing pigeon fanciers all too easily use this method of breeding. It is by far the easiest breeding method and it can lead to quick success. To me it most often appears that most fanciers are just fooling around without any specific goals or purpose in mind. If we are going to stubbornly cling to crossing as a breeding method then what points do we watch for to turn it into a logical breeding system?



"John" was a formidable racer for the loft of John Engel and Arne Porsmose, Denmark. He was bred out of "De763" a bird inbred to "De Bonte Jaarling" and "De 689" a daughter of "Guldparret" pair 5. "John" carries in his genes all the renowned base pigeons of the Van Breemen strain: "De Groten", "De Schonen", "De Gebroken Slag" etc.

All racing pigeon fanciers want to race hard and successfully and they want to achieve this goal in as short a time as possible. In order to achieve this goal they obtain pigeons from several fanciers and pair these birds to each other. That's the way it is usually done. Sometimes it leads to quick success but most often the results are disappointing. Why? It's easy to explain. The fanciers where the pigeons were obtained used the same breeding method. That's when it goes wrong! The pairings that they used were also based on crossing and good luck and if we attempt to do the same thing with their pigeons then the luck we are looking for often doesn't happen. When we purchase we have to think long and hard about what we want to purchase. The best lofts to look for birds are lofts where they are attempting to build a strain. The birds we obtain from these lofts can be successfully paired to each other. The chance that their offspring will obtain good results against our competitors is very good. It is best then to pair these birds to birds purchased from lofts where pairings are carefully thought out and breeding closely within a family is carried out. If we manage our breeding loft in this manner then we don't have to think too long and we can make use of the meticulous breeding methods of others. If you find this manner of managing your breeding loft appealing then I can give you some more advice. All your future purchases are best done from different lofts. Use different strains and with different characteristics. This will give you the best chance of successful crosses and will give your pigeons new qualities. It will make them a little more complete. That is a very high goal we can reach for even though this method has little breeding science behind it.

It has often happened in the past that similar "breeding methods" have led fanciers to reach unknown heights. You can devise as many plans as you want but in the end success is locked in the value of the genetic makeup of the pigeon. That is of the greatest importance. We have

to make well thought out purchases from lofts with high breeding capacity and we have to be strong selectors. These two points will ensure that the value of the traits on the famous list will be increased again and again. The strength of the successful lines we will preserve through the use of inbreeding and breeding within the family. Then the next step, another cross will more easily lead to luck.

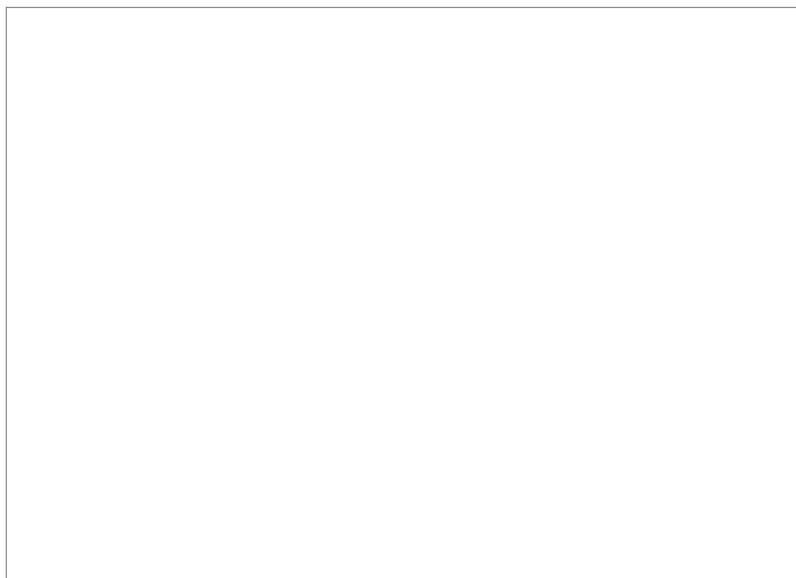
It you always base your purchases on the famous traits of intelligence, character, mordant, speed and muscle quality then you are always on the road to unlocking the breeding potential of your flock. These are the traits that are easiest to reproduce. If we purchase a youngster out of a pair that is crossed our chances of success decrease markedly. The success you may obtain could be based on the super vitality that a product of a cross will have and that is very difficult to reproduce. If you are planning to obtain birds from a top-performing loft then first study closely the pedigrees of his breeding pairs. Chose from his base birds. Chose from pairs where the blood, because of planned pairings close within the family, of his foundation birds was preserved. That is where you best chance of success will rest. Don't chose because of the success of children that are the product of a cross. This success will be difficult to reproduce and the results of their offspring will always average well below the value of the direct children of the original successful cross. Super vitality always disappears in the following generation!

The selection for the characteristics from the two groups, how does that work? We have to observe the pigeons over a longer period of time. That can be done best on the race loft. There they will have to overcome many different situations. Short races and long races, easy races and difficult races with headwinds and hear. We have to observe the condition of the birds when they arrive home from the different races. Naturally we are interested in the best pigeons. Do they always come home tireless, then that points to them having super vitality. Does you best pigeon come home from a difficult race just feathers and bones, then it had to fight to earn its early position. If such a pigeon recuperates quickly, then we can use it with the greatest confidence as a breeder. It has inherited more then the average of the traits that we can use as a foundation and build on further. Do I have to name them again?

Crossing is the most popular breeding method with most fanciers because it can very quickly and easily brings success. It has a low price in time and money. But there are several points we cannot lose sight of. The pigeon itself is one of the links in the chain of success. All the links have to be perfectly linked to each other: the loft, the training methods, the feeding methods and the captain that rows the ship and watches all the smallest details. If all these are functioning optimally then success will come. Crossing brings with it a surplus of vitality and that is the base for top performances providing all the links in the chain are strong. If we want our success to continue year after year then we have to observe closely. We have to do an inventory of the necessary traits needed for to breed future generations. The birds that best fit our needs and requirements are quickly moved to the breeding loft. Then we plan and plan again and plan one more time. If the resulting youngsters meet our expectations, then the shivers run up our backs. That is the part of the pigeon sport that everyone can fully enjoy. That can make the sport addictive!

1.33 Crossing good X good; Does it work?

Historically there have been quite a few racing pigeon fanciers that were commercially inclined. In that group there have been those who also had monetary talents besides financial resources. To attract and keep the attention of the masses they purchased national and international winners for large amounts of money. These expensive winners were advertised widely in the pigeon press with the preplanned intention of selling young birds out of them.



"De Raket" is a direct son out of the foundation pair "Het Boerke" and "De 150 Duif". He is a full brother to "Het Boerinneke", "De Schonen", Het Voske" etc. "De Raket" as a young bird won 1st place from Orleans in the Fondclub "Gooi & Eemland" by just a few seconds. In Rayon 7 he earned 2nd prize against more than 18,000 pigeons. Paired to "Orleans Lady" he became father to different excellent breeding pigeons.

Let's look at their breeding methods from the viewpoint of someone interested in purchasing one of these youngsters. If you pair two national winners together, putting no more thought in the pairing other than that they are winners, then in principle we are pairing good with good. Naturally it would be very tempting to want to have a son or daughter out of a pair of such quality pigeons in our breeding loft. But meanwhile we have learned to look past the end of our nose. Good pigeons have to be analyzed one characteristic at a time. Some national winners have won no other good prizes, just this one. This should tell us to be careful, because the regularity that genuine top class pigeons have is missing. What caused the bird to win this top position? Was it the top form it had that day? It's loft position and/or the wind? Such pigeons I wouldn't purchase, not like our friends in the Far East do. Purchasing purely on that one result without having seen the pigeon. However they have also quickly learned from their mistakes.

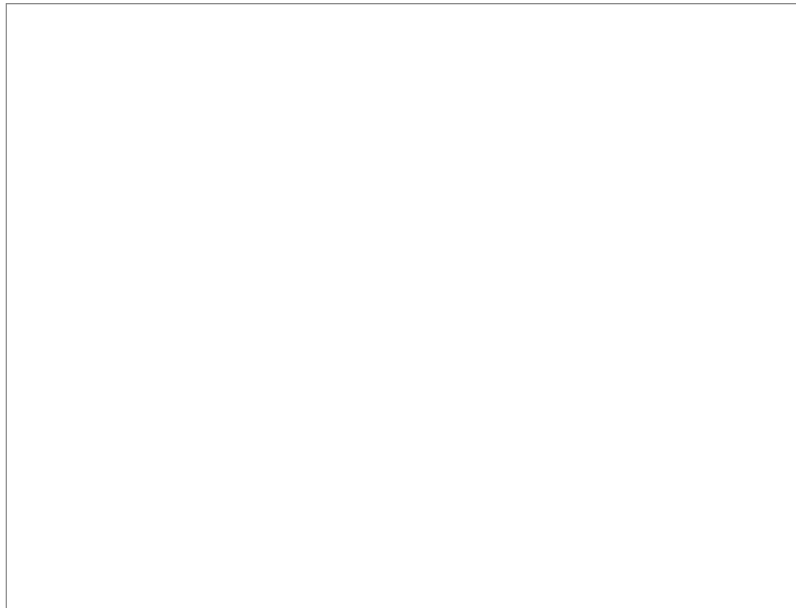
If you are planning to purchase a national winner without handling it, then I would buy one that had to fight for it's win. A bird that won a national race with slow speeds, a tough race, having to race to a home loft with lots of over flight. Those are the real class birds! The very best ones are those that have also won other top prizes. These are the ones we can put some trust in. Ace pigeons should be looked at the same way. In principle we should look at all birds

that we are planning to purchase the same way, old or young. Take them in your hands and try to analyze them.

Which qualities do they have in abundance? Can we actually use these qualities in our loft? How were these birds bred? Purchase birds that are strong in the famous group of characteristics: character, mordant, speed, intelligence and muscle quality or ability to handle the distance. If a bird is stronger in the other group of characteristics then we are less sure of its suitability as a breeder. We should try to make as few mistakes as possible. If we make the right choices and breed good youngsters out of them then we know precisely the path we have to further walk down.

1.34 What use is a Pedigree?

If we really think about it: more often nothing then something! When we purchase a youngster as blood refreshment for our loft, we almost always are furnished with a list of the bird's ancestry or pedigree. Nowadays regrettably even if your birds perform well, they have no commercial value unless they are accompanied by a list of ancestry that goes back four, six or eight generations. In plain English this really is the biggest load of "crap" going, because as soon as we find out that this youngster produces birds that can't find their way home from the other side of the church steeple, we'll soon have an empty nest box in our breeding loft.



"De Tornado" as a youngster won along with his nest sister "De 103 Duif" 1 & 2 almost 10 minutes ahead in Section M against more then 8000 pigeons. Both have produced formidable offspring. Their sire is "Klaas" a full brother to "De Goede Jaarling" and their dam is "De 776 Duif". That is the old foundation of the strain Van Breemen. "Klaas" was sold to Klaas Visser " the flying skating coach" as a youngster. He bred several section winners for the coach. Naturally a top breeder such as this I had to get back.....

In 1989 when I visited Thailand for the first time naturally I was asked to select and pair pigeons. That was done in their living rooms with the list of the birds ancestry on their laps. Each one was more beautiful and printed out nicer then the last one. Foundation birds from famous Belgian and Dutch fanciers and pictures of breeding stations were printed on them in full colour. When I asked them if I could see the pigeon first they were truly shocked. In the newest and also the largest pigeon country in the world China, with its 300,000 plus fanciers, you see the same phenomenon. At the sales the pigeons whose pedigrees have the nicest pictures printed on them are sold for the largest sums. You and I both know that this is not the way to a successful change towards the future. But what else can you do if you don't know anything about these lofts or their pigeons? Like us they have to learn through trial and error!

A list of the pigeon's ancestors tells us how the bird was bred. Which strains were used and who the bird's parents and grand parents and great grand parents were. Sometimes pedigrees even go further. When I sell a pigeon then the fancier gets a pedigree for the bird that goes back eight generations. That's what I can fit on an A4 sheet of paper and I mean just fit. Really I do this for the curiosity of the fancier, so that they can see how such a pigeon was bred over the generations, which pigeons in the bird's background show up more often. It shows which

were the dominant breeders. If that isn't so then a list of ancestors is in reality a hodge-podge of names and ring numbers the value of which is nil. The value of a pedigree increases if we can see that there actually was a line of thought and purpose to the pairings that were brought together throughout the bird's background. Was the breeding done purposefully or without any thought? That is what a pedigree can teach us and that is what we should not forget despite the colourful and beautifully printed paper work that sometimes goes along with the bird. We shouldn't let the paper work confuse us; in the end it is about the quality of the pigeon, despite all the paper!

The value of the pedigree becomes a factor if I am satisfied with the value of the pigeon. When I buy a pigeon I always do so with a view to "refreshing the blood" of my own birds. Experience has taught me that it is easier to breed good youngsters out of a prudently bred bird than a bird bred out of cock "By Chance" and hen "Luck". The more good strains and good pigeons are worked into the pedigree, the better I like it. The chances increase even more if such a pigeon was bred within a family. That really is what everyone is searching for when they are planning to purchase a pigeon somewhere: we're looking for a loft where someone is trying to form his own family or strain. Where inbreeding and the conscious bringing together of lines that have shown elsewhere that they combine well is done. Lofts like these are few and far between. Where are the fanciers that are endeavoring to build their own strain? Where?? Most fanciers are concerned only with racing. They aren't really fond of breeding, because it all takes too long. On the majority of lofts only crossing is practiced. Most champion pigeons are born as the result of a cross and crossing is by far the simplest breeding method and it does deliver good quality racing pigeons. We have to be honest!

The name of strain so and so is often dropped into a pedigree. With reverence we talk about the names of strains from long ago such as: Wegge, Sion, Stassart, Bricoux etc. To me this is from so long ago that it's not worth talking about any more. In America there are fanciers that regularly offer pure Wegge's for sale. Where does the title strain stop?? It stops very quickly. As soon as we have paid Karel Wegge for our youngsters they become our own strain. They only remain the Wegge strain if Karel Wegge comes by each year to select and pair our birds. Apart from the fact that Karl Wegge will have a difficult time to stop by and visit, this is the only possible way after all these years that we could still have the Wegge strain on any one of those lofts. The birds offered for sale in the advertisements in America are therefore straight "nonsense" to put it kindly, because Karel Wegge died somewhere around a hundred years ago. The worth of old strain "whatever" in these pedigrees is therefore zero. Then which strain has some value? After the Second World War the word strain was stamped on anyone that had managed to hide some pigeons, especially if they produced pigeons that performed with some distinction. Everyone talks about such a name and suddenly he has a "strain". Strain in my eyes is something pure, something distinct. Strain is when someone breeds closely with only a few outstanding pigeons. This is how Piet de Weerd built the Jan Aarden strain, how Valere De Smet-Matthijs formed his Klaren family and how the Janssen Bros. bred their strain on and around their "Wondervoske" and consorts. It doesn't surprise me that their names are still known half a century later and that every racing pigeon fancier the world over still think highly of them. To day a strain has little or no biological or genetic significance anymore. Race well for a year or two and the commerce raises its head and for the general public another strain is born.

No, you can say what you will, but that's not the way we should think. Before the title strain can be earned the pigeons should have performed at a high level for many years and those pigeons should have founded other lofts that do the same thing. As Piet de Weerd said "they must win here and there Nationals". These pigeons must have something everyone can recognize them by. Only then can we speak of a strain, not any sooner. Agreed??

Still a pedigree besides teaching me something about someone's pigeons, to me is a tool, a piece of equipment. Only the first three generations count for me, first the pigeon itself, second the parents and finally the grandparents. That is where the class has to be represented, not in the great grandparents. Their influence is barely 12.5% and will be reduced by half as soon as we pair up. No, the value of a pigeon is determined through the first three generations. If I knew nothing about pigeons and in the first three generations there are no extra quality pigeons, then I would calmly leave such a pigeon sit where it is sitting. There are many sellers that with fancy language want to convince us of the value shown by these pigeons in the furthest generations. Let them talk to the wind it means nothing. I also get nervous when I hold a pigeon born in 1997 that has in its pedigree only ancestors that were born in the 1960's and 1970's. That can only happen with birds that do not breed well. Give me pigeons from a strong performance family where the family tree in 5 generations only bridges 10 – 15 years and extra pigeons regularly pop up, this points to strong breeding potential!

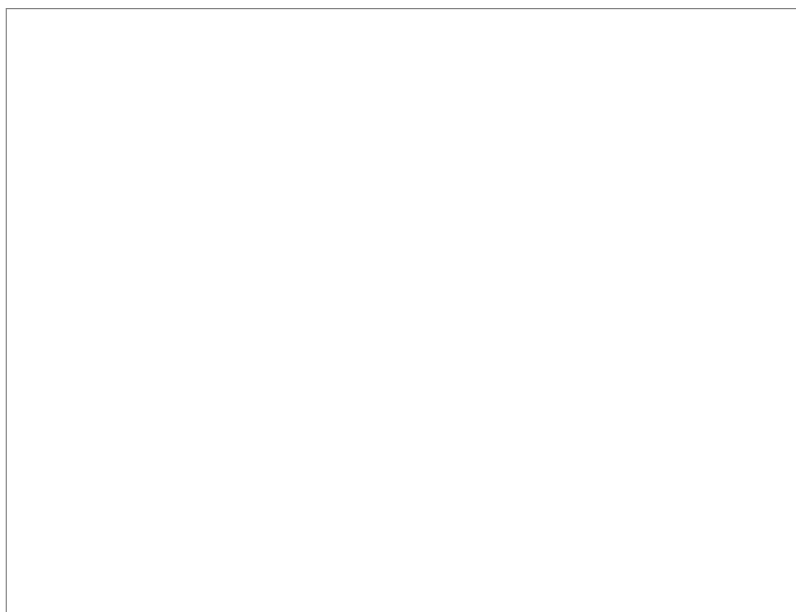
Earlier I mentioned that for me a pigeon's pedigree or ancestry was a tool. When I keep myself busy thinking about how to pair my birds, then I have in front of me each pigeons ancestry going back six generations. On this pedigree I have noted for each pigeon important characteristics such as eye colour, colour of the feathers and both types of pigment. You're right there are many other important characteristics missing, but don't forget before a bird ends up in the breeding loft it has been analyzed and judged many times. It already comes up to my specific demanding standards 100%, therefore when I am pairing them I am not really concerned with these other characteristics. Pairing for me is a way of fixing something special in a pigeon, to keep that something special and to perfect it. Creating something new almost never happens as a result of planning. You can try to fix that something special and sometimes you luck out and can repeat it. If that happens then you have pigeons that easily pass on their good genes and will easily fit with each other. Pay attention because these type of birds are worth their weight in gold! Then the story can be continued with a use of a special tool: inbreeding! We know it is a very specific tool, because it is the only tool that will permanently preserve what we have accomplished. I have always attempted by making judicious use of inbreeding and keeping an eye on the less important characteristics, such as eye and feather colour and pigmentation, to keep it from influencing the vitality of my pigeons. It is difficult to win races with inbred pigeons, there are always exceptions, we all know that. I race pigeons that I can very well use in my breeding loft. I race with vital inbred pigeons!

In fact every small fancier should be working along these same lines. It is self-supporting and you only need to find fresh blood every four or five years. It certainly would not be a mistake to begin fixing valuable characteristics in your own colony. You learn to pay attention and know what you want. You develop a sense for good pigeons and the quality of your loft will grow more and more. This way you can add a new dimension to your sport. Most fanciers search for someone that is developing his own strain when they need to bring in fresh blood. They are searching for a builder that knows what he wants and what he needs to pay attention to. Most buyers monkey around with their new acquisitions in the breeding loft, sometimes even successfully. Most of them end up claiming they were swindled. Now we know that that is not always true. There is a saying in the pigeon world "when you buy a pigeon the bird's breeder doesn't come with it". Truer words were never spoken!

1.35 Lets take all the tools and start pairing!!

In the previous paragraphs we have discussed all the different tools that are at our disposal when we are trying to decide how to pair our pigeons. Using the correct tools we must try to give each pigeon the greatest possible chance at a successful pairing. This means that we have to analyze all our pigeons feather by feather and print them in our memory. I don't think it is necessary for each one though. In the first place we have to make choices from all our pigeons. We have to decide with which ones we will breed and from which ones we won't breed. It is best to use the last group to move eggs under from the first group. This allows us to reach our goal twice as fast. If we only work with a portion of our pigeons then we only have to enter that portion into "our computer". Direct your efforts to those pigeons only, only those that fit into your breeding profile. That's what we work with; with those we plan well thought out and deliberate pairings.

When planning our pairings what do we have to pay attention to? In the first place I have each pigeon's pedigree so I can see how the bird was bred. It is important that we retain the good blood. If the pigeon is the product of a cross then it is clear that when we pair this pigeon we bring it back into our own family. If the pigeon is inbred then it is clear that if we want to breed good racers we will have bring in a cross. In this case we should already have in the back of our mind what type of pigeons easily cross successfully with our line of birds. These we have already brought home and we can choose a proper mate from them.



"Magic Mealy" flew at the very top during the '94 season on the one-day long distance races. Only his loft mate kept him from participating in Olympiade while he had to wait as 1st reserve. He is a direct son of "Het Boerke" and "De Kleine Etampes" (1st Eptampes Kring Hilversum) who is out of "De Kleine Autowinnaar" (5X 1st and winner of the Car race from St. Quentin against 13,000 pigeons as a young bird). He also showed his worth in the breeding loft by producing several first prizewinners and Ace pigeons.

We have already made some very specific choices. It is either suitable for breeding or not suitable for breeding. It is either inbred or crossed.

Now we can make the next choice. We look at the individual performances of each pigeon and what those performances are worth. How were they earned, with headwinds or tailwinds? The

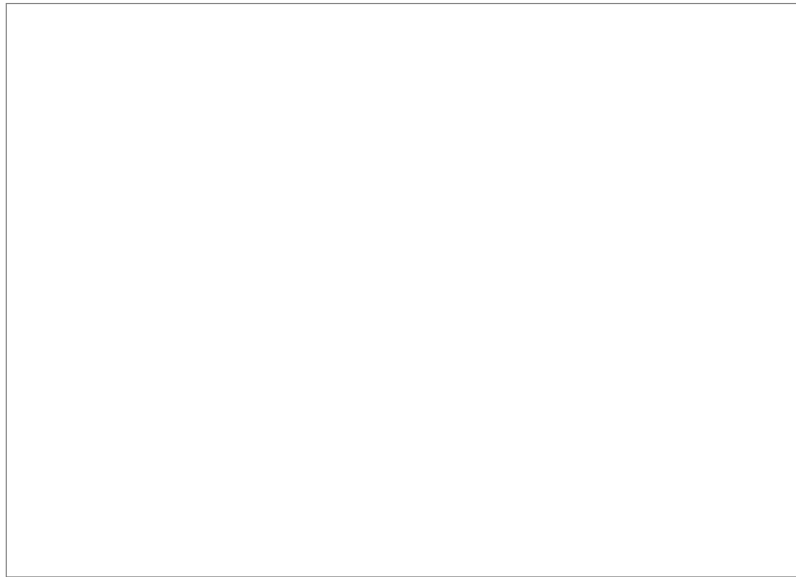
type of wind is important. It is important in determining the pigeon's quality. Then we study the results of close relatives. How much quality have they shown on the racecourse and how many good near relatives are there? Many good ones is good, a few good ones should make us ask questions and only a single good one should make us pay very close attention. Then we look at the direct offspring: children and grandchildren. In reality we are looking at the breeding value of each individual pigeon. Using the breeding results we can also make a selection and rate the birds in order. Now we should be ready to make up our breeding pairs.

But in reality we are not there yet. We have to analyze the birds that are destined to become breeders and list all their good characteristics and all their weaknesses. Each pigeon must be very closely studied and analyzed. Why is this one a good pigeon or why is it a bad pigeon? Which characteristic is its strongest point. That is what we want to know, the why? This is how we learn the differences between good pigeons. We must learn to see the individual differences of good pigeons. Each detail is of great importance. We must have imprinted in our minds each detail of each cock or hen in order to quickly go through the list of all the possible partners. If we have mastered this only then are we ready to begin pairing.

In the first section I have tried to acquaint you with the tools that are available to the racing pigeon fancier to progress in our sport. When you take these tools to begin building you will first need the proper material to build your new pigeon creations. The foundation, the first floor, the second story and the roof, these are all made up of different materials that complement each other to become a complete building. The chapters in the following section will be about the different materials that make up a good racing pigeon. You will learn how to build a good racing pigeon and you will learn which materials to use.

2.0 The building bricks that form the modern racing pigeon

In this chapter we will talk about the “make-up” of the modern racing pigeon. The attributes that enable our winged friends to perform well as racers and which of these attributes are easily passed on to their offspring and which attributes are not easily inherited by their offspring. We will discuss each of these characteristics one by one over the course of this chapter. But first there is some basic knowledge we will have to become familiar with. Which of the attributes are the most important and how are they inherited. Which attributes should we concentrate on in our breeding to give us the greatest advancement in the following generations? This is the most essential aspect of breeding. This is what we should be interested in, nothing else!



“Vivaldi” was purchased at the total sale of Pieter Veenstra to be used as blood refreshment (cross) In 1996 he was the 6th National All-round Ace Pigeon in the Vredesduif Competition. He descends from an old Hofken family of pigeons. He has produced several good offspring.

My great teacher in the how and why of breeding better and better racing pigeons, the Hungarian professor of genetics Alfons Anker always wanted to learn the kern of the why and how. How can we improve? Which attributes affect the pigeon’s ability to perform better and how are they inherited. This is what he made his life’s work. He has mapped out the most important qualities and divided them into two groups.

The first group:

1. Vitality
2. Endurance
3. The ability to come into and stay in form.

Relatively few genes influence the attributes in this first group. That is why their influence on the next generation is not all that great. When we begin inbreeding the value of these attributes quickly decreases. They return instantly when we make use of a cross.

The second group:

1. Character or mordant
2. Intelligence

3. Speed

4. The talent for flying specific distances.

The attributes listed in the second group are influenced by the collaboration of many hundreds of genes. From this we can quickly draw the following conclusion: inbreeding scarcely influences these attributes.

The inheritance of these attributes follows the intermediate model. This means that the youngster always inherit the average of the parents: $60+80=140:2=70$. The results are always inherited according to this simple mathematical equation. By dividing these important attributes into two groups and studying the manner in which they are inherited we can draw the following important conclusions:

Crossing that is adding fresh blood to inbred pigeons can quickly influence the attributes belonging to group 1 positively. We cannot improve the characteristics belonging to group 2 in the same way through a cross. Because the total value will always be divided in two we will again and again add the highest values together in our pairings. This means: we have to pair our best birds together and learn how to inventory and evaluate their attributes. The better we can do this the better our breeding results will be.

It should be clear that it is impossible to add a character value of 60 to a speed value of 80 in order to increase the value of the character attribute by 10 in the following generation. That would be same as adding up apples and pears. That would be impossible. It is not enough to always pair good to good as is the habit of many racing pigeon fanciers. In reality it is a bit more complicated. We have to add a character value of 80 to a character value of 60 in order to achieve a character value of 70 in the next generation. It is necessary that we learn to evaluate a pigeon so that we know why it is good! We also have to know which of its qualities are of lesser value. We have to find a way to improve these lesser qualities and at the same make sure that the good qualities to not go backwards. You will have to learn to evaluate all the attributes and estimate their values for each pigeon in your loft. The better you master this art, the higher you will score in the championships with the following generation.

This has been a simple practical example I used to explain an important step forward. But now back to how we proceed. We want to take certain attributes that are easily inherited by the next generation and try to concentrate them in our pigeons. How can we accomplish this goal? We can accomplish it through the use of inbreeding. When we come in possession of some very good breeders, that is the time that we, through the use of inbreeding, will fix and concentrate their outstanding genetic makeup. The more meticulously we do this, the greater the chance will be that we will breed youngsters that posses the same genetic makeup, giving us the same possibilities. At the same time we know that inbreeding in most cases will decrease the value of the attributes in the first group. We will also breed pigeons that when we study their pedigrees we know are inbred but will still be very vital. Pigeons such as these can confidently be used on the race team. Inbreeding has not affected them to the degree where they will not make good racers. But in return we can expect lesser breeding results from them. The concentration of their genetic make up is not as intense as we would have expected. We know this because the degree of vitality they demonstrate is above our expectations. Vitality is not the fundamental attribute that is essential to the increase in the quality of our pigeons.

Those are the attributes in the second group. Those are the ones where we have to put in the most effort in keeping them at a high level. Retrieving the value of the attributes in the first group takes much less effort. As soon as we find a suitable cross they will return and our pigeons will again be able to perform at the highest levels.

The most important conclusion that Prof. Alfons Anker leads us to make is that we have to inbreed in order to retain the good attributes. He taught what the good attributes are and the method we can best use to conserve them. Inbreeding is best done in a specific manner. That it is concentrating on a common pigeon in the pedigree. If we try to inbreed to more than one pigeons at the same time, we can almost be sure that we will not reach the result we had hoped for, any exceptions to this only proves the rule. The more often the super breeder we are concentrating appears in the pedigree the greater the chance that one of its descendants will be an extra breeder. If we still own the super breeder we can naturally inbreed by mating it back to it's son or daughter, or inbreed less intensely by pairing it to its grandchild. If we no longer have the super breeder, but we still have its children in our loft then the best solution would be to pair half brother to half sister. A less intense method would be uncle X niece or aunt X nephew. Full brother to sister pairing is unsuited to our goal, because we are then inbreeding to a pair rather than an individual. This is not directed at a specific pigeon, our super breeder.

In the early 1970's I had in my possession a total of 15 grandchildren off Valere Desmet-Mathijs' (Nokere, Belgium) world famous racing and breeding pigeon "De Oude Klaren '46". Professor Anker laid out for me the best system for pairing these birds together. In the first generation niece x nephew pairings were made in such a way that only "De Oude Klaren '46" was the common ancestor in the pedigree off all the resulting youngsters. This was the manner in which all the grandchildren of "De Oude Klaren '46" were paired. The youngsters resulting from these pairings were in turn paired to each other; again in such a way that "De Oude Klaren '46" became the only common ancestor in the pedigree of the resulting offspring. The youngsters of this generation were paired to one of the grandchildren off "De Oude Klaren '46".

This was the method of breeding back to a super breeder, perhaps the best breeder after the last War. The breeding scheme was not just followed blindly. Naturally there is a difference between pigeons. There is a difference in the degree to which they have inherited the various attributes. You probably realize the choices were made; I made sure that the attributes from group 2 were present in sufficient amount. These attributes are the ones that are most important. I also chose pigeons that matched as closely as possible the type of pigeon we started with, that of "De Oude Klaren '46". That is the way we kept working ahead.

Yes, you're probably asking yourself, what was the result? In principle lofts full of pigeons bred according to a scheme from which we had to select. Despite all the inbreeding most of the pigeons were very vital and good results were obtained with those that were tested on the racecourse. "De Bels" my foundation sire has in his pedigree "De Oude Klaren '46" in the same vertical line of generations four times, exactly according to the breeding scheme. "De Bels" flew a whole series of early prizes in the sprint and middle distances races. In 1978 he ranked at the top amongst the best sprint pigeons in the country. His son "Het Boerke" in his pedigree has "De Oude Klaren '46" appear in the same vertical line of generations eight times.

"Het Boerke" and his crossed half brother "De Goede Jaarling" form the backbone of my strain. "Het Boerke" was born in 1978 and was still fertile in 1997, while his half brother born in 1982 went over to meet the Eternal in 1995. This example teaches us that if we inbreed closely for several generations and direct the inbreeding on only one pigeon that the inbreeding does not necessarily have negative effects, it does not have result in degeneration. The reason that degeneration did not show up after inbreeding for several generations finds its origin in the fact that the De Smet-Matthijs strain was build up out of many different strains. Yes, do you still remember the theft? I feel very lucky that there were still some of these powerful types with their beautiful eyes left on the loft. To tell the truth this is unique, because what can you expect when you begin to inbreed?

The attributes from group 1; vitality, endurance and ability to come into and stay in form

usually quickly degenerate. This is because relatively few genes influence these attributes. We can influence this unfavourable phenomenon positively with a timely cross.

Inbreeding exercises little or no negative influence on the attributes in the second group. It is more difficult to influence the combination of many hundreds of genes working together. We are the ones who have control of the only influence inbreeding has on group two. We have to learn how to properly analyze the attributes in group two and subsequently select for them strongly and finally bring them together in the just proportions when pairing. This is the way ahead.

An important conclusion drawn from the research work done by Professor Alfons Anker is that we have to inbreed in order to maintain and concentrate the good qualities listed in group 2 and in order to bring the qualities in group 1 back to the required level, we have to cross. Crossing and inbreeding should alternate with each generation in the pedigree. After inbreeding crossing follows, both in an endlessly alternating sequence.

How did I actually do it? I traced down several descendents of one of the best breeders that the racing pigeon sport has ever known: "De Oude Klaren '46" bred by Valere Desmet-Matthijs from Nokere, Belgium, a pigeon that formed a world class strain. His offspring have won uncountable honours at different distances under different circumstances in countries spread all over our globe. It seemed to me that it would be worthwhile to inbreed to a pigeon of his class, in order to concentrate and fix his good qualities. I did this come hell or high water. Always when pairing that the parent's descent was concentrated on one pigeon. As soon as you start crossing you will get a division of the genes and only 50% of the original blood crosses over to the next generation and this becomes less and less with each succeeding generation: 25%, 12.5%, 6.25% etc. This is the cause of the fact that if you keep crossing and crossing the good attributes will slip through your fingers like sand. Inbreeding is the only remedy that will stop this from happening. By always again and again bringing partners concentrated on "De Oude Klaren '46" into the pairings I bred pigeons that possessed a more or less concentrated genetic makeup. I only had to separate the wheat from the chaff. That meant learn how to select for specific qualities. The qualities or attributes listed in group 2. There was much chaff amongst the wheat. Learn to watch for richly coloured eyes, strong weightless pigeons, pigeons with supple muscles, pigeons that looked intelligent and pigeons that would fly through thick and thin to get home: wringers. That is the type of pigeons that I have fixed in my loft for many years and big or small, beautiful or ugly has nothing to do with it. Only the pigeons that bring together these ideal attributes in high concentration, those are the ones that you must always search for and never waver in your selection. At the end of the song I had few pigeons left. Those I cross bred to give them a chance to show their breeding strength.

Now I had arrived at the point where I had to begin racing. The breeding schema of Prof. Anker had been brought to fruition. The inbred material had to be crossed, but with what?

Some things in this life of ours just happen; you don't really know why. They just happen. In this case it did too, it just happened. During the time that I was solely inbreeding it didn't make much sense to use the inbred birds for racing. Saturdays when I was all done scraping I naturally became bored. I got out the bike and often went to watch the birds come home at someone else's lofts. Where is the best place to watch? Obviously, the best place to watch was at the lofts of the best racers.

The best during the middle of the 70's were the in the Gooiland area were the partnership of

Krouwel-kalksma and Jan van Erp. Two very big fanciers and one small one if we use the number of pigeons kept as a gauge. I didn't learn much from the large fanciers. When the pigeons fell there they fell like marbles and they couldn't pick up the marbles fast enough. But at the small fanciers loft there I saw something special. Apart from the fact that with only two handfuls of pigeons he regularly succeeded in beating the big partnership and therefore had class pigeons, he had something unique that he didn't fully utilize. That was a small blue hen that he called "De 08 Duif". She was bred out of the very best Janssen lines from their glory days in the 60's. Every time that I was there to watch the birds come home, whether it was from short or far, that small hen beat all the other champions that Jan van Erp had. "De Tien" who had ten combine wins, "Mr Orleans" who won the Orleans combine race 4 years in a row, "De 05" and "De 06" both had a handful of first against large numbers, the little blue hen easily out flew them every time. But she almost never trapped and Jan van Erp shipped her just in case she happened to feel like trapping like a bolt of lightning that week. Till the day came where he had had enough: "Now I'm going to get rid of that damn hen", the words fell roughly over his lips when one day she embarrassed all the widowers flying and staying in air above the loft well ahead on a fast race. After this dreadful waste she spent her days in my breeding loft and how! "De 08 Duif" was a unique pigeon in every respect. She possessed all the necessary attributes to become a top breeder in extremely high concentrations. Her children had already made that amply clear at Jan van Erp's and she had also proven herself in competition at the highest level. She easily passed on her good qualities and she knew how to use them in an exceptional way on the racecourse. Lady luck just fell into my lap. I was in the right place at the right time. When I got her in my hands the first thought that went through my head was: "De Kapoen"! That had to be her partner. The quality of the offspring this pairing has produced borders on the unbelievable. This you can see in my pedigrees, because more than twenty years after she began breeding in my lofts, her blood is worked into that of every one of my top birds and always in a concentrated form. Finding the right cross requires some luck. You have to go to extremes to search for the cross that will, by chance fit together perfectly with your line. "Eureka, it fits" you will then shout loudly. You can help luck along by reading constantly and doing what others have already shown can be successful. The crossing of Desmet-Matthijs with Janssen Arendonk was already old news before I did it. Louis van Loon did it in the late 50's, followed by Heinemann from Frankfurt in the 60's and by Stan Raymaeckers and Jef Houben in the 70's. Again and again the cross was shown by each of the named fanciers to work with overwhelming success. I could therefore have known it would before I tried it. You can also learn which crossing combinations work the best by reading the pigeon papers and magazines carefully. Now that we know that the crossing has worked, how do we continue down our road?

The pairing of "De Kapoen" with "De 08 Duif" worked exceptionally well. Considering that I had a loft full of inbred Desmet-Matthijs it was my intention to use "De 08 Duif" as blood refreshment. To make complete the type of pigeon I had and to breed the most successful of the crosses back into my own line and in so doing fixing the extra I had gained, to anchor it in my birds. Then again we would take the next logical step, crossing and then again inbreeding. Now you know the next step, crossing again. While breeding and testing I would pay close attention to pigeons that show exceptional breeding ability, around one of these I would plan to build another family. In reality what happened when "De Kapoen" and "De 08 Duif" were paired was something extraordinary. The types of pigeons resulting from this pairing were exact mirror images of their parents. The offspring had everything the parents had but in a double portion. A new strain had been born out of the combination of the two existing strains. Coarse bone structures are not found in the Janssen pigeons and outstanding muscle quality is not found in the Desmet-Matthijs pigeons. My crossing of the two lines resulted in youngsters that had all the valuable concentrated attributes combined in them at the same time. This is a rarity and from the moment that I realized what I had, besides crossing with other strains of pigeons, I also maintain a line of birds in my loft that keeps the purity of the Desmet-Matthijs and Janssen lines, hoping that I can again produce the same results and that has been done repeatedly.

If we want to begin building our own type of pigeon, then in the first place we have to choose the correct building materials. Most fanciers understandably have difficulty making the necessary choices. If someone sets a basket full of pigeons in front of us and we are allowed to freely choose from them, what chance do we have of making the right choice? There are attributes that we can see, there are attributes that we can feel and there are attributes that require experience to judge effectively. When everything is added together we can evaluate the worth of a pigeon. This really is not an easy task, because before you can effectively add up all the attributes, a lot of practice is required. The value of a pigeon usually does not depend on only one outstanding trait, but of two or three which are in turn supported by the quality of the remaining attributes. The collaboration of, or the manner in which the attributes work together is always different depending on the worth of each individual attribute.

That is why it is so difficult to compare good pigeons to each other. If you look closely you will always see differences. There is a difference between good and good.

The trick is to be able to recognize the differences and in the end make the correct use of this knowledge when we begin breeding. Many fanciers when evaluating pigeons are guided by the specific requirements of standards set up for judging show pigeons. When I first began racing pigeons I did the same thing, but I quickly learned that these beautiful show pigeons usually crossed the finish line just before the sweepers. At that time I had a red Belgian stray that always flew well ahead of the pack. Nobody could understand how that nothing bird managed it, neither did I.

I soon understood that other factors were involved besides those that made a pigeon look good in a show cage. From that moment on only the best racing and breeding pigeons interested me and I have done everything possible to obtain them from wherever and however I could. I did everything possible to discover the link between what I felt in my fingertips and the good traits of the pigeon and developed the ability to routinely recognize a good pigeon on sight. These abilities should not be underestimated. In reality it is purely a question of technique. Think about the ability to evaluate weight and balance, the correct wing shape of a pigeon, the quality of the muscles and last judging the window of the soul: the eyes. If you have the ability to evaluate all these traits then you understand that you don't learn that in one day, it takes a great deal of practice. Then you will be able to say that a certain pigeon can't fly 600 km successfully because its muscles are not supple enough for the task.

The ability to know that this pigeon cannot fly out front with head winds because its wing is shaped wrong. You will have the ability to look at all the attributes of a pigeon and assess its athletic ability. To do this correctly is not easily learned and the creed is: Practice, practice, practice and practice some more! As I have already indicated practicing should not be restricted to our own loft.

For a long time I thought that there were no better or any other pigeons then those of DeSmet-Matthijs. Till one fair spring day in 1975 I got a genuine pure Janssen Arendonk pigeon in my hands for the first time at the lofts of the late Jan van Erp. I was used to large, bony and fiercely wringing pigeons. What a world of difference compared to those small to average size bundles of muscle that Jan had on his lofts at that time. Over many years all over the world I have had many racing pigeon strains in my hands. The Putteries in South Africa hardened by the heat and drought, the Busschaert's in England, the "100 Baht strain" in Thailand, the red Catanzaro's in Malta that weigh next to nothing so that they can fly for long periods of time over the sea. Why? A bird when flying makes use of the rising warm air. No warm air rises over the sea. Heavy pigeons can't get to the other side of the pond after a long distance flight. With each type of pigeon comes a specific set of attributes according to its country of origin because of years of selection for specific attributes needed to survive and

perform under their specific conditions. Don't underestimate the differences in traits. If you know for which purpose they were developed, then you know that it is difficult to gauge the value or quality of an attribute in the same way on the other side of the world. The deeper you study this material the more you will come to understand how much there still is to learn!

The first racing pigeon periodical was the English "Racing Pigeon Pictorial". Every month they print wonderful reports and are regularly accompanied by magnificent pictures of pigeon eyes in all the possible natural shades of colour.

England is rightly "eye crazy". I once attended a forum in Kirkintilloch, Scotland, a small hamlet of several thousand souls of whom many were pigeon fanciers.

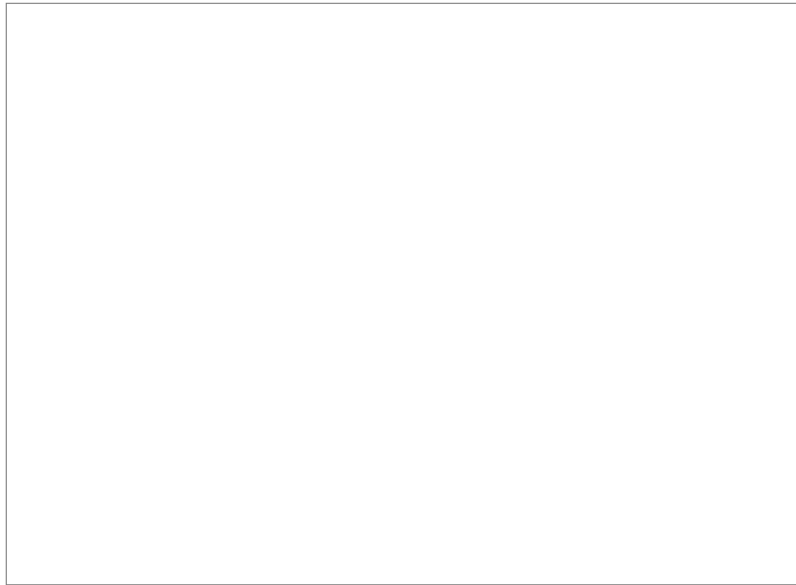
When I suggested to my first questioner that there were many other traits that made up a good pigeon, no other questions were directed at me the rest of the evening...

Everyone there knows everything there is to know about the eye. They stare themselves blind into the pigeon's eyes. The Belgian, Vanderschelden, who published a book on his wing theory, made the same error. Looking at the aerodynamics of his wing theory I agree with Vanderschelden completely. Just like the English and the eye sign theory, he postulated that the wing and the ability to perform are one and the same. The rest is conveniently forgotten.

I have acquainted you with the two divisions of characteristics as presented by Prof. Alfons Anker and their scientific importance in the racing pigeon sport. I have shown you the road you have to walk to find the way to success. I have also described the road to learning I walked down. Now it is your turn. Now you have to take the first steps down the road to success in the pigeon sport. You now know how to separate and group the most important attributes. Now you have to learn how to judge them so that in the end you can take all the building blocks and put them together to build an indestructible and successful racing pigeon

2.01 The Attributes of the first group

The meaning of the words vitality, endurance and the ability to come into and stay in form are all essentially the same. I think everyone can agree that we can take the sense of all three words and bring them all together in one word "vitality". Extraordinary vitality lies at the basis of the quality of a pigeons athletic ability. It results in the pigeon, at any given time, being able to perform better then his opponents during any given race. If that particular race is difficult then such a pigeon flies well ahead. It seems as if there was nothing to it. When the bird puts out such an athletic performance, it is as if at that moment the bird didn't have to over exert itself: just at that time it was in the form of its life. Naturally the reason for this phenomenon is what interests us. I will give you several examples of how the fanciers' management can influence vitality.



"De Vooruit" is a son of "De Kleine Etampes" and "Het Boerkinneke". As a young bird he was sold to Peet Kester from Honslersdijk, where as a yearling he placed first club in the first five races. Before he had a chance to fly his sixth race he was back in the breeding loft of his birth. "De Vooruit" is a full brother to the "Magic Mealy" who was 3rd National Ace Pigeon One-day Distance.

Some lofts are situated so that the sun cannot shine well into it till the month of June. The pigeons that inhabit such a loft will not come into real form till that month.

During the months of April and May these same pigeons will fly prizes only in the bottom of the prize sheet. For top performances you need form, constant form. The loft plays an important role in the pigeons form. The loft is not optimal if the sun cannot get into it. As long as the suns rays cannot enter well and long enough to warm the loft you will have problems. The floor will stay wet or damp and that can lead to problems with coccidiosis and worms. Because the temperature in the loft is not divided into different layers by the influence of the suns rays you get the impression that you are in a cellar. Cold, chilly and damp is the way the late Arie van den Hoek would have described it. As soon as the sun's rays begin to have an influence everything changes. The floor will dry, the air begins to circulate, the differences between day and night temperatures are not as great (the walls store the warmth of the sun rays and release it at night) and immediately it happens: the pigeons begin to win early prizes. They are in form! To know the real value of your pigeons, having a good loft is of great importance.

Placing your loft in such a way that it can profit optimally from the sun will greatly influence the performances of you pigeons. Floor heating will dry your floors and start the air circulating, mechanical ventilation will remove the used air and force in oxygen rich fresh air, some glass in the roof or an extra window where the sun first enters the loft are all things that can help and the final results can sometimes surprise you!

The loft is the base from which we start in the pigeon sport. An outstanding loft has inestimable value. How to breed good pigeons is what this book is all about. But there is more under the sun. There are some simple things that through careful reflection and adequate management you can solve yourself.

We have built a good loft and in it we have placed some pigeons. Only two more months till the beginning of the racing season and we want the birds to be ready. That will only happen with well-trained athletes. Towards the winter we decreased the amount of exercise and during the winter itself we have allowed the birds to come to a total rest. We have paired them and everywhere we look eggs fill the nest bowl. Everything seems well ordered. Now the training can begin anew. As long as they are sitting on eggs we won't force anything, because a shoulder out of the socket can happen easily and then flying near the front is done and over with. So long as it isn't necessary we don't want to shrink our race team due to injuries. The cocks are exercised in the morning and the hens go outside in the afternoon. Flying, clapping, lolly gagging about on the roof, everything is allowed. Then the youngsters are banded and as soon as they are big enough to be without mom and dad for a while, cocks and hens together, three times a day outside. They are chased off the roof, now they have to fly. After a week that won't be necessary, they'll fly on their own. By the time the youngsters are weaned they should have flown themselves into condition. They won't have form, that isn't necessary yet. The real form is close, but we have to be patient.

The feeding methods as well as the training methods influence the vitality of our pigeons. In the winter when activity levels are very low we shouldn't feed too heavy, good quality barley can be used as high as 50%. When we begin pairing we lower the percentage to 25%. Pigeons eat less when barley is added to their diet and this will directly influence the number of calories they take in. As soon as they have been brooding for 10 days or so then we can change over to 2/3 breeding mix and 1/3 super diet. When the youngsters are around three days old we feed only the breeding mix, once a day. Bringing up youngsters takes strength and energy and that has to be accounted for in our feeding. At this time we are also increasing the intensity of the training. Now it is best to provide a light meal an hour before the morning and evening exercise. The birds get their main meal after the evening training; at this time we still want them to have a sharp appetite because they have to learn to listen to the boss. We also have to feed them well once they are on widowhood. We have to replenish the lost energy, then hold them at that level and follow up by relighting the flame for the next flight. This can be done with aids such as raw peanuts, barley and rich racing mixes. A sophisticated feeding method is essential.

There is still another way to influence the vitality. This can be done through the drinker. These are the natural products from the animal specialty retailers or animal healing products that are not prescribed by a veterinarian. From the middle of November to the middle of February the birds are resting. After this time the blood and organs should be cleansed. Garlic, teas, propolis and wine vinegar are natural products that have a blood cleansing effect. I use them regularly but if the condition of the pigeons indicates they are not needed, I delay their use as long as possible, till just before the races start. The veterinary doctor can play an important role in the form of your pigeons. If you have any doubts before the season starts let him check the pigeons for worms and coccidiosis, don't treat blindly for these. Nearly all pigeons have trichomoniasis (canker) to one degree or another. When you have the droppings checked ask

the vet to do a throat swab on some of the birds. A tricho treatment at the right time can provide the push in the right direction your pigeons were waiting for. Don't visit the vet if after three races they aren't performing, then a whole season could be lost. Don't wait too long! A vet can be the man or woman who can provide the panacea that changes your pigeons from Volwagens into red shiny Ferrari's racing their motors at the starting line. I don't believe in a regular schedule of first giving that and then that and the next day this. Search for results by firstly optimizing your loft and perfect your training methods and have confidence in a proven feeding method. You yourself are the family doctor for your flock! The vet is the specialist there to support you.

If after all this there is still always something wrong with the health of your pigeons then the problem lies with your pigeons. They lack natural vitality. Training and feeding methods directly influence the non-natural vitality. This is the vitality that you bring on through particular management methods. Natural vitality is a vitality that they already had in the egg. You cannot influence it. It is a quality they receive from Mother Nature. How you can assess natural vitality and how to select and breed for it we will discuss later.

First you have to learn to recognize the one in order to judge the other! Pigeons that have a sudden or constant (this kind does exist!) super vitality race home effortlessly, minutes ahead. Their loft mates come home dishevelled barely able to land and once on the landing board their wings hang well under their tails. Pigeons with an outstanding vitality quickly act like nothing happened after a tough flight. They recuperate quickly; their reserves are replenished faster and they are the first out of the loft when the boss opens the window the next day. The more of such pigeons we have the more early prizes we'll win and our race results will look that much better.

That's how important vitality is in our sport! That's why racing pigeon fanciers are such fervent practitioners of crossing as a breeding method. They know that this breeding method most easily provides for vitality. A pigeon with great vitality has tight feathering and shines every day. A pigeon that only comes in form only once in a while only looks like this once in a great while. That is why selection for natural vitality is very important and has to happen throughout the year. You have to handle your pigeons often in order to observe the changes. Pigeons that regularly handle poorly have to go, no quarter given! I'll give you some examples.

Going into the winter the pigeons should gleam like peacocks. They still exercise around the loft regularly. If you handle them one after the other they leave the same impression. This is not the appropriate time to make a final selection for the race team or make the final conclusions about your breeders. The last should be done over a longer period of time and to a lesser degree the same should be done for the racers. Only then you can form an impression of what they look like at their best. It goes without saying that a selection has already taken place at the end of the race season purely on the quality of the performances. The best impression that we get tells us that later under the most favourable situation we can't expect much more. What we have to do is enter into our memories these impressions the birds leave (naturally we can write them down) and every week when handling them recall it during the months of November, December and January. Then you can draw a form curve for each pigeon. The pigeons that have a straight line will hold their form the longest. We never have enough of these pigeons on our race team, an easy choice. A pigeon showing a form curve with many peaks, next summer will regularly surprise us, we'll keep this bird. A pigeon whose form curve is high when we first begin to check them and during our examinations never peaks again has poor vitality. Those that easily lose condition when not exercising or lose it as a result of a tough race or lose it during the time of year when the sun's intensity is lower, without any doubt have to go. We simply cannot build on pigeons such as these. Yes, I can hear you say, but then I'll only have a few pigeons left! You'll only go one season with less pigeons. Breed heavily from these, by floating their eggs under the lesser quality pigeons (you'll have enough of these left) and in one year you will have taken a long step forwards, is

the answer I'd give you. Just pause for a short while and you'll win so much! The quality of your pigeons will improve so much. They stay so much healthier and because they are all formed from the same mould they will form a really solid team. You will have a team that will be easy to oversee and look after, easy to train, feed and manage. This is the foundation of good race results!

It's all about building on that foundation and with every step forward strengthening the foundation. I will give you another example. Even though I measured 60 km longer than the shortest loft in 1980 I had the best loft in Midden-Nederland on the sprint and middle distance races. In 1999 I had accomplished the same thing but this time on the one-day distance races with the same family of pigeons. Their family tree was the same. Pigeons that have to stay in the basket an extra day use more strength and energy than pigeons that only have to spend one night in the basket. The difference simply is in the surplus vitality that lies hidden in an iron constitution. One-day distance pigeons are in principle the most complete pigeons. They have to accomplish everything in one day, non-stop. Sprint and middle distance pigeons are not selected for their ability to store much energy. They do everything in a quick explosion of energy. These types of pigeons simply can't make it once the races go past 400 km. Once the motor blows up it can't be restarted. You have to breed pigeons like the ones Piet de Weerd described so well, "ones that get fat from eating little". What he meant was that they would use little fuel on the trip home. I would add that even with a full feed trough they won't get fat. These are the kind of pigeons we need. These are the ones we can trust when we enter them for the hard tough races. If you want to compete at the distance then you have to select for and breed for the type that can fly well ahead. If you send a team of these types of pigeons down the road then you will begin to have remarkable results. You have obtained a necessary uniformity. As long as you don't have this then you will only have the odd good result. Sometimes you will get an early prize on a smash or win a first on a race with extremely high speeds. My advice would be not to select on an accident. Select for characteristics that will give you a 60% chance of successfully breeding performers, these will give you dependability. If we want to form a team that will under all circumstances dare to race home then we must always select in the same way. What are we attempting to attain? We want to develop a pigeon with outstanding vitality, birds that always shine, birds that will not lose their shine after fighting a few rounds for their box when we pair them. We want birds where after a fight the scabs on their wattles just seem to disappear overnight. We want birds that effortlessly raise their young without losing a gram of weight; birds that quickly go back on eggs and while sitting don't get fat. They exercise in cold and damp weather tirelessly; the whole flock stays in the air for an hour just for the love of flying. Sometimes we have to slow them down and call them in. They all come home together from their training tosses. When you handle them they all feel just right and sometimes you think maybe a bit too light. Their eyes are tight, dry and twinkle in their head. There is nothing wrong with their metabolism. This begins to show as the races get tougher and longer. Their fighters mentality forces them to push home with all their might, they come home empty, but after an hour or so they have fully recovered. If you handle this type of pigeon after a short while the palms of your hand are covered in fine pigeon bloom. When you move them to the breeding loft after several racing seasons they will give you many years of enjoyment. Then you know that all is in order with the vitality of your pigeons! Who was it that said that vitality is the same as a long life? Exactly: Jan Aerts.

The experience I have gained after twenty some years of breeding, selecting and testing the resulting birds on the race course has led me to the following conclusion: an excellent constitution is directly proportional to the quality of the attributes in the first group. But, again like eyes or wings it is not the whole picture. At one time many fanciers placed a great deal of value on a strong and as complete as possible constitution or as listed on the judging card: Build. Throughout history there were many fervent proponents of this so called standard. The explanation was simple and easy to understand for everyone: a good pigeon was a nice pigeon. Requirements were listed and many fanciers began to select their breeders based on the standard. It was simple; with this system you could judge the birds by eye or simply with the tips of your fingers. In reality good and beautiful rarely go together.

That is what we have learned from experience. A nice appearance, coarse and thick bones only mean one thing: slow pigeons! Many fanciers still base their selection on pigeons that closely fit the standard. I think they do themselves an injustice! The difference is concealed in being able to tell the difference between a strong constitution and thick bones. The latter can almost be measured with a ruler, for the first one you need feeling and experience. At one time it was thought that there was a correlation between thick bones and athletic ability. My own conclusion is that a coarse thick skeleton is just extra weight that acts as an anchor rather than a crutch on strenuous races. Certain parts have to provide for the strength and other parts for the necessary elasticity, but again not for too much of either. Firstly the breastbone should not be short. A short breastbone will make the bird use too much energy to stay aloft. There is no balance; the area is too small for all the other parts to attach to it. The breastbone should be somewhat deeper, should be of average length or somewhat long, it should give the impression of being immovable and in the hand should give the impression of being harmonious and balanced. It is not necessary for a pigeon to have strong tight vent bones that lie directly behind the breastbone to qualify as being a good one. To me they are only the connection to the tail and further don't mean too much. I have never looked at the shape build or placement of the vent bones of my pigeons and many times other fanciers have justly criticized me for it when they handled my pigeons. Up to now it hasn't stopped my pigeons from leaving their properly build competitors minutes behind on the race course.

Again it takes some practice in order to assess this important quality. For me a strong skeleton lies at the base of all the other bodily attributes in the first group. A strong bone structure is a must. If a pigeon doesn't have it you can do nothing with it. It will quickly pass it on to its offspring. I go to a lot of sales. When I reach into the cage and put my hand on top of and half way around a pigeon with the intention of picking it up, you often almost feel the carcass cracking. You can feel the volume of the carcass decrease, like it has too much air, not enough content and above all no strength. I'm not interested in pigeons like these. The base that a quality pigeon requires just isn't there and it is impossible to build a good family that will shine in the races I want to compete at around it. The next step is to put some pressure on the back and the breastbone at the same time. If you can feel a part of the contents of the carcass pushing out against your ring finger, which you have placed in the area between the vent bones and the breastbone, then don't push too hard because the pigeon can't take much pressure and certainly cannot win a 700 km race in hot weather with head winds. If you're looking for the strongest one-day distance pigeons, then you'll have to put this one back in its cage quickly! But if you are looking for sprint pigeons then understandably the requirements will be somewhat different and we can continue with our test. We now hold the pigeon with the right hand while with the thumb on one side and the middle finger on the other side put some pressure on the rib cage. It shouldn't feel like you are squeezing a sponge and the pigeon shouldn't peep or crack. Pigeons that do, only fly an average speed of 1000 meters per minute when the winner does 1100, these kinds of pigeons belong to the big peloton of nameless also-rans. We have to exercise some care when we are testing someone else's pigeons the way we have described above. I would think that should be clear to everyone. We have to learn to identify and judge certain qualities but we can't go too far, we have to remember we are handling a pigeon, an animal with feelings. I'm sure you know what I mean.

It is easier to over tax the skeleton of young pigeons than that of older pigeons.

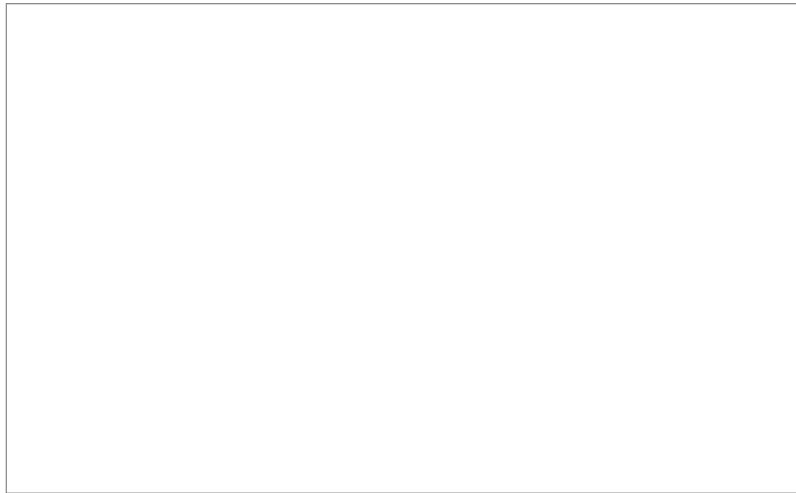
A young pigeon's bone structure has not entirely calcified and therefore won't leave with us the good impression we are looking for. We can be fairly certain when judging for skeletal strength when we are judging a yearling after it has gone through its second big moult.

The breastbone in the first place provides for the strength of the whole structure. It also functions as the attachment point for the large breast muscles. I personally prefer a somewhat deeper breastbone to a shallow breastbone. A breastbone that has a certain curvature has the attachment points for the muscles somewhat further apart and allows the breastbone to

function like a spring that supports the stretching and twisting of the muscle movement. If the spring is strong the muscles will function more efficiently and therefore longer. A somewhat deeper breastbone can leave the impression that the pigeon is poorly muscled. This is because the attachment points for the muscles lie further apart and because they lie further apart the muscles are stretched over a larger area. A shallower pigeon will more often give the impression that it is better muscled. The quality of the muscles is determined more by the ability to stretch and flex than the amount or muscle mass. We'll talk more about muscles in another chapter.

2.02.1 Character also called mordant.

When I think back and review all the good pigeons that I have owned, than I can only conclude that they were almost all pigeons that were enormously strong willed. Their inner strength along with their intelligence was at the base of all their extraordinary successes. If we add to the two foundation characteristics of intelligence and character enough of the other important qualitative characteristics, then a good pigeon becomes a better pigeon and in exceptional cases it turns a super pigeon into a world class pigeon. I will give you an example of the importance of a strong will in our racing pigeons.



This is the National Ace Long Distance 1995 for the Bros. Pilunthanakul from Bangkok, Thailand. He was bred out of the lines of "Het Boerke" and "De Goede Jaarling". His full brother was 9th in the FCI race in Rosmalen organized by the NPO. His half brother won the very hard race from Mae Sai, Burma, more than 800 km.

At the end of the seventies, when I first entered the results of my cross breeding into the races to try them out, I soon realized that they had some shortcomings. If due to weather they had to be held over for a night then the performances across the entire line declined appreciable. If these same pigeons had to compete in what might be called a smash, then it was always my best pigeons that were lost, and that always caused me pain. Even though they were very good pigeons, I thought there was something missing, but what. At that time I regularly visited my German friend Bernard Achtermann in Essen. Piet de Weerd helped him to obtain his foundation pigeons at the beginning of the seventies and after that he regularly helped Bernard in determining the pairings of his breeding pigeons. The pairings interested me very much because through regularly having a glimpse at them I gained an insight into the manner of selection and the manner of building a strain by someone who I considered to be the most pre-eminent pigeon expert of his time. At first I didn't think these pigeons were anything out of the ordinary. That perception changed one overcast, dreary Sunday afternoon in 1979. Bernard Achtermann had entered his "MannSchaft" in a race from Aars. It lies near the top of Denmark roughly 700 km away from Essen. The birds had to come from the north into a southwest wind along with rain, not really a blow home. At that time I didn't dare enter my own birds in races further than 400 km. Taking the weather and the distance into consideration I quickly spoke my mind: " Bernard it's impossible for the pigeons to make it".

Bernard Achtermann managed to change my mind and convinced me to stay and watch the birds come home. To my great surprise they fell soaking wet, from the rain, out of the dark

grey sky. I had to handle these birds. They had given everything they had in them; they were soaking wet and as light as a feather and they were terrible wringers. At that time I hated these wringers with a passion. They all wringed in your hands like they were possessed. They had flown till the cupboard was empty and what energy they had left they happily used to try to get out of my hands. These pigeons had an inbred characteristic: willpower. It was a conclusion that I couldn't miss, something I had to aim for. One way or the other I had to breed this into my pigeons. It had quickly become clear to me. Being able to clock early pigeons with a whole series near the front in less than perfect weather situations, for years was something that had been missing in my own pigeons. Bernard Achtermann showed me in fine detail what will power was. If you judge one of these pigeons in the hand, he told me, then it will twist its head every which way. Further it will, with all its strength, move its shoulders up and down. That's what we call a wringer. Such a pigeon dislikes intensely having its beak pulled carefully. It will pull its beak with a back and forth wringing motion with all its might out of your fingers. The more fanatically they do this the more certain we can be that we have a pigeon with a very strong will.

Until that overcast drizzly Sunday afternoon I didn't want too much to do with these wringers. The adjustment of my selection criteria, on this characteristic has not led to any disappointments. It made it necessary for me to change the manner I handled my pigeons. The beautiful types that could win a prize at a show in the winter were soon traded for other types. I still remember very well when my "Goede Jaarling" was asked to play a role other than that of a racer. The show judge who was holding him in his hands quickly said to his assistant to give him 5 x 18 points for participating, as points to enter on his judging card. As racers they also had become completely different pigeons. They had more character and were harder to handle as a team. No longer the type of birds that fell into the loft boom, to win. They were pigeons that flew an extra lap or two around the loft when they came home to see if the coast was clear. They also had advantages. They were harder to lose in bad weather races and they became better breeders. Since adding character as a necessary part of my personal selection standard my pigeons have become more complete.

Lets try to explain further what we mean by a wringer. That inner pugnacity or fight is anchored in them right from the beginning. In the nest they are already difficult to ring. They let you know they don't like it. Even then holding them by the beak is not appreciated.

Old pigeons, blessed with sufficient will of their own, pull their beak from between your fingers with all their might. If we persist and want to observe the eye or want to look inside the beak to judge the health status of their throat and airways, then they quickly and wildly begin wringing with their shoulders and wings.

No matter what the cost they don't want to be held. They want to be free. If you attempt to hold on to them, it will cost feathers. In my view this energetic wringing is a specific characteristic of a thoroughbred. These wringers tend to be real personalities, individuals. They have inner and outer strength. They are not followers but loners. They go their own way and do the same when racing home. This type of pigeon easily flies minutes ahead of the rest. When the racing becomes difficult they keep on fighting to get home. They never give up. But, there is a but!

If this type of pigeon is not blessed with the necessary vitality and the necessary toughness, then on hard races further than 600 km they will fly themselves into the ground. Their spirit, their soul is stronger than their bodies.

I don't think that it is wise to enter birds overcharged with this electricity in non-stop races further then 700 km. By nature they are too restless and use too much energy in the basket, therefore an extra drain on their reserves, before the release.

When I first met Willem de Bruijn during a photography session by the maestro pigeon photographer Peter van Raamsdonk. He asked me what I thought of the birds. I answered that he had very good pigeons but that they were limited, that they would have problems with tough races further then 600 km.

In reality this was the question he, as a one-day distance specialist, had asked without coming right out with it. At the time he took my straightforward answer hard, and my remark ended our conversation.

Several years went by and then one Sunday evening in July of 1994 Willem called me: " I have to have some of your pigeons. Yesterday we flew Ruffec, a real tough race, almost all the good ones are gone and the rest didn't do too well. Now I understand what you meant when you said they were limited."

Willem's pigeons had tried to fly around the rain showers. They flew extra kilometres and had increased the distance to their lofts. Besides this the strong prevailing headwind had made it impossible for them to get to the finish line in Reeuwijk without doing damage to themselves. If you want pigeons to participate in this type of race then you need to add will power to physical strength in your breeding method, otherwise they won't win outright but perish.

Piet de Weerd has written more then once that the wringer characteristic was a sign of super vitality. In this case I am not in full agreement with his theory. As you have read earlier, Mother Nature regulates the inheritance of these two characteristics in a different manner.

If you pair wringers to wringers you get wringers. Vitality is inherited sadly enough in an entirely different way. Still we have to try to keep the quality of both characteristics as high as possible in the pigeons we breed. One without the other will still result in early prizes. But if we can combine both than the possibilities become legion for our pigeons in the competitions.

It you get lucky and at the same time as forging an iron will into the bird we can add a bit of speed and a touch of intelligence, then you have brought a super crack into the world.

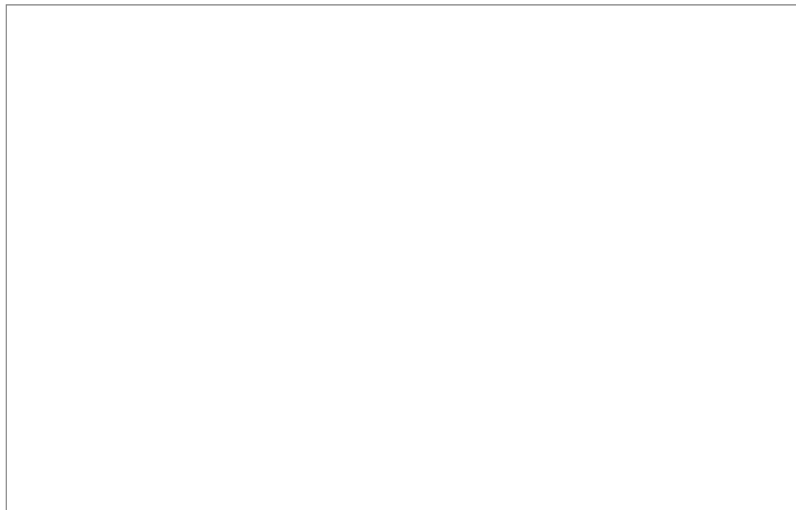
Piet de Weerd's preference was for pigeons that had a surplus of mordant. In his books he talked many time about "De Zwarteband" of Oscar Devriendt, "De Klaren" of Valeer de Smet-Matthijs, "Het Zotteke" of Huyskens van Riels and many more of these world famous birds. They all distinguished themselves as racers because of their enormous will power. The same holds true for other animals that are bred explicitly for competition, such as greyhounds and racehorses. The wringer characteristic is of great importance for winning competitions, but is of greater importance in the inheritance. Since the lesson I learned at Bernard Achtermann's, I have put the wringer characteristic as number one on my preference list for selecting, the breeding of extra quality pigeons for both the race loft and the breeding loft has come much easier. That is why I think that this characteristic is the foundation of all the other characteristics and qualities!

2.02.2 Intelligence

Intelligence, in pigeons, is an attribute that is not very easy to read or determine. There are many different attributes that work together in order to give a pigeon the ability to win a race. To state that only an intelligent pigeon can win is not correct.

I think that by watching and comparing, many times over a long period of time, the behaviour and facial expression of a pigeon that we can learn to tell whether or not we are dealing with an intelligent or a simple pigeon. But it should be clearly understood that: in order to gain this ability an unbelievable amount of time and practice working with the proper material for comparison is needed. As you know I like to attend sales of quality pigeons. Sometimes it happens that I have very little time to fully study the sales catalogue, which I usually like to do so that on the day of the sale I don't have to handle all the pigeons but only those pigeons that really interest me. When this happens then at the sale I only handle the pigeons whose facial expression impress me. Afterwards when I do take the time to analyze the sales catalogue very often it seems that I chose the right pigeons to handle. The facial expression that these truly top class pigeons exhibit is something that is very difficult to describe and put down on paper, but it is something that is very characteristic of top class pigeons. It gives the impression of intelligence, character and having fully experienced life all at the same time. At the same time there are so many differences in the facial expressions of champion pigeons that it would be an impossible task to describe all of them even if I could find the right words to do so.

Every class pigeon is a story apart. It is made up of multiple attributes and in each of these class pigeons there is one characteristic that is dominant and predominates all the other attributes. All this has its repercussion on the facial expression. Take a look at athletes. How many different types don't you see that have taken up athletics running down the track. Many different types are suited to winning competitions. Large and small, fat (well maybe not....) and thin, lets keep the comparisons simple. In the pigeon sport it is no different. Not one class pigeon is exactly like the other.



This is him: the famous "312" a son out of my foundation pair "De Kapoen" x "De 08 Duif". This is the combination of the strains Desmet-Matthijs and Janssen Arendonk. This picture was taken in 1980 after he became the National Ace Pigeon in the "Brabantse Reisduif" (the forerunner of "De Vredesduif"). In 1981 he again earned a whole series of top prizes with several firsts against large competition. That year he also earned the title of 2cnd National Sprint Ace Pigeon in the W.H.Z.B. He placed 3 years in a row in the top 4 in the National Sprint competitions. Till now no other pigeon in the Netherlands has been able to repeat this feat.

As I have written earlier, if you stop to think about what it is that turns an ordinary pigeon into a champion, then you always have come back to the fact that it can only be realized with the addition of a good measure of intelligence along with a large dose of willpower. All the other characteristics only add an extra penny to the purse. As the number of these characteristics increase in a pigeon, the bigger the chance that we have a real champion to enter against our competition. I can't say it often enough: we have to constantly endeavour to gain the ability to recognize and judge the attributes that are closely related to athletic ability. That means: practice, practice and again more practice! Wherever and whenever we can we have to handle crack pigeons and then later mentally compare them to the pigeons in our own loft and eventually with experience we will gain the ability.

There is a wonderful quotation from Piet de Weerd in "De Kunst van het Kweken". "The secret to class pigeons is their passion, their stubbornness and their vitality.

Everyone that has healthy pigeons that cannot or will not fly a prize, because they don't possess the necessary will or the confidence to fly till the soul leaves their body when necessary has to think that these are the ingredients that are the essential ones lacking in his pigeons. A class pigeon is a battery filled with electricity. Anyone who can breed this into his pigeons is a step ahead of the competition. This is the spark that can ignite a frozen engine".

Therefore we have to learn not only to feel, we also have to learn to see! If we take a pigeon in our hands then you can judge the will and temperament of the pigeon by the degree to which it wrings. A real crack does not necessarily have to be a wringer, but often they are. A practiced eye can read the willpower and stubbornness in the pigeons face. The face of a real champion radiates willpower, personality and intelligence. To me a class pigeon has a noble expression; its facial expression together with the expression from its eyes speaks volumes.

Now don't think that this is the same for all class pigeons: for each class pigeon there are individual differences. The differences between real champions are distinctly printed in my memory, they are almost impossible to describe.

This results from the experience of years and years of practice and again more practice. It is easy to make mistakes with young pigeons, but with old pigeons through experience there is much that can be read from the facial expression.

To me it really is the most important attribute a pigeon can have. If it lacks this distinctive characteristic, then I will not work with it in my breeding loft.

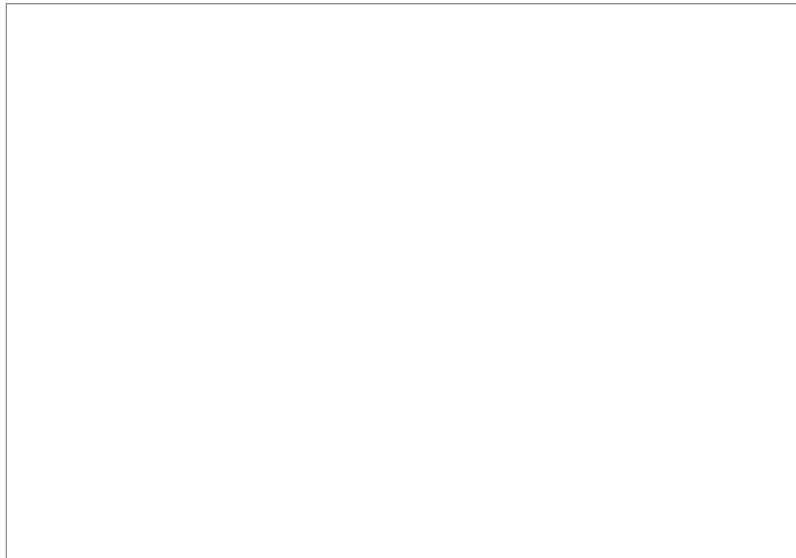
In the past I have sometimes purchased a pigeon at a sale and directly culled it because it lacked this characteristic, because, to me it walked around like a silly goose.

For me a pigeon has to have distinctly intelligent face. When you look straight at its beak then you have to see both eyes entirely. The head should be fine, almost feminine. I don't like very coarse pigeons possessing a robust head.

Pigeons like these very often lack the necessary characteristic of vitality. As I have observed earlier, many attributes have to come together in order to perform at the top, one needs the other. But as you have learned we can be surer of our breeding when we base it on characteristics such as intelligence rather than when we seek success on the basis of the characteristic we call vitality.

2.02.3 Speed

The attribute speed can appear in different forms. It can appear as a super fast pigeon that is always at the head of the peloton, these pigeons very seldom miss their prize. Some pigeons can also be somewhat slower and every once in awhile miss their prizes. If you own pigeons that never miss their prize then your name will always be on the prize list. You will hardly ever miss but you will also hardly ever have a super result with many top prizes. If you want top results than you will have to find faster pigeons to use as a cross and freshen your blood. It can't be done any other way.



This is the full brother to "De 312", "De 411" also out of the foundation pair "De Kapoen" and "De 08 Duif". This cock also has a long list of top performances. Paired to his half sister "De 309" produced amongst others "De 646 Duif", "De 150 Duif" and "De 16 Duif". These three hens form the base of the current colony in the lofts of Steven van Breemen. "De 646 Duif" was paired to "De Bels" and they became the parents of "De Goede Jaarling". "De 150 Duif" was paired to "Het Boerke" and they became the parents of "Het Boerinneke". "De 16 Duif" along with her partner "De Meeuw" (obtained from Bernhard Achtermann) went to Leo van Leeuwen & Hans van Greiken in Aalmeer. Their so-called "Bonte" line has produced many top pigeons one of which won the 1st National Orleans in 1998.

Slow pigeons paired to each other will never produce pigeons faster than themselves. Therefore if we want faster pigeons we have to get them somewhere else and cross them into our own flock. By fast pigeons I don't mean those that win races flown at high speeds on races longer than 100 km. This type of pigeon often has a wing shape that is suited to these high speeds. I see this type of wing more as a limitation rather than a possibility to make my own pigeons faster. When we attempt to improve we have to watch carefully that we don't take a step backwards.

To me a loft is a fast one when it can produce many top positions at speeds between 1100-1400 meters per minute and obtain these in real pigeon weather at distances from 100-700 km.

Frequent training can appear to make pigeons faster, but this is something the pigeons were given, given to them because of routine. The same can be said for pigeons that are exercised precisely twice a day around the loft. If they get the extra speed because of the effort the fancier puts into them, then I take this into account when making my choice.

I think you now realize that I prefer pigeons with an inherent natural speed. If they have

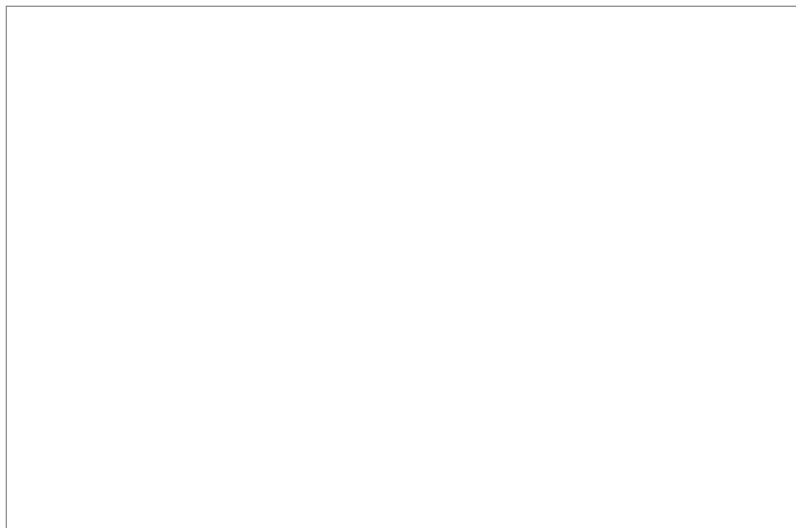
natural inborn speed than you don't have to put a lot of extra effort into their care in order to end up at the top of the race result. It will happen as it were, almost all by itself. We can never have too many of these naturally fast pigeons in our loft!

2.02.4 Talent for a specific distance

The inherent ability to race specific distances is closely related to the quality of the muscles. When evaluating the qualities of a pigeon the muscles will clearly tell us how many kilometres the pigeon can fly with ease. What I mean to say is that if the quality of the pigeon's breast muscles is not tremendous then that pigeon is in fact limited. Often limited to flights around the 400 km mark. That is, flights with only one night in the basket. If such pigeons have to spend two nights in the basket and on top of that have to fly 500 km then they come home totally worn out. Physically they can't handle the stay in the basket and the distance.

The quality of the muscles also determines the bird's endurance. We have to practice judging the quality of the muscles till we almost get cramps in our fingers. To evaluate muscle quality we have to learn how to use our finger tips. We have to learn how to distinguish the minor gradations in muscle quality, learn how to feel the capabilities of the pigeon, the distance it is capable of racing successfully. Some fanciers overestimate tremendously the potential of their pigeons. When the race becomes too difficult this can cost you a loft full of good pigeons. However when estimating the distance a bird can fly we have to judge the value of other important characteristics and relate them to the quality of the muscles.

I'll give you an example. A pigeon with modest muscle quality: 300 km. One with somewhat better muscle quality: 400 km, and one with outstanding muscle quality: 500 km. If this is accompanied with a good skeletal structure then we can attempt: 600 km. A pigeon having excellent fighting spirit or pugnacity can add roughly another 100 km. It is therefore a question of learning how to judge the potential capabilities of the pigeon. The more of the required qualities a pigeon has the more capable the pigeon is of bridging extra kilometres. The opposite is also true. If we don't assess the pigeon's capabilities properly and send it to races it is not suited for than the extra effort required will lead to early wear and breaking the birds will to give it's all. This often happens with intelligent pigeons that have had to go through the wringer and reached their home loft more by luck than smarts. The fancier also has to take external factors into consideration. Sometimes a flight of 450 km with a headwind can be tougher for a pigeon than a flight of 600 km with a tailwind. When you are preparing your pigeons for a race of 350 km, then your feeding methods have to take into account whether the race will be 350 tail wind kilometres or head wind kilometres. This makes a considerable difference.



"De Derby" was bred out of "Romario" a son out of the golden pair "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw" paired to "Het VetBlauw" a daughter out of the Stichelbout foundation pair "De Jonge Munchen" and "Het Klein Blauw". "De Derby" won besides the 1st Orleans against 1853 pigeons also the 1st from

*Niergnies against 4400 pigeons. He also flew the following top prizes:
3rd Etampes, 5483 pigeons 6th Chateauroux, 832 pigeons 7th Strombeek, 5026 pigeons
8th Monlucon, 726 pigeons 11th Orleans 1582 pigeons 26th Orleans National, 11,132 pigeons*

The muscles of long distance pigeons are usually suppler and more elastic than those of all round pigeons. It is a characteristic they are born with and having this type of muscling greatly increases the ability to stay in the air for a long time. A pigeon is born with a specific type of muscle, it either has it or it doesn't. Feeding and training contribute to muscle development (the total number of muscle fibres do not increase but they can increase in volume), but the genetic material brought in by both of its parents determines whether or not a pigeon has a certain type of muscling. You cannot make a long distance pigeon out of a middle distance pigeon with a certain type of training, feeding or preparation. The opposite is also true, naturally, apart from some exceptions. When fanciers enter their favourites in shows they feed them some extra small seeds. The extra muscle that results is not muscle but fat. You cannot feed extra muscles into a pigeon; they have to be bred into the pigeon with the help of correct pairing and selection methods. The longer type of pigeon often seems to have fewer muscles than a pigeon with a shorter keel. As soon as there are fewer points of attachment for the muscles, then such a pigeon often seems to be better muscled than the rest. Actually both types of pigeon have the same amount of muscle. Naturally the same is true for a somewhat deeper keeled pigeon.

In practice a pigeon can have the most fantastic muscling, but if the muscle attachment is not 100% in order, then that pigeon will not be amongst those that fly constantly near the top of the prize list. The breast muscles of a pigeon are attached to the breastbone. Everyone that has studied a dressed pigeon carcass knows that the breast muscle is made up of two parts. The outer part is the part we feel with our fingertips. This is the large breast muscle. The small breast muscles lie under the large breast muscle. A pigeon can fly because the small breast muscle pulls the wings up and after that the large breast muscles immediately pull the wing down.

The small breast extends the wings in a definite tempo and the large breast muscles pull the wings in the same rhythm back towards the body of the pigeon. It speaks for itself that the last part the down stroke requires more strength than the first part the up stroke. Studies have shown that a pigeon has an average wing beat of 300 per minute. To fly a distance of 600 km at an average speed of 1000 meters per minute the pigeon has to raise and lower its wings 180,000 times. These enormous numbers of wing beats show the importance of the quality of the muscles.

How do the muscles work? While one muscle is working (the small breast muscle on the up stroke) the other is resting (the large breast). During this short period of rest the muscle is provided with the oxygen it requires for burning its fuel from the blood stream.

The first form of fuel used to provide energy is glycogen. After flying for a short while the muscles switch to the fats they have stored within them for their source of fuel. When the fats have been used up during a tough race as a last resort the body's own cells are used to fuel the last kilometres to the loft. The result is a pigeon coming home with only its bones and feathers; it has left the rest of itself on the racecourse attempting to come home on a long tough day. It is of great importance to constantly pay attention to the quality of the muscles when selecting our pigeons. It should be obvious to everyone that in order for a pigeon to perform well it requires supple and elastic muscles; they should definitely not be stiff and hard. What is the difference? Supple and elastic muscles have a large supply of capillaries. This allows blood to flow freely to all the muscle fibres. This in turn ensures that all the cells within the muscle fibres are supplied with a good supply of fuel. The ability to store fuel is much

better, as well as the ability to use that fuel.

As I wrote earlier, in order for a pigeon to fly the well-oiled close cooperation of two muscle groups is required. Constantly one group is at work, while the other group rests. The better and longer the one group can do its job, the better and longer the other group can rest. This saves energy and besides energy saving also increases the birds endurance precisely because of its better muscle quality. When purchasing pigeons make sure that at a minimum they have the same muscle quality as yours and if possible have better muscles than your own. This ensures that the quality at least remains the same or increases somewhat, because the inheritance of muscles is intermediate; that is the youngsters inherit the average quality of the muscles of its parents.

Up until 25 years ago I always possessed the old De Smet-Matthijs pigeons. These were old fashioned, when compared to the modern requirements of our competitive racing pigeon sport. At that time they were the best there were: coarse, bony, with a wide bull sized head, they were light and felt as if they didn't have any muscles at all and they had a very aristocratic appearance. They were very dependable racers and at their best between 500 and 800 km with the odd one very good at the over night long distance races. They possessed wonderful deep coloured grey eyes, shiny soft silky feathers and their behaviour in the loft showed a high degree of intelligence. Each and every day that I spent in my loft amongst them was pure enjoyment for me.

I liked them and enjoyed them so much I wasn't interested in any other pigeons. I was definitely in love with them. If another loft didn't have De Smet-Matthijs pigeons I wasn't interested in even visiting it. Janssen's, Tourniers or Delbars, I had heard of them, but I didn't have any idea what they looked like. That changed when in 1976 I became a member of the "P.V. de Eendracht" club in Hilversum where almost everyone raced with Janssen pigeons.

That first year I spent building and filling my new lofts. As a newcomer invitation were quickly given in the vein of: "If you get bored on Saturday don't be afraid to come and watch the birds come home at my place". That's how I ended up becoming involved with the now deceased Jan van Erp, who was like a son at the home of the Boys from Arendonk. He crossed with pigeons of the same origin from fanciers in his own club. They all knew each other's best pigeons and this led him to first get "De 583" from Karel Schlotter. It became one of Jan's foundation pigeons.

Later he acquired offspring out of the direct Janssen's owned by the Combinatie Krouwel. These were forged into a close-knit group of pigeons that immediately impressed me greatly: they were short and compact, they possessed small henny heads, they had eyes that were pigmented heavily and muscles the like of which I hadn't felt till then. At first I bought one pigeon from Jan: "De 08 Duif" and that pigeon became responsible for a total change in my lofts. Everything changed at once.

A whole new type of pigeon was developed and the boss at first had a difficult time learning how to manage them properly. Strength and power, intelligence and character and super muscles, all this together creates a sort of pigeon that you have to learn how to handle. They became all rounders. Pure top prize flyers from 100 to 750 km and all this was made possible solely and only by the muscle quality that that famous "08 Duif" brought with her. Her muscle volume was enormous, but it wasn't only the quantity, it was also the quality. If you played with her muscle bundles with the tips of your fingers and at some point stopped playing, then you could feel her powerful muscles slide back into place, just like that. That is elasticity.

They weren't slack without resistance. That's the way muscle should be. "De 08 Duif" was an exception. She was very exceptional, because after crossing with the Desmet-Matthijs pigeons that I had, I had crossed material with muscles that far surpassed those of the old strain. I was also lucky that these muscles over the years were very dominant in the inheritance. Even in the Desmet-Matthijs birds with which I line bred. That is having all the luck in the world. But it did teach me something. When I purchase a pigeon I now pay very close attention to the muscles to guard against going backwards.

Understandably, you are now curious about how to assess the quality of the muscles. Don't think that you can learn this in just a few days. There are no arts that can be learned quickly. Everything requires some practice, especially the fine points, that is the real art!

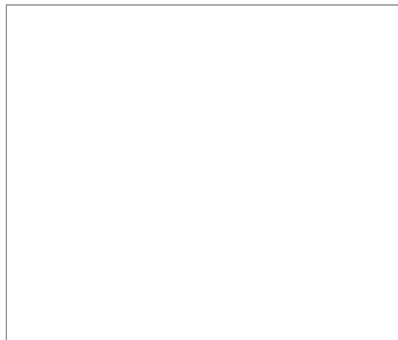
When you take a pigeon into your hands then you have to give it the impression that it is safe. It has to know there is no danger of being harmed. It has to feel safe and secure. Then it will relax and allow itself to be properly evaluated. It makes no sense to immediately hold it tight and firm. The pigeon will tense its muscles as tight as possible and it will feel like you are holding a board. When the bird relaxes and finally rests quietly in your hand then we have to try to shut out the world around us and concentrate only on what we can feel through the tips of our fingers. You have to learn how to feel with them. With our fingertips we can learn to feel life under the skin. A doctor has to learn how to diagnose problems and we pigeon fanciers have to learn how to evaluate the best muscles. This is not easy and requires the utmost concentration. First we hold the bird comfortable and balanced. We begin with a diversion: we stroke the feathers, and arrange the wing and tail feathers if it is needed. We caress and pet the bird. This relaxes the bird and it will become quiter and at the same time we are practicing how to feel with the tips of our fingers. Then we carefully move the feathers away from the breastbone and we gain access to the breast muscle. Carefully we move only our fingertips from the front to the back and back to the front. Then we lightly press, again with only our fingertips and again do the same: from the front to the back and back again. Finally we move our fingertips back and forth, first very carefully and then with some light pressure. Lastly we put considerable pressure on the entire muscle mass with both hands. We do this with both eyes closed, shutting out everything else around us. This will teach us to feel correctly with our fingertips. The rest is practice and more practice. Practice with good pigeons and with poor pigeons, with sprint pigeons and with middle distance pigeons and finally with long distance pigeons. Until, when asked, you can tell someone that this pigeon won't do well past 500 km and in the background you hear them whisper, "How did he know that!" That is when you have become the artist!

2.03.1 The Eye

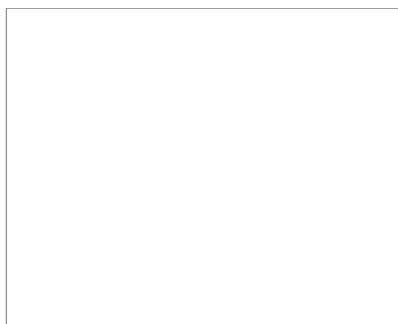
A classic part of evaluating a pigeon is the evaluation of its eye. Every pigeon fancier no matter where in the world you go, while evaluating or judging a pigeon looks at the pigeon's eye. If you ask them: "What do you see?" you get a thousand and one different answers and if you think that I am going to write down and clear up the mystery of the pigeon eye in this chapter, then you are mistaken.

There is no one who with a pigeon in his hands can name all the qualities that pigeon possesses by looking at its eye. That is a utopia. But, there are people who can read more out of a pigeon eye than you would expect.

This requires some practice and after much practice you will get experience. Don't be afraid to use a magnifying lens that enlarges 15x, or glasses that have special magnifying lenses fitted. Piet de Weerd had the help of such a pair of glasses while assessing the pigeon's eye. It certainly is not shameful or eccentric to use these and as we like to say: "Every little thing helps".



The eye of "Het Asgrauw" a daughter of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw". She became the mother of "Rijs" the 1st National Orleans winner in 1996 and the grandmother of Jan Witteveen's 1st National Orleans winner in 1997.



This is the eye of "De Schone" a son of "Het Boerke" and "De 150 Duif". He became the father of "De Zwarte Baron" who won 1st National Etampes in 1996 and father to the cock of the "Golden Pair"(had in 1995 the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th National Hannover) of John Engel & Arne Porsmose in Denmark.

Eye photography by: Peter van Raamsdonk.

The first thing we notice when looking at a pigeon's eye without the use of optical aids is the pupil. The pupil is nothing more than the opening in the coloured iris and the dark black colour is the back or retina of the eye showing through.

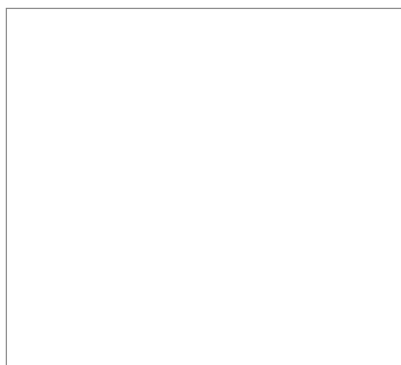
Images are reduced in scale and projected through the lens onto the retina. The retina contains nerve endings that are stimulated by the incoming images. These stimuli are sent to the brain and the brain turns these stimuli into images that the pigeon sees (this is a very simplified description of the actual process).

When we study the eye we have to pay attention to the size of the pupil. A small pupil is important. A large pupil is an indicator of nervousness and a pigeon with less will power. The more hard kilometres that have to be flown, the harder they have to fight for the early prizes, the less often these pigeons are found at front of the results. This is the reason I try to avoid bringing pigeons with large pupils into my strain. They lack some of the required fighters mentality and have a shortage in that which is required to fly to the long tough races in winning style.

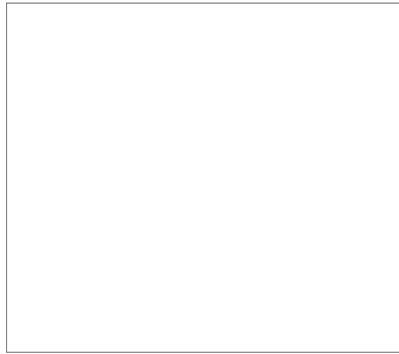
Most ace pigeons have a small pupil. To me an ace pigeon is one that can win under all situations from 100 to 750 km. You can often find pigeons with large pupils amongst the sprinters. Sprint pigeons are not required to regularly perform to their utmost, to fight to the end. They have totally different requirements: speed, intelligence and naturally a great deal of preparation by the trainer-fancier. The more the kilometres stretch out, the more the quality of the pigeon influences the end result. Without strength, supple muscles and character no pigeon can win a race from a distance of 650 km at a speed of 1100 m.p.m. This is why small pupils, to me are of such great importance.

When I study a pigeon's eye I always do so under the same conditions: at my desk with a halogen lamp as a light source. This way the conditions are always identical and the eyes can be accurately studied. I regularly move the pigeon's head away from under the light source. I don't want to see pupils that immediately get very large. Pupils must remain small under all circumstances. Pigeons that have pupils that always remain the same size I regard as useless for either the breeding loft or the race team.

There are always exceptions that prove the rule, but it makes little sense to let exceptions tempt your breeding decisions. That wouldn't be any different than opening the doors of your breeding loft with the hope that your fairy godmother will pay it a visit. Belief me when I tell you that your chances are very small.



The eye of "De Raket" a son of "Het Boerke" and "De 150 Duif", in 1991 he won the 1st prize from Orleans in the distance club "Gooi & Eemland", 2nd in the R7 National against 18,000 pigeons and the 7th National (3 Rayons) against 25,000 pigeons



The eye of "Apollo" a son of "De Bels" and "De 646 Duif". This full brother to "De Goede Jaarling" won several first prize against large competition.

Eye photography by: Peter van Raamsdonk.

The second thing that we notice about the pigeon eye is the iris; we see all the different shades of colour in the circle that lies between the pupil and the colourless cornea, which makes up the top surface of the eye and continues on under the eyelids. The outer edge of the iris is made up of a thin black separate circle, which we racing pigeon fanciers have named after our Belgian colleague, Louis Vermeyen: the Vermeyen-ring.

I'll say it like it is: there is no straightforward definition that will state, (that is the colour and markings in the iris etc.) what an ideal pigeon eye should look like. A lot depends on personal taste and in the evaluation a lot of intuition is used. Every pigeon fancier is free to use his own thoughts and ideas.

I have never made it a secret that I am personally very impressed by a richly coloured eye, provided with the necessary markings and depth. When I say depth of colour I mean abundantly pigmented and the more richly a pigeon eye is pigmented the more beautiful colours it contains. A small pupil surrounded by deep full colours, placed in an "owl like face", where when you look directly at the beak you can see both eyes in their entirety, those are the types of heads I like to see in a pigeon loft.

The head has to radiate personality. A pigeon must have an aura about it. It should have charisma, which is a mixture of intelligence, will power, experience and things like wisdom. It takes years of experience to be able to determine this accurately. It is my contention that a breeder has to have this "something". If a pigeon does not have this unmistakable mysterious "something" poured all over it, then I will not use it as a breeder. Years of experience have taught me that dumb pigeons more easily produce dumb pigeons then clever pigeons bring clever pigeons into the world.

Or a racehorse has never been bred out of two donkeys. Once you have brought a dumb pigeon into your strain it will take years and years of selection to get rid of that dull appearance in your family.

I constantly search for pigeons with expressive faces, faces that give me sufficient information about the future inheritance of this so very important characteristic.

How can we learn to see this and subsequently verify that our personal taste in pigeon eyes is correct? By taking every chance that comes along to get more experience. It comes down to wanting to see and seeing!

Take a look at the youngsters in the baskets when shipping for the early young bird races. You will see all types. The conditions up to now have been relatively easy. But week after week as the conditions become more and more difficult for the birds at the front of the pigeon peloton, the pigeons with the dull pale eyes and the dull expressionless faces begin to disappear.

If you visit a fancier that specializes at the sprint than you will notice that the evenly coloured eyes mostly come to the front and if you subsequently step into a distance loft, you will see completely different eyes: those that have richly coloured with an abundance of pigment.

Every type of pigeon is formed and developed for the purpose for which it is intended. I have had the opportunity to travel to many countries all over the world and have had all types of pigeons in my hands and have been able to closely study their eyes. Everywhere there was a strong similarity in the eyes. The best pigeons always had eyes full of colour. By this I mean, that where colour occurs it must be thick "well mixed" like it is painted on.

There should not be a clear separation of the colours, no; they should run freely into each other. The pigmented capillaries in the "circle of correlation" should run through the coloured section of the iris. There are no definite borders between the rings. It is possible to have many different colours, but then there has to be an intensity of colour from the outer edge to the very inside of the iris. This is all because of the pigment of the pigeon. It indicates that the blood supply flows easily to very ends of the filaments. I maintain that this is an important characteristic and I always watch for pigeons that have it. You see it not only in the eyes but also in the feathers and in the legs.

Pigeon racing is performance sport. In order for a pigeon to perform it has to burn oxygen and energy in its cells. These are transported to the cell by the circulatory system. The better the circulatory system works, the easier it is for a pigeon to deliver top performances week after week. There is no way around it; an efficient circulatory system directly affects the ability to perform. This is mirrored in the thick rich colours in the eyes that often occur in the best pigeons. In reality the deep colours are nothing more than the ends of the microscopically small ends of the capillaries in the iris piled up on each other. The more that are seen together, the more colour there is and the more tints, shades and depth of colour shows.

Don't only look at a pigeon eye squarely, but look at it from the back and from the front from the side of the beak. Looking at the eye from the sides will allow you to more easily see the irregularity of the surface of the iris. It should look granular, that is the type I like best.

If you gather together 100 class pigeons, then at least three quarters of them will have the type of eye that I have described above. Mind you: I am talking about class pigeons, that is what we are directing our efforts towards, aren't we?

The other quarter is also made up of good pigeons, but to me they are those that can be considered exceptions and I have already explained to you several times that there is a greater advantage to working with a certainty than with exceptions. Still the remaining 25% have also performed tremendously and that shows that these pigeons possess sufficient other outstanding characteristics that enable them to perform at a very high level.

This points out that we should never blindly stare at one and the same characteristic the way many English fanciers do with the valid eye theory and way Vanderschelden and other fanciers did at the time that they tried to impose the wing theory. Every theory has its good points and

has some validity. They are the raisins in the porridge and the more raisins that float in the porridge the more clients come to eat at the restaurant!

If the eye is filled with those red coloured clouds, then that is a certain indication of the richness of the blood supply to that eye. This has nothing to do with grainy pigments, but is a result of the very thin capillaries that appear on the surface of the iris. The result is that the iris, which normally would have been a different colour, now takes on a blood red colour. Here I also like to see that this colour completely covers the entire iris. The amount and the coverage and the characteristic colour in turn give you an idea about the efficiency of the blood supply and this has a close correlation to the efficiency of the blood supply to the rest of the pigeon's body.

If the colours and the graininess over the surface appear like a well-used artist's pallet, then we can be assured that the circulatory system is in excellent order and that the circulatory system in the rest of the body is in equal order.

The eye in its totality gives an indication of the natural form of a pigeon, of the vitality, which lies at the base of its athletic ability. I very strongly favour eyes, that every day of the year, are coloured and pigmented the same. This regularity of colour and pigmentation indicates a very high natural vitality. This natural vitality belongs to a type of pigeon that like cash, you can take them to the bank they are that dependable. They are very easy to bring into and keep in form.

I firmly believe that a good circulatory system is responsible for and is at the basis of vitality and staying constantly in form during the racing season. The vast majority of champion pigeons that I have had in my hands and studied no matter where in the world, had strong eyes. Can I then not presume that the numbers speak for themselves??? Don't I have a reason to strongly disagree with anyone who tries to diminish the importance of the quality of the eye??

The amount of form and vitality depends on the abundance of blood in the total organism. When a pigeon comes into form, it comes into form because of the sudden improvement of the blood flow throughout the body.

The easiest way to monitor this increase in blood flow is through the eyes. Just look at a pigeon that has been away for a few days and comes home late from a very tough race. Under these conditions its total organism is extremely fatigued. Agreed?

If you subsequently look at this pigeon's eye, all the colours will have disappeared. Agreed? Then isn't it logical to link the degree of blood flow through the body with the deep colours of the eye?? Agreed?

What about those light grey eyes of the Janssen pigeons? In principle most of the Janssen pigeons were created for the short racecourse. Other characteristics are of greater importance, such as character, intelligence and speed. These races are finished as fast as a fart and the pigeons only have to stay in the air for a few hours. In this case the characteristics that are closely related to vitality are not as decisively important.

We have discussed the Vermeyen ring earlier, but not as extensively as the pupil and the iris. There is still a one ring that can often be seen between the pupil and the iris: the circle of correlation. The circle of correlation often has a grey or black colour and can be a whole, half

or quarter circle, sometimes as a real circle and sometimes as a heavily notched star shape in the iris. Depending on the different appearances of the circle many fanciers maintain that they can deduce the value of several characteristics. This means that there have been many debates about the circle of correlation, about the importance, about the shape and about the colour. I have to admit that I think there is a kernel of truth in it, but also a very large untruth. Because I think that it is more of a strain related characteristic. The old De Smet-Matthijs pigeons had it very strongly and the Meulemans pigeons had it.

But I have handled quite a large number of top class pigeons that didn't have it. Regrettably this means we can't use the circle of correlation as a gauge of class or no class in a pigeon, which is too bad, because such a small indicator of quality or no quality would have made it very easy.

The Vermeyen ring speaks less to the imagination of the fanciers. This ring forms the separation between the colourful outer edge of the iris and the rest of the eye, which is white in colour.

Even though this is only a very fine ring, I think the Vermeyen ring is an important gauge for determining the degree of form in a pigeon. The colour of the ring can change in intensity from dark black/brown to light grey or something else.

I think that with the increase of form in a pigeon, the colour of the Vermeyen ring intensifies. This means that you should imprint in your memory the colour of each pigeons Vermeyen ring under normal conditions. Then you can use it to indicate whether a pigeon is coming into form or whether it is going out of form. It becomes a question of winning or losing, of sending it or keeping it home. Try it sometime.

Up to now we have looked squarely and directly at the iris and each eye separately. This allows us to see that most, that's right. Still we have to look at the eye from another angle, namely we have to look from the point of the beak. I like to be able to see as much as possible of both eyes. This total picture gives us a dependable impression of the intelligence of a pigeon.

Pigeons where you cannot see the entire area of the eye I don't readily use for breeding. Look and compare them yourself and in the end you will have to agree with me that under this type, most of the good ones lurk.

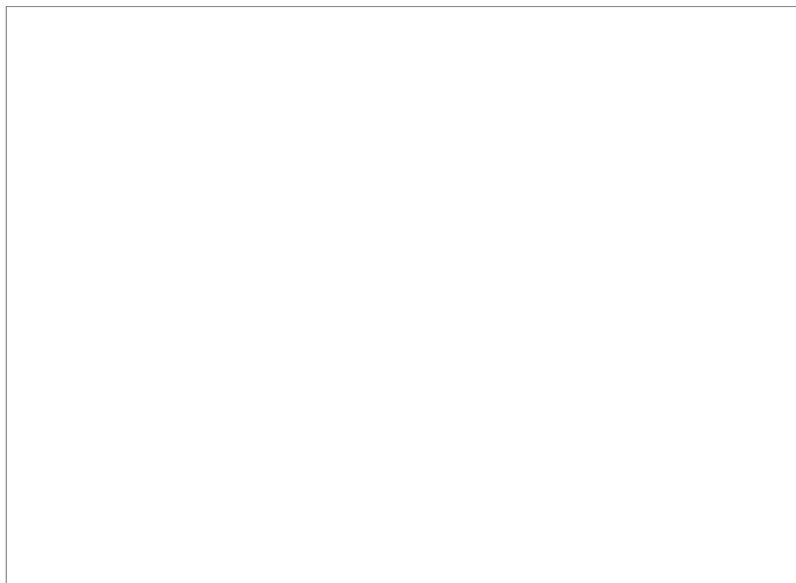
2.03.2 The Vitality Story

Vitality can be described as: strength, vigour, having an aura of health, the direct opposite of which would be: sickness, weakness and susceptibility to illness.

Pigeons are strongly dependent on vitality, either during the races or while breeding. Vitality is often something of the moment. The state of the birds' vitality at a particular time will determine what we can expect from the bird at that time.

But the real breeders have vitality as an inherent factor: they have received all their attributes in the right proportions from their parents. That does not happen to same the degree to all our pigeons, super breeders as we all know are few and far between. That is why it is simple to explain why most good racers never become good breeders. Within each pair of breeders the degree of vitality, which both parents bring into the pairing, is of decisive importance. If they aren't successful then we say that this pairing doesn't click, they don't fit together. The vitality brought into a pairing is of the utmost importance. Without it the potential of their offspring is limited: speed, strength, endurance are only some of the important characteristics that are directly related to vitality. In nature a female chooses a partner with an abundance of vitality. To her he has an aura health and strength.

If she doesn't she endangers the survival of her species. In our pigeon lofts it is us who determine which partners will make up our breeding pairs. We have to endeavour to pair them as best we can. Whether or not we have good race results in the future is in our own hands right from the beginning!



This is the famous "Kleinen". He was bred out of "De Witpen Compiengne" out of the wonder pair "De Blauwe Compiengne" X "De Meulemans Duivin" I reacquired from the Bros. Vonk from Nigtevecht paired to "Gisele", a daughter out of the "Zwarte Baron" (father to 1st Nat. Etampes '96) with the foundation hen "Het Boerinneke". "De Klienen" in '95 and '96 was 2nd Ace pigeon One day distance in the Fondclub "Gooi & Eemland" and won:
1st National Orleans '98 13,250 pigeons (8 minutes ahead)
1st St. Ghislain 3310 pigeons.
3rd Strombeek Prov. 6183 pigeons (behind 2 loft mates)
6th Etampes 1554 pigeons 8th Bourger 867 pigeons
8th St. Ghislain 4455 pigeons 12th Montlucon 728 pigeons
18th Bourges 881 pigeons

The foundation of a good loft of pigeons in my eyes depends heavily on the quality of the breeding hens. To my way of seeing things the hens have more influence on endurance, strength and speed than the cock. I think the cock has more influence on the personality and the character of the offspring. Excellent breeding hens are more often found in pedigrees than cocks. In my experience this is because she is the one who is most responsible for bringing vitality into the pairing. When I pair my pigeons to begin breeding, I think it is an absolute must that the breeding hens are in top condition. The vitality at that very first moment (the fertilization and the development of the egg), in my opinion, has a strong influence on the development of the offspring. The quality of different rounds of youngsters from the same breeding pair in the same year can vary greatly. The following year the same pair of breeders sometimes doesn't produce anything worthwhile. The youngsters don't develop well; they are susceptible to sickness and are easily lost while racing.

These are all matters that are directly related to the degree of the vitality the parents have at the time of the youngsters' development. It is important that a breeding hen in her turn over several generations produces more breeding hens. A hen line like this on your loft is invaluable. They can easily be used to cross onto an inbred line and with their inherent vitality blow new life into it. Think about it: these are the most essential elements of breeding!

I move young hens that possess enormous vitality directly to the breeding loft without batting an eyelid. You understand of course that they also have to have many more good characteristics. With young hens that do have these other good characteristics but don't yet show enough vitality we have to be patient. I let them take part in some races and allow them to raise a round or two of youngsters, which gives me the chance to observe them closely. I dislike shy stressful hens; often they lay thin-shelled eggs, which I blame on a lack of vitality. Bringing this type of hen into your line means decline.

When you hold a pigeon in your hands the bird's vitality has to be felt directly or seem to jump to your fingertips. In a fraction of a second you have to feel it: this one has it and this one doesn't have it. Acquiring the ability to feel this requires practice, practice and more practice. Take every opportunity to practice: hold the extra good pigeons in your hands every chance you get. Then observe and compare, those and to the ones at home. The types of pigeon, sprint, middle distance, all round (100-700km) or long distance, the differences are considerable. This does not make our task any easier.

I will try to describe the feeling you should look for in your fingertips. A vital pigeon in your hands give a feeling of strength and robustness or power. The total frame is solid and is firmly constructed. The pear shape often answers this description best and therefore I prefer it in my personal breeding program. You should be able to carefully put pressure on all sides of the chest with your hands and not hear a wheezing sound accompanied by a quick release of air. When a light pressure is put on the breastbone it should not produce a mass of excrement because of the pressure put on the intestines. Please be careful when exercising these tests, what is light pressure for one, for someone else can break bones or worse. Open or so-called loose vent bones have never caused me any concern. A powerfully built pigeon has to have its muscles attached firmly to a well shaped strong keel, enabling it to work tirelessly at the head of the pigeon peloton. Further the frame has to protect the lungs and the air sacs.

Fanciers that visit my lofts and handle my pigeons often remark that my pigeons have very soft feathering. I think good feather quality is dependent on good vitality and is related to vigour.

Often you already see it when the youngsters are in the nest. Youngsters weaned off with

many fret marks in their feathers indicate a lack of vitality. The outside four flight feathers should show great flexibility and should be curved down slightly. When pigeons have to stay in the air for a long time on their trip home, you often see that the four outside flights are curved up. If this is the rule more than an exception, then the pigeon is extremely inefficient while flying because it is difficult for it to produce power. This handicap means that these pigeons are more or less obliged to calmly fly home. Very seldom will you find an ace amongst them.

The tail should be a compact whole. I don't think the tail is anything more than a tool for enabling it to turn right or left. Pigeons that quickly raise their tails up are not my favourites. It is a sign of poor balance and it's best not to have too many of these types on our lofts.

There are many things that directly influence the vitality of a pigeon. The loft is of great importance. Arie van den Hoek always spoke of the three K's (koud, kil and klam) or translated to mean: damp and cold or chilly and of course he was right!! Make sure the loft is dry, light and warmed by the sun and has perfect ventilation.

Disease can have a great influence on vitality. A young pigeon that has to fight an e-coli attack will lose its flesh and in no time there is nothing left of it. The same thing happens if it gets a paratyphoid infection. The degree of an ornithoses infection will determine how late a pigeon returns home from a race if it returns at all. In cases like these it would be best to get help from a veterinarian specializing in racing pigeons. If the problem returns there is something not right with your loft or with the natural vitality of your pigeons. The solution is to get your hammer and saw or be more selective about the birds you breed out of. There are also external factors that can influence the vitality of your pigeons, such as: stress caused by several nights in the shipping trailer, overcrowding, bad quality feed or the wrong method of feeding, attacks by raptors etc.

Besides what you can feel with the tips of your fingers there are other ways of determining the degree of vitality of a pigeon; things that you can see with your eyes. You can agree or disagree with what I am going to put down on paper. No problem, after all tastes and ideas fortunately can differ. Observe the wild pigeons living in the large city squares. I don't want to get into a discussion on the overall health of these city pigeons, but I think there is one thing that you will have to agree with and that is that those pigeons that have the least amount of natural vitality will be the first ones that go to meet their maker. Very soon these less vital ones disappear from the flock in the square. Then we look for the common denominator of those that are left: many dark blues and dark cheques. The cheque colour has depth and the blue ones are very dark. I feel that the degree of pigmentation is directly related to the degree of natural vitality. I have noticed that pigeons with strong colours often are very firmly put together. Wild pigeons require a natural type of protection. I think that it may be their colours. You don't see those bright blues and light cheques, the old recognizable Janssen types, you just don't see very many of them living in the city squares.

Jan Aarden's, Horemans, Hornstras and Hermans those are the types that you see living in the towns and cities. Pigeons with strong deep colours make up the largest numbers, deep dark cheques, brick reds and blacks with very few white flights. Do you think it's coincidence?

Sometimes I visit lofts in order to keep an eye on what is going on in the pigeon world. I am not impressed if on one of these lofts I see too much of the same, for example all blues. If you pair them together for several generations then the blue bands acquire a paler and lighter colour. This is also a form of inbreeding, constantly pairing the same colour pigeons together. Sometimes this happens because it is a characteristic of the strain, and it is easier for the clients to recognize it. Often the managers of such lofts have to pull out all the tricks to keep

their pigeons healthy. Treatments for canker are a normal practice for them. That can never be good. On the other hand you won't win many prizes flying those wild city pigeons either. The truth, as you know, always lies somewhere in the middle!

What we are looking for is natural vitality, the vitality that is provided by Mother Nature, right from the start. Having a strong natural vitality will ensure that now and in the future the pigeon will have more reserves than all its competitors on the flight home. The exertion that is required will affect the pigeons overall constitution to a lesser degree than that of normal pigeons and the effort can easily be repeated several weeks in a row. It seems as if there is nothing to it, while the average pigeon has great difficulty keeping up. From the average pigeon you don't have to expect a repeat of the top performance the following week. It will require a longer period of time to rebuild its reserves and reacquire its previous form. Often such pigeons need help from the man in the white lab coat. I try to keep it completely natural. I want pigeons that besides a canker treatment and some natural products don't need anything else. I don't think I have to explain to anyone what will happen: week after week many pigeons at the top of the race sheet will become normal for you. Naturally we have to make sure that all the other important attributes are also present. I select as regularly as a clock and always for vitality. My management methods would be considered quick simple by most and pigeons that have problems staying healthy are quickly culled. Pigeons that have a large dose of vitality glow every day. That's the way it has to be!

Usually in the winter the yearlings are moved to the race loft and there they begin their first battles to try to win one of the best nest boxes. After they are paired up they take their battles more seriously and sometimes fight almost to the very end of their strength. When they begin to brood everything settles down but when the youngsters are hatched and covering the bowl, peace in the loft quickly goes downhill.

The pigeons I like are the ones that have ink coloured oil spots in their feathers and whose exercise periods become longer and more intense at this time. During this time try to select them as much as possible and if you don't have faith in your selections, write down your findings, at the end of the season you can check to see if you were right. The following year you will have more confidence in your observations. If you keep it up year after year, you will eventually end up with a loft of pigeons that are easily kept healthy. Most importantly they will, with little effort on your part, easily come into form and hold that form for long periods of time!

Pigeons that always glow and sparkle in the loft, pigeons with tight clear heads, pigeons that are always the right weight and don't lose their muscle mass when bringing up a pair of youngsters, pigeons that can endure extra effort on the way home. "Eat little and still get fat", is what Piet de Weerd would say.

I would put it this way: "by having an optimal natural vitality they use a minimum amount of energy!" These are the characteristics of the greatest importance in the pigeon racing sport. Don't pull the wool over your eyes. Try to test your pigeons, when breeding, when training. In the winter when they aren't being stressed let them go without food for a day. The pigeons that hang onto the edge of your coat the next day and quickly lose weight are not the ones that impress me. As soon as the race gets longer and or harder and their systems are taxed they are the first ones to send in their letter of resignation.

Try it the other way also, for a while let them eat what ever and how much they want. The real class pigeons don't easily get fat, their organism knows that they need too much extra. Good pigeons don't get hungry in the basket. They are always fit and this will show itself during the

races. If in the winter you have many fat pigeons, select them out. The real extra pigeons are never very fat. Watch for it you'll see that I'm right!

There are other tools we can use to determine the bird's condition. These are calm regular breathing and a pressure test. When doing the last test I have to ask you to use some caution and to be careful. Not everyone knows how to use his hands gently, some hands are stronger than others. The amount of pressure can also be learned and will take some practice and in this case very careful practice. It is putting steady even pressure with the right hand as it glides from the front to the back of the keel. Pigeons that murmur or make a grumbling sound and quickly open their beaks or those where some of their internal contents are pushed back between the vent bones are not the pigeons that belong to the strong or powerful type. It is difficult to race them every week during the race season because their organism doesn't function, as it should. They can't handle the longer or tougher races. Often with these pigeons when you open their beaks, you see a trachea big enough to move a marble through. Pigeons that are too heavy usually don't react to this test successfully, but like I wrote earlier: the real class pigeons hardly ever get fat. When you are almost done assessing the pigeon it should be lying quietly in your hands. It should be breathing calmly. Worn out pigeons have a higher and more irregularly rate of respiration. Try practising the following some time. Count the number of times the pigeon you are holding breathes over a set number of seconds. After much practice there will come a time when doing this will become routine. Hold one for a short time and you know, yes this one has a lot of wear and tear and this one is strong as steel. You can determine all this by how calmly the pigeon breathes. Pigeons that have a slow rate of respiration will be able to increase it with increased exertion. A sudden increase in a pigeon's normal rate of respiration indicates it is not quite right. It would be prudent to keep it home an extra week. They have probably had to dig a little too deep while speeding home during the last race. Some pigeons keep a high respiration rate after a tough race. They are worn out and will never return to their former state. If this pigeon is good enough to use as a breeder it would be better to retire it from the race team. All the shine and glow is pure illusion and if entered in another tough race it will likely never come back.

Don't condemn a pigeon because it failed one part of the exam. We try to assemble together as many plus points as possible. If we use a pigeon to breed out of then we try to find a partner for it that cancels out its minus points with opposite plus points. The youngster then should inherit the average of the best and the worst attributes of the parents. But be careful not to work with too many bad attributes at the same time, you'll see that won't work out no matter how you turn it!

Naturally I have tried to see if the practice and feeling I have acquired in my fingertips also worked when judging the value of a young bird. I'll quickly give you the answer: I soon stopped, because when judging or assessing young birds many mistakes are easily made.

One year I made notes on the quality of my young birds as I weaned them. After a few years I realized I was just wasting my time. Young pigeons take a year to develop into adulthood and only after completing the main moult does it make any sense to try to make a judgement that could be characterized as being reliable.

As just weaned squeakers they can show some very nice characteristics. Later you think how in heaven's name is it possible that earlier you thought so much of it. Some as youngsters seem like they are made up of two parts and later grow out as strong as a block of concrete in your hands.

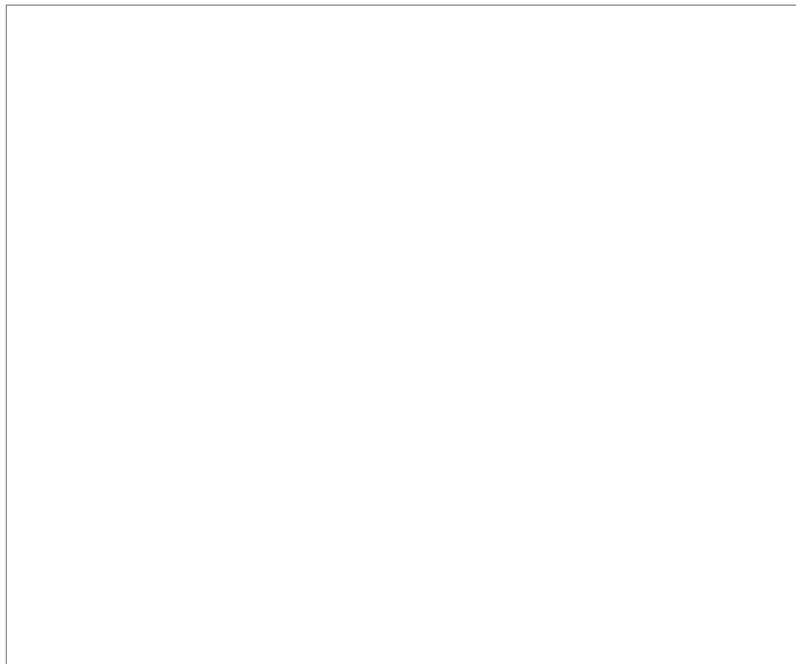
Some old pigeons require an extra year to grow out fully. With these you can also make some

substantial mistakes in judgement. Usually I don't like to assess or pass judgement on a young bird till after they moult as a yearling. It is not till then that they have become fully developed mature pigeons. They now have acquired the necessary experience by taking part in a number of races from various distances. The muscles are now fully developed. The eyes are full of colour and deeply pigmented. If we judge pigeons at this age we will make the fewest mistakes because they are fully mature and if we lack sufficient experience in assessing the quality of our pigeons it is at this age that we will make the fewest mistakes due to our lack of experience. Therefore I have patience when it comes to passing judgement on the quality of a young bird and select mainly by the race performances of the youngster and it's on average high degree of vitality.

Therefore good vitality is directly due to an efficient and strong total organism. Such pigeons after a strenuous race usually recuperate very quickly. It has to do with an efficient circulatory system leading to a good blood supply. Such pigeons have eyes that are clear, eyes that sparkle and shine all the time. They have eyes that are fully and strongly coloured. The Vermeyen ring is black and has definite borders. After handling these pigeons your hands are full of bloom. The feathers of these pigeons are almost with exception silky smooth and soft. Pigeons from a vital family last a long time in the breeding loft, up to a ripe old age they bring up youngster effortlessly. If you have a team of pigeons like this you don't have a care in the world. The only worry you have is keeping it this way...

2.03.3 The bone structure

In my eyes a pigeon's bone structure is also a quality that is closely connected to its vitality. In the fall when I am selecting the birds and in the winter when I am deciding on pairings, I handle my pigeons much more often than in the summer. In the summer only a glance at how the birds are exercising around the loft is sufficient to know if they are in order. If you exercise the tips of your fingers often and if you store the data you obtained in your "computer", then you will sometimes notice differences in the strength and resilience of the pigeons bone structure. This decrease in vitality is influenced by the decrease in exercise, different and lighter feed and the changing of the seasons and can in my experience be felt by the amount of tension in the bone structure. Years ago we were influenced by the then unwritten rule that a beautiful pigeon = a good pigeon and an overwhelming amount of attention was paid to the bone structure of the pigeon. The breastbones had to be the thickness of one's small finger and the vent bones had to be strong closed and lie almost against the end of it. Over time we have come to think differently about this notion, because everything in the pigeon sport beginning with "too" as we know generally has a price influencing the speed of the pigeon. The only place where such pigeons can still score is at the shows and nowhere else. A strong skeleton with closed vent bones is easy for a show judge to feel and easy to evaluate and also easily verified by others. But as soon as feeling and experience on characteristics that directly influence performance are required, then everything changes quickly. If we make a list of approved show judges and sift out the ones that have good performing flocks of racing pigeons, then the list would be very short....



This is "Het Ooievaartje 207" she comes out of the breeding pair from Pieter Beerda from Ter Idzard. In 1987 as a youngster she was the Best National Young Bird in the National Competition "Wie Heeft Ze Beter". She was raced mostly to a nest and won prizes from Minderhout up to and including Bourges for more than 13,000 points. At that time a record. Her full brother a year later was 2nd in the National Orleans against 28,500 pigeons. "Het Ooievaartje 207" was sold to Taiwan where her offspring won various Derby races for the loft of Dhanin.

Foto: Peter van Raamsdonk.

It is my experience that if "too" begins the description of a characteristic it will cause another characteristic to in turn begin with "too". A bone structure that is too thick will cause pigeons to be too heavy and too slow. You will see pigeons with thick legs sticking out from under them, from which after five or six years you will have to cut the bands off. The feathers become over abundant on top of the back and further disaster appears in the enormously large heads they often possess. They have become good looking pigeons, but slow pigeons because of all the extra ballast that this type of pigeon has to drag along. The modern racing pigeon does not weigh one gram too much, because excess weight will take a toll while racing home: the pigeon will lack sufficient speed. The modern pigeon when compared to those before World War 2 are built much finer. Still there are any number of fanciers that keep insisting that a pigeon requires a strong bone structure to perform well. They are right! The difference lies between the old fashioned pigeons and the pigeons that are "too" modern. The difference sits between "too" strong and "too" weak. The too modern type has too thin bones and its skeleton has become flexible. The old fashioned type has bones that are too massive and too thick and that makes for an overall too heavy structure that is not streamlined. To walk the right path down the middle of the road, again will require much practice. We need a type of pigeon that has strong and light bones. Bones with a thick wall and filled with air. Light because of their specific gravity, this makes it very complicated, because we have to learn to use our hands as a type of weight scale and at the same time relate the whole of the pigeon to that weight and evaluate the quality of its bones. This is not an easy task. I have to say it, but there is no other way, the old fashioned type is too slow. We all know it. The type that is directly opposite to it has become "too" modern and this type also has its limitations. These are the real speed demons with which all the records up to 400 km can be broken, if everything is in their favour. That is the weather, the wind, the drag; it's loft position, a perfect pigeon for those fanciers that like to fly the sprint and middle distance races. But, as soon as this type of pigeon is tested, then quickly they show their limitations. Head wind, a Chateauroux at a distance of 650 km and a stiff 540 km Orleans fourteen days earlier under their wings, an extra night in the basket, which requires a different sort of preparation, these are all factors that severely test the organism of our birds. Do you still find it strange that when they are tested quite a few pigeons quickly give up the ghost??

We have to search for pigeons that can take the heavy going. Pigeons whose bones are not filled with calcium but are filled with air. Pigeons that have the ability to more easily stay in the air and do so a little more comfortably. The walls of the bones are thick enough to withstand the extra pressure from our hands when use a little strength. These are pigeons that can take a heavier workload because of their stronger organism. They can take a bit of wear and tear and if they happen to have the ability to pass this characteristic on to their offspring we have taken another step down the road to successfully practicing our pigeon sport.

Jan Ouwerkerk from Lekkerkerk is one of the few fanciers I know that pays close attention to the pigeons bone structure. By evaluating only the quality of my birds bone structure he was able to pick out the best ones. Naturally that piqued my curiosity enormously. The first time he did this I was too dumbfounded to remember exactly what he thought of each pigeon so one evening I took several baskets of pigeons to him to again let him evaluate them. This time I paid close attention. Now I had the necessary material to make comparisons on my own loft and could compare "good", "bad" and "this one just makes it" to each other. Evening after evening I compared till I acquired the feel for the strength and specific gravity of the bone structure in my fingers and this feeling I could now successfully fit in to my breeding and selection methods. To acquire this feeling is a matter of practice, practice and practicing again. Practice with pigeons and sometimes taking a lesson from the textbook of a master who understands and knows the essence of the subject.

Why since the practical lesson I received from Jan Ouwerkerk do I put so much stress on a strong but light bone structure? As we said above the extra air in the bones cavities gives to pigeon a superior capability to stay in the air. The entire pigeon becomes lighter in its specific

gravity.

Anatomically we know that the bones provide the attachment points for the muscles and since the modern homing pigeon is a racing machine, it is dependent on its muscles for good race performances. Good muscles and a good bone structure are therefore inextricably linked to each other. A poor bone structure will cause the muscles to tire quickly and that is exactly what we have just said about the too modern type: they have limitations. Perhaps the muscles want to continue, but the bone structure says: stop, this far and no farther. The muscles have no choice but to give up. A strong, light bone structure functions as a type of spring while the muscles are stretching and pulling. If that spring gives too much then it takes extra strength for the muscles to move the wings up and down. The muscles will tire sooner and the pigeon will have to decrease its speed during the longer and more difficult races. That is why I like pigeons with strong shoulders. If you use some extra pressure in order to pick them up so that they don't slide out of your hands, then the shoulders should not give too much. This is a characteristic of pigeons that have wings that hang like loose sand from their bodies. These pigeons also have limitations.

I also am very fond of pigeons with a short back wing, pigeons that have the wing built as close as possible to their bodies. That ensures a lower workload for the muscles. There is no extra energy lost and the wings don't lose speed through the short back wing. A wide, long back wing belongs to slow pigeons. This type of wing drifts easily with the wind and a lot of air escapes between the body and the last secondary.

Anatomically we also learned that the skeleton gives protection to the organs that are stored within it. If you put light pressure on the sides of the chest with your thumb and finger then there should not be a puff of air escaping from the pigeon's lungs. If you do the same thing with your thumb on the back and the rest of your fingers spread over the breastbone, then the organs have stay in place within the breast cavity.

At last we come to the vent bones. Fanciers that have read some of the articles I have written know that I pay little attention to the vent bones. You can easily lay two fingers between the end of the breastbone and the vent bones on most of the pigeons in my lofts. It has not stopped my type of pigeon from performing at the top of the results at all distances up to 750 km. What I don't like are vent bones that almost push out through the skin, this kind of vent bone indicates a deficiency during the development of the skeleton.

When we evaluate the bone structure of young pigeons we have to be very careful. Young pigeons take a long time to develop and some strains can take as long as two years before you can make a proper assessment of their bone structure. Because young pigeons take such a long period of time to grow out fully I place a lot of importance making sure during their first year of development to provide as many of the building bricks as possible. That begins when pairing the parents and providing them regularly with vitamins and minerals. Everything has to be present in order for the fruit to ripen properly.

Once the youngsters are hatched I do the same: grit, pickstone, and by-products such as P40 and Entrodex in abundance. I also believe that a pigeon should be able to feed its young whenever it thinks it is necessary. My breeders have, through the use of a type of automatic feeder, feed in front of them all day without being able to spill any of it. It is also necessary to fill the reservoir of the automatic feeder with the best feed available. Ripened by that yellow ball in the sky that is responsible for all life on earth. Don't be afraid to get rid of youngsters that don't do well with this type of care. You can be sure they will never become good ones. I keep up this extra care when the youngsters are weaned and put in their own loft. The first weeks they get lots of strong feed so that they keep on growing and later when they start exercising and during training, somewhat lighter but still, nutritious feed. When the races start then I make sure that they have sufficient fuel in the tank, so their growth and development is slowed as little as possible. After the big moult, in the winter when all the pigeons handle as naturally as possible (no more condition because of racing and training), is the first time I dare to evaluate my youngsters as to the quality of their bone structure.

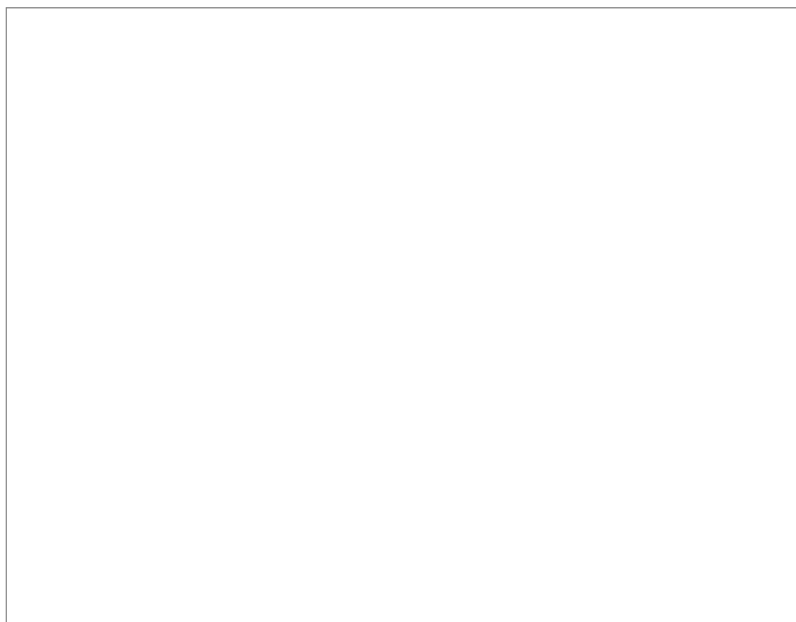
Naturally there is a certain type, that is, the way a pigeon is put together, that gets my

preference. The sprint and middle distance pigeons are on average a bit shorter and the long distance pigeons a bit longer. My type of pigeon is on average somewhere in between the two. The breastbone is of average length and I prefer a somewhat deeper type, but still having little weight, a pigeon having the breastbone hanging out under the pigeon a bit. This will cause the attachment points (which by all types are in number equal) of the muscles to be somewhat further apart. If you can provide this type with very supple muscles and a short forearm to transfer the muscle strength to the wings, then the pigeon will be able to fly much easier and therefore much longer than its competitors that one by one come because of their shortcomings have to slow down or stop. Because this type of pigeon has the muscles situated over a larger area they give the impression of being poorly muscled. The opposite is in reality true. The total amount of muscle in all types of pigeon is always the same. What we need to do is evaluate the quality of these muscles and that again means practice and more practice with the right material to make comparisons.

2.03.4 Balance

Balance is closely connected to the birds bone structure, that's why I will write this short chapter on balance directly after the chapter on bone structure. Balance does not necessarily turn a pigeon into a champion, but that does not mean that it is not a significant characteristic. If the pigeon is balanced it does not have to expend extra energy and strength when it is flying. Strength and energy should be used as much as possible for forward locomotion. Yes, but you may have noticed that in the preceding chapter I said that I prefer a somewhat deeper pigeon and that undoubtedly does help the pigeons balance. How come?

If you had noticed the preceding than you are absolutely right. I will exaggerate somewhat to get my point across; a somewhat deeper pigeon will almost fall forward head over heels when it flies, but not if its wings are attached high enough! If its wings are almost attached to its neck then they will again lift the pigeon's body up into the air. This is the type of pigeon that in my judgement has an advantage when flying into headwinds. It can because of its greater volume produce extra strength, when compared to a smaller pigeon. The headwinds as such do not have a negative influence. The reverse of course is true with heavy tail winds, then this type of pigeon has a disadvantage when compared to a pigeon that has its wings attached somewhat lower. Moving the wings up and down harder or with more strength with strong tailwinds in any case is impossible. What helps the pigeon with the lower wing attachment in this case is the somewhat extra forward speed it gets from the larger back wing that this type usually has. Since many sprint and middle distance races average higher speeds than the one-day distance races I would take this into consideration when making my selections, if the distances I wanted to specialize at were up to 400 km. Further than 500 km the average speed slows down considerably due to fatigue, and the type of pigeon with lower attached wings hardly ever plays a role in the fight for the places of honour.

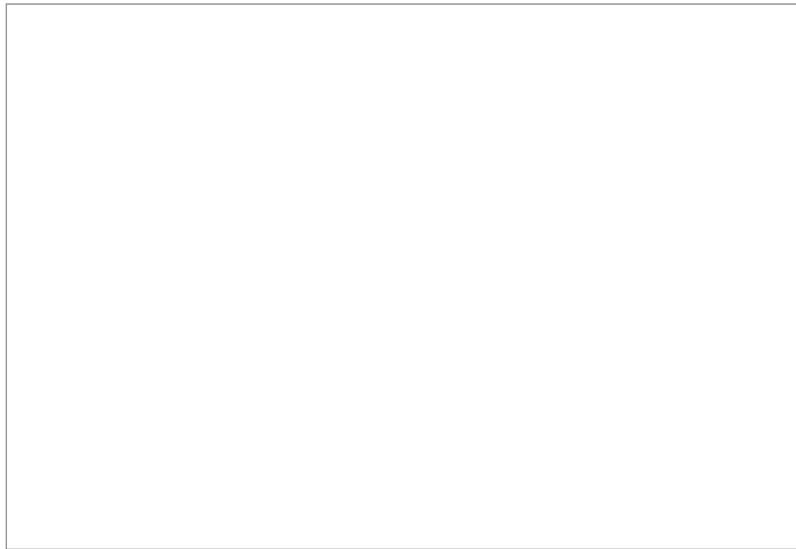


This is her: "Het Schoon Blauw". She was purchased at the total sale of Gerrit van Maasdijk from Wijchen in December of 1986. Three of her children placed in the top 10 Ace Pigeons of the Netherlands: 3rd, 5th, and 7th. Her grandchildren were, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th etc. Ace Pigeons in various National Competitions. Her direct offspring won first prizes National for 5 generations. If there ever were to be a list of the best breeding hens made up, then surely she would be listed amongst the top ten!

To be balanced a pigeon must be light in weight. Heavy pigeons are automatically unbalanced and that applies to short pigeons that are also wide in front. If you let this type of pigeon fly from your hands you can hear the air swoosh as a result of the large amount of air being displaced. They land with a thud on the ground. The other side of the coin is that they require extra strength when flying up to their nest box or when coming up to speed at the beginning of a race. Unbalanced pigeons and those that are too heavy, tire more quickly than other pigeons, I don't think I have to explain this to you, do I?

2.03.5 The Quality of the Feathers

We all want to see pigeons with silky soft, shiny feathers. That is a wish that most of us find easy to express. We would also love to believe that these silky soft shiny feathers are a positive, allowing our birds to perform at a higher level. Unfortunately it isn't so. It is thought to be a plus if the pigeon has a silky soft coat, but we have to be careful that it is not a surplus of softness. Anything in the pigeon sport that begins with "too" unfortunately translates into extra ballast for the pigeon to carry on the way home. The old pre war pigeons all had without exception first class feathering. The first exceptions were the intensely inbred Stichelbouts just after the war and the feather quality of the Janssen pigeons proved that soft feathers were not necessary for top results in the races. They were the first examples of the modern racing pigeon that we are all familiar with today.



Three racing pigeon fanciers that are constantly searching for better racing pigeons all over the world. Jan Grondelaars (third from left), Prapat Pilunthanakul from Bangkok, Thailand, (first from right) and Steven van Breemen (second from left). All three have many first prizes National in their own countries.

The quality of the feathers is also related to the pigeons bone structure and if the young bird lacks for nothing while growing then in most cases it's feathering will be in good order. Every set back will be marked by a kink or a dent. If the quality of the feathering is well below average in most cases it can be blamed on shortcomings during the pigeons growth or during the moult. If in general feather quality is lacking somewhat then it may be a family trait and if these pigeons race all out and fast, then so what?? Still we all want to see pigeons that are well feathered. Feather silkiness is actually a result of an abundance of powder on the feathers. This powder acts as protection on rainy days.

We can recognize the old fashioned pigeons by the over abundance of feathers around the vent. This abundance of feathering can be characterized as extra and unnecessary excess baggage. What then is the best feathering? That is a difficult question to answer. Some fanciers believe that pigeons that dry quickly after a bath have the best feathers. I think fast drying feathering is more a question of condition and form, because it is usually these same pigeons that are the first to take a bath. Bad feathers are a disadvantage, but silky soft feathers do not make a pigeon really good.

It would seem that pigeons use their feathers in the search for the way home. There was some

research done by Michael A. Bookman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on pigeons in a wind tunnel. They were allowed to fly or flutter to their familiar spot to find food. As soon it was made impossible for these same pigeons to use their wings to search for their meal they found it much more difficult to find the same spot. Pigeons that could only walk had a noticeably more difficult time to locate the familiar place where they were used to finding their meal. This could lead one to speculate that a pigeon uses it's feathering as a sort of receiving antenna that helps it in orienting. How they precisely function as an aid in orienting are questions that the researchers still have to answer, but as racing pigeon fanciers it gives us a hint that it certainly makes sense to keep paying attention to good feather quality.

2.03.6 The Pigeons Wings

Yes, wings that what they fly home with. A pigeon that has all the needed qualities to make it a champion, but has a set of terrible quality wings attached to its body cannot race very well. But the other side of the coin is also not true: a pigeon with a perfect set of wings, with the rest of its qualities of average value, will also not become a champion. The wings are a tool the pigeon uses to bring it home and whether or not it can be a champion depends on what those wings are attached to.

If the wings, are shaped aerodynamically and are fastened onto an athletic body owned by a pigeon that has the needed character and intelligence then chances are we have a born winner. Pigeon's wings are a part of a whole and a part of that whole only. You cannot use the wings only to judge if a pigeon will be a good or a poor racer. That is exactly what the pigeon iridologist in England do and what the Belgian Charles Vanderschelden also did a while ago with his postulated wing theory. I can assure you that his outline of the pigeon wing comes close to being faultless. The problem with Vanderschelden was that he ignored the rest of the bird. Judging the pigeon by only a single quality is the biggest mistake that a "judge" can make. The wing is a part of the pigeon not its essence and that makes a world of difference!

In the 1920's when the first of the racing pigeon strains were begun, we saw the old fashioned types, somewhat coarser, a little heavier, along with a somewhat larger wing surface. The modern racing pigeon has had all that extra removed by the law of, "the fastest is put in first place on the race sheet". The type of pigeon I like best has its wings attached high on its shoulders. This makes the wings align more to the inside and results in such pigeons having an open back. The back is not fully covered by the secondaries of the wing that otherwise often lie against each other. Pigeons with scoop wings are those where the back wing is too long. The co-ordination between it and the front wing is not efficient enough in such a pigeon. These are all signs of slowness. If you are allowed to choose a pigeon from a large group walking on the floor, pick one out that is paying attention to you and has an open back.

I'll give you ten to one odds that you picked the best one. I prefer a wing that is not too long, I would sooner see it too short. This usually means that the outside four or five flights stand somewhat rounded. Why do I prefer this type of wing?

Head winds, because of the extra air pressure, cause the outer flights of the wing to bend as a whole (as one part). This results in a decrease in the surface area of the wing. If the outer flights are a little rounder and spread out this doesn't happen as easily and if this shorter type of wing is attached close to a firm carcass with supple muscles, then you have an optimally shaped pigeon flying machine. There are different wing shapes. Each has developed to serve a specific purpose. Don't condemn any of them because of a shortcoming. A scoop shaped wing because of its ability to catch extra wind has its advantages with a strong tail wind. You sometimes see this type of wing amongst the winners of fast long distance races. Because we have different winds every week, here in Western Europe it is difficult to select for a specific type of wing. If possible I try to keep a few pigeons of each type in reserve on my race team and every once in a while I get a surprise on race day. But I almost never allow exceptions to change the rule and selecting for a specific type of wing also has its advantages.

In Thailand just about every week they race with tail winds. If you know that as a certainty, then it makes sense to take this into serious account when selecting. Pigeons that often have to fly over water without ascending air currents which they can use when flying over land while raising and lowering their wings, also need a different type of wing. Deviating from these needed types will come at the cost of top positions on the race sheet.

The crossing from Sicily to Malta is always the last part of the race for the 1500 fanciers living on an island the size of Texel in the Mediterranean. Pigeons that have 5 or 600 km under their wings are already tired when they begin their crossing. They now have to put in an extra effort in order to remain in the air. If they have the wrong type of wing for the task they will drown because of exhaustion. I know this because I have seen it on my visits to that Island and now you know it too.



This is the winner of the FCI race from Chiengray in 1996, the official world championship in Bangkok, Thailand, won by the brothers Prapat & Prapon Pilunthanakul. There was no pigeons home the first day on this very tough race. The next day she was the first one home on the roof of the Menam hotel. She ended up being the 1st Ace pigeon on all the races. Later that day she sold for \$50,000 US at the sale of the prize-winning pigeons. She was bred out of "De Witpen Compiegne" (son of the "Blauwe Compiegne" line of "De 08 Duif") with a direct daughter out of "De Goede Jaarling" with "Het Schoon Blauw".

Lets take a careful look at Vanderschelden's theory. This makes sense, because it is definitely correct.

The forearm up to the armpit is at most 6 cm long and should always be thick. A thin long forearm will take less stress. The secondaries on hens should be no longer than 11-11.5 cm long and for cocks this is 12cm.

A back wing with long secondaries make it looks wide, and is a characteristic of slow pigeons. Particular attention must be paid to the length and shape of the outer four primaries. The numbering of these flights is in the order of their moulting. This order means that the inner flight is always the first and we count to the outer edge of the wing. Vanderschelden has stated that their length should be between 12 and 15 cm. According to his theory the outer flights should be as long as possible. Their shape should be like a well-worn bread knife, not too wide, so that the pigeon can stay in the air unhindered and can make better use of the air currents. The outer flights should be "ventilated", that is when we open the wing, these flights should not form a closed area, but we should get the impression that we could let peas fall through them. Vanderschelden was concerned about the shape of the flights. He listed four varieties:

- 1.The eighth is shorter, the ninth longer, the tenth is the longest of all. He stated that this was the worst wing.
- 2.The eighth is shorter, the ninth is the longest and the tenth is a little shorter. This pigeons are of average quality; these should not be used as breeders (I wouldn't take his word on this if I were you!).
- 3.The seventh is noticeably shorter, but the eighth, ninth and tenth are of the same length. We see a lot of winners with this type of wing and according to Vanderschelden we don't have to be afraid to breed with these.
- 4.The seventh is the same length as the eighth, ninth and tenth. The last four flights are almost equal length. There is a definite step up between the sixth and seventh flight. To Vanderschelden these were the supers for both racing and breeding.

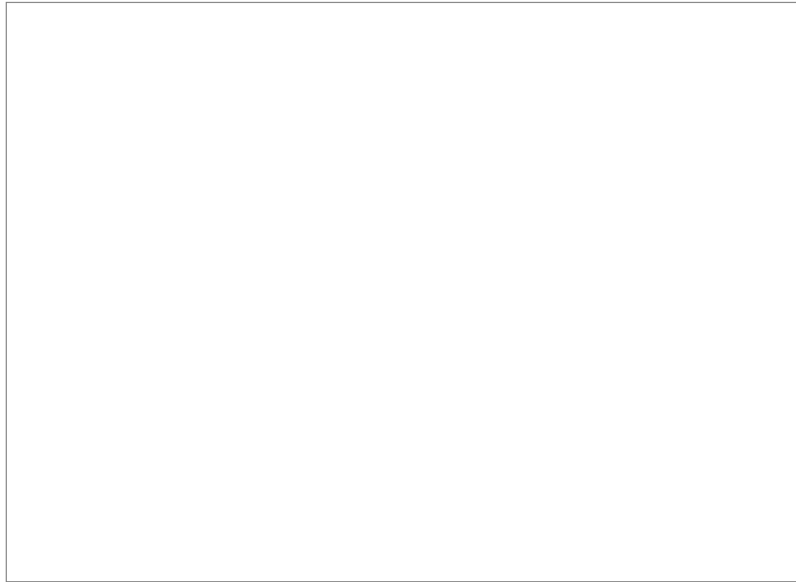
From an aerodynamic point of view his theory is completely correct. But please don't forget that there are an unbelievable number of characteristics cooperating with each other that in the end allow a pigeon to deliver top performances. It is not only the wing that allows this. It is only one part. The wing can either help or hinder the bird. The idea that Vanderschelden's theory can be directly related to the breeding value of a pigeon is naturally pure nonsense.

Many people when opening a wing have a very Vanderschelden learned look on their face. I have yet to come across a pigeon that has " I am the champion of this loft" written in its wing. We have to look for the wing type that in fact fits or is suited to the pigeon. It is one of small parts that can make a pigeon better. That is if the wing fits perfectly with the pigeons' body.

I think it makes sense to test the quality of the flights. Check to see if the quills of the outer flights have a combination of flexibility, strength and suppleness and don't easily retain kinks etc. (hold them over some steam and these bends and kinks should disappear quickly). I like to see the outer edge of the outer four or five flights have a rounded shape. Spiked sharp flight tips don't impress me, because it is often a result of wear and tear. Further I think all the feathers, flights and secondaries, of the wing should seem somewhat fatty or greasy. Dry feathers normally wet through quicker in rainy weather. Those kinks that mostly appear in the middle of the first two flights are usually the result of a disturbance to the bird's organism. The next time the pigeon moults usually they are replaced with flights of a better quality. Some of the outer flights when breaking out of their casing when growing sometimes hang up a few days and then the tip of that flight will show a bit of a rough or feathered edge. This is also a result of a disturbance to the pigeon's organism and will also disappear with the following moult.

2.04 Where there is a will there is a way!

In my native village Laren (North Holland) the boys went with their brothers to play soccer at the L.V.V. (Larense Soccer Club) and the girls went with their sisters to the Willen is Kunnen Gymnastic club. (Where there is a will there is a way). The name of that gymnastic club contains a lot of wisdom. In all sports there are those with natural talent, but there are also a lot of athletes that, because of a lot of training and hard work have reached the top levels of their chosen sport. The pigeon sport is no different!



This is "De Jonge Sturen". In 1996 he won together with "De Jonge Baron" the 1st and the 2nd prize in the National Etampes against 11,789 pigeons flying 8 minutes ahead. He also won several top positions on the one-day distance races. He was bred out of my old foundation lines: his father is a son out of the wonder pair "De Goede Jaarling" X "Het Schoon Blauw", while his mother is a full sister to the "Magic Olympic Grizzle" that is bred out of "De Bonte Jaarling" (a son of "De Goede Jaarling") paired to "De Bourges Duivin".

When I started in the pigeon sport my first exposure to the sport when I took part in a pigeon show. Several cast-off's from friends, that probably had not performed up to expectations on the race course, obtained for me my first tangible success in a sport that would become an important part of my everyday life. During the season that followed that first show I naturally bred the appropriate number out of those first winners. You can guess that I was very disappointed with the success I had racing the offspring of these winners. On the easy sprint races they could manage to gain a position on the race sheet, but as soon as it became time to do a little work, they quickly handed in their notice. Almost all experienced racing pigeon fanciers know that the standard requirements drafted to help the show judges in judging racing pigeon classes are not the same as those that are required to harvest laurels on the race course.

There are sufficient tools available to us that give us the ability to make a distinction between excellent and ordinary prize flyers, without have to test them on the race course. But I have to admit that it is not all that easy. There are characteristics that we can feel with the tips of our fingers and the palms of our hands. There are also characteristics, which by carefully and thoughtfully looking at and studying our pigeons, that can very accurately assessed. With these two sensory organs, our hands and our eyes, we can quite accurately judge the value of

a pigeon. However it requires an enormous amount of practice. But, where there is a will there is a way!

It is necessary to have a combination of many good characteristics to promote an average racing pigeon or an Ace pigeon into a real crack racer. Therefore, whether or not a pigeon is good or worthless does not depend on the value of one or two characteristics. No, it takes many more. Often many of the characteristics of a crack are average and only several are outstanding. It is those outstanding characteristics that allow a good pigeon to develop into a crack. Sometimes there is a very annoying characteristic present, one that hinders all the wanted successes. To be able to judge, which of those characteristics are important, is what takes so much practice.

The ability to assess these characteristics doesn't come easy and thoughtfully listening to the tall tales over a blonde glass of frothy barley brew at the bar in the pigeon club doesn't really help very much. It will help if you ask one of the strong competitors in your club the right questions. He will seldom take part in all bull sessions at the bar. He has heard the stories about the "Good Blue" and the "Fast Red" till he can't stand it anymore. Being a good listener is an art. He won't be able to pass along all his knowledge just like that. You know it's not that simple. But as your pigeon-racing career develops there will come a moment when you will be able to put all the parts in the right place. It will also help if you regularly visit the lofts of the strong competitors in your combine and ask the right questions. Why wasn't this pigeon entered for that race? Why did you enter that one? Why are you flying that one so many years? Why hasn't it moved to the breeding loft? Why are you culling that racer? Why is that one being taken out of the breeding loft? Ask if you can hold them in your hands. It also helps to attend the sales. There you can see cracks for sale that have achieved top results in all the various disciplines. At the sales you can see Ace pigeons that have performed in the race loft and birds that have performed in the breeding loft and some that have been outstanding in both lofts. Try to listen to what your senses transmit to your brain. Try to use your memory and intuition. Decide for yourself how good and how exact a certain pigeon is. Don't be misled by the shadowy tales told in the sales catalogue or by the fast talking auctioneer. If the auctioneer himself hasn't achieved much racing pigeons, then believe me when I tell you that following his advise will cost you a lot of money. If you want to become a real pigeon flyer than the only advise I can give you is: practice till your drop. For you there is also a way if there is a will.

I'll go a little deeper into this material for you. You have a pigeon in your loft from which you expect quite a bit. It has good parents with a promising lineage. The family it is bred out of has bred a good percentage of better than average pigeons.

The pigeon has a short form arm placing the wing close to the body which points to speed for the work it has to do in the azure blue sky. It's eyes have deep colours and have tiny pupils placed in the center. It has supple muscles. It is well balanced, when balancing it in your hand the tail remains in a small straight line. It weighs little. Or is it too light? In the back of your mind there is a question. This pigeon has class, but there is something not quite right. What is it? The pigeon may have been hurt as a result of an attack by the adeno-ecoli syndrome. Or is it a result of an indiscriminate release and being on the road for several days as a result. Practiced fingertips can determine the problem. There is no point racing this pigeon any longer it will never again reach the top. If it is bred right than this pigeon belongs on the breeding loft. But why has this happened? Often such a disease or spending so much time on the road can cause a liver defect. As a result the pigeon can no longer store sufficient fuel. As soon as the races get longer or tougher then such a pigeon doesn't come home till the next day. Latecomers are normal, but for a racing pigeon fancier they are a source of irritation. Still a lot could have been achieved with this pigeon, if your touch and eyes had been practised enough. Where there is a will there is a way.

Those prize winning pigeons at the show in the winter of 1962 at the "P.V. de Zwaluw" in Laren, where I took my first steps in the pigeon sport, didn't move me ahead one position on the race sheet. But I did with Georges Veys' little red stray, the one that everyone rejected when they ran it through their hands. He was an excellent flyer and his youngsters also outperformed the others. But, not one of his offspring could race as well as their old father. Why was that? Was it the fault of the hens that I had paired to that little red cock??? Or...

Encouraged by my father who with his bantams hens had won almost all there was to win at the national competitions, I began to make notes and to compare. I wore out the front door at local champions such as Bram Lokker, Gijs Hartog and Joop Bollebakker. I visited them to the point where they almost became tired of hearing me knocking at their door. Through Georges Veys little red cock that had strayed into my loft the doors at Gust de Baere, Valere Desmet-Mathijs, Bros. Willequet, Andre Lietaer and later at many other world famous lofts opened for me. In order to feed my ever-growing pigeon colony I began to write articles for the pigeon papers in the early seventies. That is how I unexpectedly came in contact with Prof. Alfons Anker from Kaposvar, Hungary.

That contact with Prof. Anker awoke my curiosity and I started to think about pigeons more and more. The doors to pigeon genetics were blown wide open for me. I soon realized that I really knew very little about all the common characteristics and how they behaved in their inheritance. Prof. Anker overwhelmed me with his views on pigeon genetics and I found the patience to study the subject and soon became engrossed in it. Reworking and translating his writings afforded me the opportunity to come to a full understanding of his material. Finally I was able to take the theory and apply it practically when pairing my pigeons. That is the successful combination in the pigeon sport. Where there is a will there is a way. If you really want to stand out as a judge or grader of racing pigeons you will require a lot of knowledge. Your technical knowledge will have to be high and you will have to have an accurate overview of the entire sport. You will have to know how the different characteristics work together, because that is what gives a racing pigeon the ability to perform. The ability to perform is not dependent on a nice eye, a fast wing or supple muscles. It depends on how intensively the important characteristics work together and if there are characteristics that hinder that co-operation. It is impossible that a pigeon has only good characteristics otherwise all pigeons would fly as fast as all the others and all pigeons would fly at the front on the sprint races as well as Barcelona. A heavy pigeon will never become a good distance racer. A smart pigeon without good muscles will never reach the absolute top as a sprinter. The same counts for a slow pigeon at the middle distance and a nervous type of pigeon at the long distance. What we have to be able to do is assess the how the important characteristics will work together or against each other for the work we require the pigeon to do. The sum total of these characteristics will determine the ability of that pigeon to perform the required task. We have to learn to judge precisely what that pigeon can or cannot do. To only enter that pigeon at the distances where he can be a winner and not to overestimate the ability of a good pigeon and to lose it on a race where it should never have been entered. We have to learn to assess all the characteristics as closely as possible. Every time we don't do that properly there is a chance that it will cost us a good pigeon. A pigeon that is limited to 400 km because of his muscle quality can in some instances fly further by filling his gas tank the right way or with the right fuel. What I am trying to say here is that a fancier should not only know about the pigeon itself but should learn about the methods of racing and feeding and the scientifically developed methods of using by-products and medicines. We have to keep up with all the developments in the pigeon sport. It is the knowledge and use of these new developments in the pigeon sport that will put us in a position to have our pigeons perform at levels we had not dared dream of. However we don't want to become too reckless. A pigeon with stiff muscles will still not fly a distance of 650 km successfully.

A release chairman that for one reason or another makes an enormous blunder releasing the pigeons for a race can be the cause of having a totally empty racing loft. We have to be

cautious when racing pigeons. Enter the pigeons for the distances they are suited and have them adequately prepared. If the weather is going to be questionable and you don't have full trust in the release chairman's abilities, sometimes be willing to keep the race team home. You have to realize that your crack pigeon can still give you years of pleasure through his offspring if you move him to the breeding loft. A trophy won on a Pyrenees race can only be looked at or talked about. As soon as you realize that you also are talking about the past you know the time has come for you to register at the high school of pigeon knowledge and begin your studies. Study the breeding methods with chapters on: inbreeding, crossing, line breeding etc. Study how to make the right use of characteristics that strongly influence how well a pigeon can perform. Read about famous fanciers in our sports past and understand why they did or didn't do a certain something. Acquiring that comprehension will in the end turn the pigeon sport in an addiction!

Sometimes you see a fancier judging and giving his opinion on a pigeon. Everyone's opinion should be respected and from everyone's opinion there is something to be learned. But we should be aware that if you know that this fancier has hardly ever visited champion lofts or never reads pigeon papers or magazines and regularly fails to succeed racing his pigeons, then there is probably little you can learn from him and his opinions and explanations can be classified under the title "Tall Tales".

The tall tales also can make our sport fascinating, but you have to learn whether or not there is something to learn from them. Listen to the fanciers that produce top results against eye-popping competition. Fanciers that regularly bring in fresh blood can give you a lot of information about their experiences with the various strains. At least you can learn something from listening to them. Certainly this "big champion" can also make a big blunder, perhaps get rid of a breeder too soon.

You can learn to assess many of the pigeon's attributes. Endurance, intelligence, speed, character, you can see them in your dreams. Through a lot of practice you have learned to recognize them and can judge them with a lot of certainty. It is even more difficult to assess and determine the breeding value of a pigeon. It is here where the real champion separates himself from the ordinary fancier, the one who always wrongly thinks the champion is just plain lucky. I maintain that luck does not just blow your way. You can get luck coming your way regularly by becoming knowledgeable and gaining experience! In fact you should be able to judge a pigeon accurately without having to actually put it in the basket. But, before you can do this you will have to acquire a vast amount of pigeon knowledge, studied that stuffy pigeon genetic subject. Having theoretical professional knowledge can have very practical and successful results in your pairings. Reading everything there is to read on the mass of information that is available on the best performing strains of the moment. The fancier that is willing to go that far will probably be taken for a fool, but could end up being a fancier that knows a little more about a pigeon than all those others. Those others will quickly end up hollering: "he's giving them something". Those same others who spend their entire racing careers looking for than one trait which from a distance will let them distinguish a good pigeon from a cull. That one trait, believe me, doesn't exist. At best they are traits particular to a family and to understand that you have to intensely study and understand that family, in other words, obtained knowledge. The more pigeon knowledge you gain the quieter you become in the company of other pigeon fanciers, where often the opinions of the boasters and braggarts fly free and easy. As you learn more and more you begin to realize how little you really know.

In England there is an old hand in the article writing trade. He signs his articles as "Old Hand". Often he gives his unbridled opinions on the qualities of a pigeons' eyes. Mostly they are those of unknown pigeons from not very experienced fanciers. The advice that he gives after making

his comments is usually in the manner of changes to the loft or changes to the management methods. In this way he can maintain safely his opinions on the eyes. I asked him once to give his opinions on the eyes of some of my own pigeons; he declined to do a write up on them. His name and fame had already been established and an error on the masters' part would not help sell any more papers. I have already written about Charles Vanderschelden and the wing theory that he postulated. He also sought, just like the old Englishman, that one easily recognizable trait. I maintain that that is absolutely impossible, but still I am convinced that there is something to learn from the years of experience from those who have immersed themselves in the study of that one trait. Don't let yourself become snared by a good yarn about that one subject. That would only lead to disillusion. It is about the impression we get of the whole of what we call a racing pigeon. That is what makes our hobby so absorbing and all encompassing!

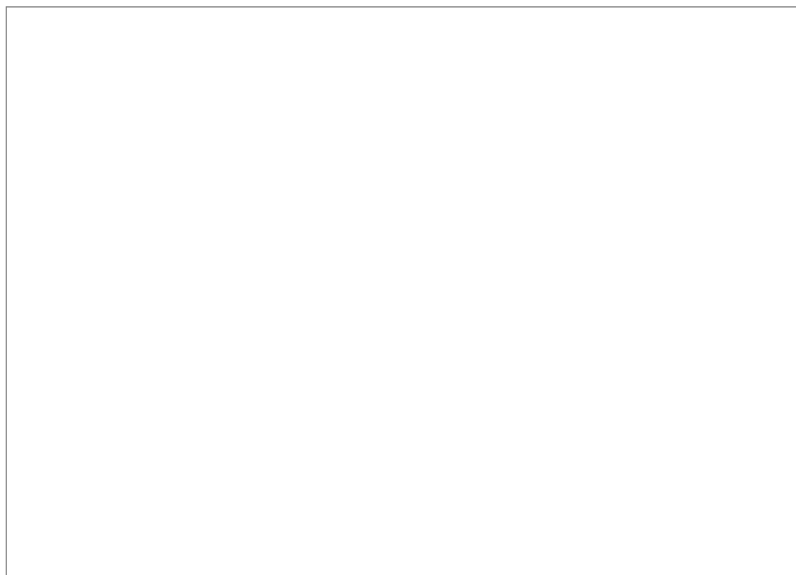
Out of my first real breeding pair in my lofts at Hilversum on Leeghwaterstraat, "De Kapoen" and "De 08 Duif". I bred amongst others "De 312" and "De 411". Both brothers through their performances still talk to the imagination of the Gooise fanciers. Both flew very well, but "De 312" was heads and shoulders better than his brother. He was 4th, 4th and 2nd place three years in a row in the National Sprint Competitions. No other Dutch pigeon had done that before him and to date no other pigeon has imitated him. If the race was a disaster, "De 312" came through it and the next morning was the first one out the window for his exercise. Speed, intelligence, vitality; are all noted as being extra in my old yellowed notebook. "De 411" was another type of pigeon: speed, intelligence and character were all noted as being good. Stamina and vitality somewhat less I noted all those years ago, characteristics that made him somewhat less than his brother when it came to racing. Veterinarian Hans van der Sluis once had him trap into his loft after a disastrous race. I had forgotten the advice I have given others. "De 312" had been sold for a good sum to the land of the rising sun. He didn't really have to many good offspring. "De 411" was lost on the next race he was entered. His 4 daughters, whose mother was "De 309 Duif", also out of my foundation hen "De 08 Duif", became responsible for my current family. Being able to pass on the genes or breed is totally different than being able to perform and race well. If we can learn to recognize the traits necessary for breeding, then we have accomplished much if not everything necessary to succeed in our sport.

Where there is a will there is a way, but I want to give you some advice, begin in time. What do I mean?? Willem de Bruijn once provided me with the proper answer: "the difference between an also ran and a champion, is that the champion always transfers his best flyers with breeding value to the breeding loft in time. This keeps him at the top for many more years and nothing else." He was right.

2.05 Make timely choices!

When you are at the top in the pigeon sport and want to stay there then you have to make the correct decisions at the right time. I closed the last chapter with Willem De Bruijn's statement in which I think he hit the nail right on the head. He said, " the difference between an also ran and a champion, is that the champion always transfers his best flyers with breeding value to the breeding loft in time. This keeps him at the top for many more years and nothing else." Everything in the pigeon sport depends on selection, making choices. Making the right choices at the right time. If it turns out that you were right, don't succumb to the lure of money! If you give in than you will miss out on the only tool we have to raise the quality of our loft: selecting for breeding value. Sell the apples but never the tree that bears the fruit, is an appropriate saying. We keep the tree that bears the exceptional fruit. We can sell a few bushels of apples, but we always store a bushel away for ourselves in the cellar. From these we look for the best specimens to again plant in our orchard.

The old apple tree will eventually stop bearing fruit. Then we will have to have a new tree growing beside it, that bears at least the same quality fruit, preferably fruit of a higher quality. That is selection. Selection is the tool with which we can increase the quality of our pigeon population generation after generation. We have to be eternally searching for better. That is how we get better results every year. In our sport we measure the result of our selection by our race performances. There are certain years where the weather can be a spoilsport, but on average we can quickly determine if we are doing better or worse. But, as I wrote earlier there are many ways of increasing the quality and accuracy of our selection process. Learn to look at and see your pigeons. How do they behave themselves? What does their facial expression and behaviour tell us? Learn to listen to what your fingertips are telling you. Learn to ignore beauty. We are looking for speed. The pigeon sport is no different than all the other sports, every year they go faster. The standards for our selection must be set higher every year, or else we will end up racing in the peloton. We need pigeons that can go with the break and have enough left over at the end of the race to make the jump to the top of the podium for the kiss from the beauty in the bathing suit.



This is "De Kleine Autowinnaar". As a young bird and yearling he won 5 first prizes and was immediately moved to the breeding loft. His mother, a daughter of "De 151" out of the line of "De Slimme" and "Het Bruinoogske" that is the line of "De Oude Rosten" a half brother to "De Oude Klaren 46", became 1st Ace pigeon in the Kring Hilversum for Ton van de Brink. Several of his offspring won first prizes against large competition. His son "De Kleine Etampes" when paired to "Het Boerinneke" bred cracks such as "Magic Mealy" and "De Vooruit".

Ace or crack pigeons in large part have many of the same outstanding attributes. They are pigeons that don't miss a thing. Those with the owl typefaces that I described earlier clearly predominate. Their heads stay still; it's the eyes that move. The pupils are at the front and see everything. That gives them a look or facial expression that is alert, aloof and at the same time intelligent. If you look at their eyes closely you will notice that they have thick rich colours painted on their irises with small pupils centered in them. They are almost all pigeons that never have anything go wrong with them. One of their greatest strengths is that they have an indestructible vitality, which is usually accompanied by a determination to triumph at any cost. These pigeons after a very hard race are usually the first ones out of the window the next morning clapping their wings to do their training laps. When it comes to these attributes most of the outstanding crack pigeons are very similar. Other than these characteristics they show large variations. Take a look at the athletes that run on the shiny tartan track, the 100-meter, 800-meter and those that compete in the marathon. Each discipline is executed differently. If you look closely there are many other differences to take note of. The pigeon sport is no different.

Naturally the most important indicator we use to measure whether or not we are progressing using our selection methods is the race basket. But we cannot turn a blind eye to other very important factors in the pigeon sport: the fancier and the loft. These two factors can either greatly hinder or greatly increase the potential of all the attributes a pigeon may possess. In the hands of a poor fancier and the same goes for a poor loft a champion pigeon will not be able to perform to its potential. A good loft ensures that a pigeon's vitality will do it justice. Good training and feeding methods on the part of the fancier will do the rest. The result is a pigeon that easily comes into form, which can hold this form, recuperates quickly and can be raced weekly with success. Am I writing in Spanish? Can you understand what I'm saying? I thought you would!

For us as racing pigeon fanciers the most important attributes a pigeon can possess are character/mordant, speed, muscle quality and intelligence. Let's not forget its breeding value, which ensures that the crucial qualities easily pass onto the next generation. We have to search for pigeons such as these unceasingly. When I get the chance I look for them every day of the year. It's not an easy task. Those strange pigeons, the ones we think can add something to the quality of our pigeons, have to fit in with our management methods. They have to easily add their qualities to those of our own pigeons and make them something better and that is difficult. These pigeons are extremely rare and valuable. That is why I am constantly searching.

Mostly I get the door slammed in my face! When I look back I can think of precious few pigeons that were able to add some extra class too the inhabitants of my own loft.

Often you go to a sale and the overwhelming majority of pigeons are well below expectations. Don't misunderstand me, I want to say: many pigeons that are good racers but very few that have the breeding value or potential that I'm looking for. Those that for me stand apart and in my eyes jump out at me. When I see one like this I try to take it home with me.

When looking for a pigeon to add to our loft at a sale we have to have the good qualities and the outstanding attributes of our own pigeons at the front of our memories. If you make a good comparison between the birds for sale and your own then ultimately there should be very few pigeons at any of the sales that you would be interested in. Sometimes the temptations can be overwhelming, the flesh is weak and the spirit becomes somewhat muddled by a proffered glass of beer and an irascible story telling acquaintance we haven't seen for a while. It doesn't take much to lose you concentration. Under these circumstances making an accurate selection becomes even more difficult, for me too.

Selection is very closely connected to breeding. You have to be able to easily recognize the needed attributes. The most important ones can be divided into two groups: the additive and the non-additive inheritable groups of characteristics. The characteristics that I have summarized in the foregoing paragraph can be improved by pairing the best to the best. I concentrate them by inbreeding. This causes the quality of the characteristics related to vitality to decrease automatically. Planned purposeful crosses will easily increase their quality again. Finding appropriate material to use as a cross therefore becomes of eminent importance.

When making your selection you have to watch that the feeling in your hands and the sight in your eyes don't always cause to select the same. Naturally having all our pigeons of the same type is a laudable pursuit and obviously nice to see. But when everything becomes almost the same advancement becomes more difficult. The stretch has gone out of it. The variation is gone. We have reached a certain height and that is wrong. Don't concentrate on one particular attribute. The athletic ability of a champion pigeon is determined by the combination of many important attributes. If you aim for these, then you won't get to the heights of your abilities or possibilities too quickly.

Therefore selection is choosing and everyone does this in a different way. This is what makes breeding and flying racing pigeons such an exciting hobby. Where will a person's choices lead him? Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees. Many fanciers allow their choices for loft improvement to be influenced by the big names of the past. Usually this leads to the worst buy of the year. The outstanding performances of these men lie buried in the grey past and aren't there any headlines in the papers today pointing to current international status and class. Strain nonsense also runs rampant. If you have had some success with a certain strain, then the foreign dollars will fall like ripe oranges in your lap is often the underlying hope and often it turns out to be true.

An article along with some beautiful pictures in the pigeon media of a breeding loft full of direct Janssen Arendonk pigeons without any performances in the racing loft will get the foreign busses to stop in front of your door sooner than a loft that has been performing at the top for years with home made material. There are also those who are slaves to the pedigree. There have to be as many famous pigeons as possible worked into the previous generations as possible. Such a pedigree makes the pigeons good otherwise, without it their not. They will ignore a fantastic crack pigeons with great performances from here to Tokyo with the greatest of ease. That is exactly the sort of pigeon that I am always searching for. These are the ones with something extra, but they don't have a name, or a strain or a pedigree. I have found that this has never hindered me in breeding tremendous offspring from these pigeons.

When selecting we need an open mind, common sense and especially an overview and understanding of what is required in a performance pigeon. We have to always use our intellect and understanding if we want to build something important and lasting. The road and tools needed are described in this chapter. Read this chapter thoroughly and often it will give you the foundation to build on for success in the pigeon sport.

3.0 The architecture

In the previous chapters we have discussed all of the important building blocks that we need to build the modern racing pigeon. You know that these building blocks are divided into two groups and you know that the inheritance in each group works in an entirely different manner. You have studied and learned how to recognize and select for all of these important attributes. Now you have arrived at the point where you have to make some choices. Like most of us there are not many fanciers that have the financial wherewithal and space to keep many pigeons. For them and us it is a sport and a hobby. But, still every one would like to reach the top of the ladder and gain a little fame in our chosen pastime. That is an understandable aspiration and in order to climb that ladder it is necessary that we make some choices. We have to specialize.



This is "De Oude Kapoen of '67". He is a son of "De Kapoen '60" and "Het Prinseske" (a daughter of "De Oude Klaren '46") Desmet-Mathijs from Nokere. He flew 7 1st prizes on sprint races from a distance of about 100 km. His father flew the 1st prize National St. Vincent. Paired to "De 08 Duif" out of my Janssen base from Jan van Erp from Hilversum, "De Oude Kapoen" became one of the most important foundation pigeons for the loft of Steven van Breemen. His son "De 312" was in 1980 1st National Ace Pigeon for the "Vredesduif" Competition and his other son "De 411" besides being a formidable racer was also an outstanding breeder.

When I look at the race program for our "CCG1 Hilversum & Omstreken" for 2000 then I see that it looks like the following:

Old Birds:

1. Seven sprint races varying in distance from 100 to 270 km. All of them with Friday basketing and Saturday releases.
2. Seven middle distance races varying in distance from 340 to 380 km. Three with Friday basketing and the other four with two nights in the basket.
3. Five one-day distance races varying in distance from 530 to 650 km. For all five races basketing is on Thursday with a Saturday release. These dagfond races are raced every two weeks beginning the second last week in May and continue till the Middle of July. The in

between weeks we have a middle distance race with only one night spent in the basket.
4. Five two day distance races, beginning the first weekend in June, with the last one flown during the first weekend in August. These vary in distance from 780 to 1070 km long. N.B. Besides this program there are other long distance races where pigeons can be entered in National races. This makes a total of 24 races for the old birds.

Young Birds:

Ten races in varying in distances from 100 to 600 km. For 4 of the 10 races the youngsters are entered on Thursday. These races begin the last weekend of June and go to the first weekend in September.

Post season races:

Four races varying in distance from 100 to 270 km from the middle of August to the middle of September.

N.B. These races originally were set up to race the mates of the widowhood cocks and the summer youngsters. Nowadays there are also many early darkened young birds and old widowhood cocks flying to a youngster entered.

In our country just about all of the fanciers have more or less specialized due to the number of races held. These specialties can be divided into the following groups:

Sprint and Middle Distance:

This group is by far the largest and they prefer to race with the pigeons spending only one night in the basket up to a distance of about 400 km. Recently because of changes in shipping methods middle distance races where the birds spend two nights in the basket have become more common. This group also race their young birds up to 400 km and usually race their widow hens to the nest in the Post Season Races.

One-day Distance races:

These races in principle are to be completed on the day of release. Our national organization the N.P.O. since 1990 has organized a National Championship and Regional National races for this discipline. This type of racing has very quickly become enormously popular.

Overnight Distance Races:

Because of the large number of available race at these distances, this specialty is one of the oldest in our country.

General:

In our region the race program has a total of 38 races available. A General Championship has been organized that includes all of these races. I also consider this a specialty because there are many fanciers that compete for this championship in each region by sending birds to all the various distances and disciplines. In order to stand out in this specialty it soon becomes clear that the competing fanciers are required to spend a lot of time with the pigeons and need a lot of space for the lofts to house the number of pigeons that are required to compete.

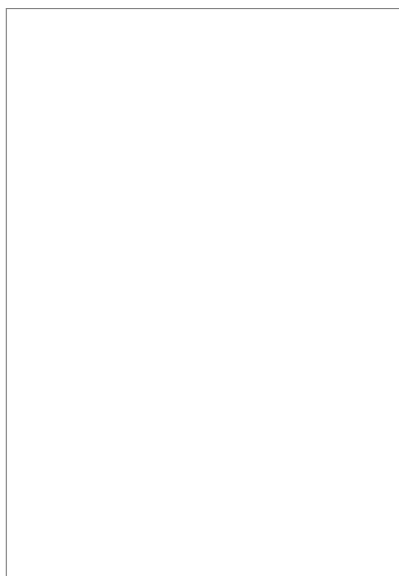
Due to the number of races available and the various championships that have been organized it is easy to understand why fanciers began to specialize. They began to deliberately purchase and breed pigeons suitable for their specialty. But what do we have to pay attention to specifically for each discipline??? What is important and what is not important???

3.01 There are important differences in the types of pigeon

These differences determine the ability to compete in the various racing disciplines. These differences can be grouped into three types of pigeons:

- a. The type for one night in the basket.
- b. The type for two nights in the basket.
- c. The type that can spend prolonged periods in the basket.

I will describe these three types of pigeon in the following paragraphs, but first I will try to explain and clarify the most important difference between the three types of racing pigeon.



After the 1994 racing season the King Championship for the one-day distance races in "Gooi & Eemland" and also for the N.A.B.v.P. were won. Both the Nominated and Un-nominated championships were won along with the Ace Pigeon Championship. The pigeon in the photo is "Magic Olympic Grizzle" who was responsible for winning these major titles.

The pigeon's ability to successfully compete at specific distances besides the list of attributes that we have described earlier also needs a specific type of temperament. A pigeon's temperament has a direct influence on its nervous system. Pigeons that are very temperamental or high-spirited are better suited to successfully compete at the shorter distances. The opposite is true for very placid or calm pigeons. These pigeons are born with a temperament that makes them better candidates for races at the longer distances. One can expect that the metabolism of a very lively pigeon is much faster than that of a calmer type of pigeon. If the metabolism is faster than we can surmise that such pigeons while in the basket will have to make use of their reserves much sooner than the more placid type. If these livelier more temperamental pigeons are held for a time on the day of release and meet unexpected deteriorating weather conditions on the way home they will have a hard time getting there on time and arriving in good condition. That is why I strive to develop a type of pigeon that has lots of character but is somewhat reserved in its manner and behaviour. If you have chosen the one-day distance races as your specialty then the pigeon required is a mixture of many different characteristics. I think that it is the most difficult of all the disciplines: non-stop without resting, on the same day, arriving at the finish line as fast as possible.

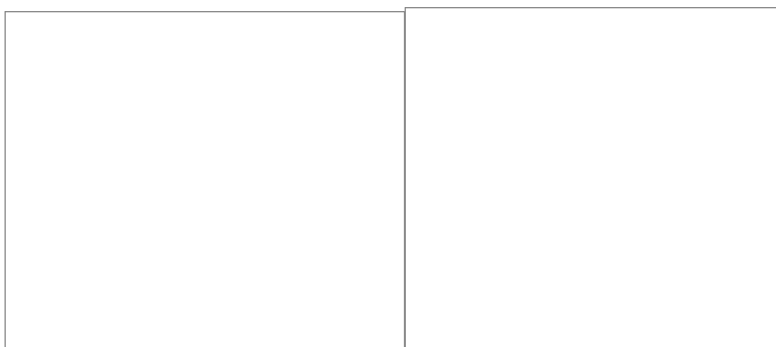
Pigeons with a considerable temperament generally mature early. It is not too difficult to fly

them to a nest as youngsters. If you have chosen the long distance as your specialty then you will notice that many of these pigeons take much longer to grow up and mature. Personally I don't like pigeons that cannot be raced successfully till they are two years old. For me it takes much too long before I can get a picture of the quality of such a pigeon. The same goes for determining the breeding quality of its parents. I want to know much sooner the quality of what I have bred or whether or not a pair of breeders fits together. But I don't have a problem if that is your chosen specialty, the long distance races. Probably you have a more patient personality. It doesn't matter to you if it takes longer to determine the value of a pigeon. In the end the type of pigeon has to fit your personality and disposition.

The one type to nervous and the other type to calm, if you pair these two then won't you get a type that can successfully fly at all the disciplines? It sounds plausible but I am not a believer in this system. In any event for the same day distance races it has never led to any degree of success for me. Still I regularly keep trying it all over again. What I do believe in is that a mix of all the types can be used to build a successful competition pigeon for the shorter overnight distance race, overnight distances between 750 and 900 km. But as soon as we reach the overnight distance races with an early morning release we need a specific type of pigeon. Personally I am always searching for pigeons to use as a cross that is as complete as possible in all its attributes. Then the loss in quality will be as little as possible. I don't think I have to tell you that these pigeons are as rare as albino ravens...

3.02 The type for one night in the basket

The government in its attempts to protect society has passed many new laws. One they have passed a few years ago is one that regulates the hours a truck driver can work. After driving for eight hours they must rest for eight hours. The result of these new regulations means that in our section it takes a great deal of effort and it has become difficult to get to Chantilly 390 km in one night. I think that 400 km is the limit that every pigeon can fly with any great problems. One that can win decisively at 400 km into a head wind can also do well when racing from 600 km with wind at its back.



These are pictures of the eyes of two important foundation pigeons Steven van Breemen's lofts. Left: "De Goede Jaarling" in 1985 winner of 1st National Chateauroux against 8500 flying 18 minutes ahead. Right: "Het Boerke" he never raced and as a late youngster was placed directly into the breeding loft. Both cocks, half brothers, have produced 5 generations of 1st prize winners at the national level.

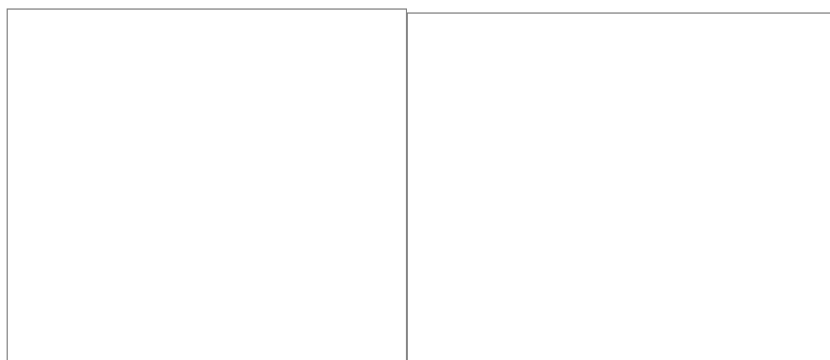
But if you misjudge the weather conditions for the upcoming race and the wind suddenly turns to a head wind then the story changes for these pigeons. The first time it happens nothing much can be seen and if the handler after these unexpected race conditions becomes reckless, then often problems will pop up down the road.

The fuel tank has not yet been completely refilled and the internal mechanism has not yet been thoroughly lubricated and fine-tuned. Under these circumstances you can lose your best pigeons. Pigeons that effortlessly can fly at the front week after week at race distances from 100 to 400 km. You can find many differences in the type for one night in the basket. That is because at these distances the man with the hammer hardly ever comes peeking around the corner.

Possible weaknesses are not that obvious and are not often exposed. A bit bigger, a bit heavier, muscling can be somewhat lacking, a bit too nervous all these less desirable characteristics for the long distances can be seen in these pigeons. The vast majority of the pigeons in this category are fast, intelligent and have strong characters. The vast majority of this type of pigeon is very easy to motivate. They often react quickly and easily to all sorts of tricks, such as not showing the hen and then suddenly one week showing her, or showing the hen for short periods of time for weeks and weeks and then one week leaving her for several hours. When breeding this type of pigeon you have to be knowledgeable about the positive characteristics. The negative ones are not quite as important and you don't have study them quite as thoroughly. In this category pure speed is all that counts, which does not often go hand in hand with the enormous wringer characteristic. What we need are pigeons that have a fast finish brought about by strong motivation.

3.03 The type for two nights in the basket

For us in Section 7 Middle Netherlands these are the races from 475 km to 700 km. In some of the other sections these could be races as far as 800 km. In order for a pigeon to be outstanding at these types of races, and I am not talking about a 600 km race at a speed of 1600 meters per minute; a pigeon has to have substantial physical capacities. In order to win a 700 km race at a speed of 1100 meters per minute a winning pigeon has to fly a good ten hours and those that come home after it eleven to twelve hours. I should be clear that we would find few large, heavy and nervous type pigeons amongst the winners. Any shortcoming in physical quality will quickly use up all the fuel in the tank and once the tank is empty the motor will stop. Obviously in comparison to the type for one night in the basket these pigeons can be somewhat slower. Physical strength and supple muscles are now more important.



Two more eye photos of two pigeons that have shown that they have tremendous breeding potential. On the left is "De 151" from the line of "De Oude Rosten" Desmet-Matthijs. Two of his daughters produced National winners. On the right is "De Schone" a son of "Het Boerke". He produced "De Zwarte Baron" father of the 1st National Etampes '96 and the cock to the "Golden Pair" (Guldparret) in Denmark.

This type is certainly as intelligent as the earlier type, but pigeons with character or mordant, the wringer type will predominate. In this type of pigeon all the required characteristics work together fluidly. If one of the characteristics is weak then the pigeon is definitely handicapped. This pigeon has limits and as fanciers we have to recognize these limits. We cannot flippantly ignore these boundaries otherwise pigeons that are asked to perform tasks that are beyond their abilities simply can't and won't come home.

As an example take a pigeon that after a smash race has spent several days on the road and has hurt its ability to store energy. If we don't pay close attention and make sure that the strong colours in it's eyes have fully returned or that it's shrunk muscles have been fully rebuilt and refilled than the first time it has to come home under difficult circumstances we will lose it. This doesn't have to be from a race of 600 km; one half as far could be too far.

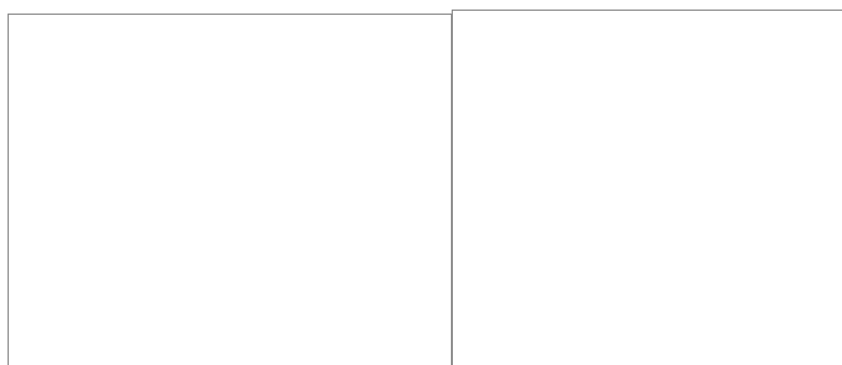
What do these pigeons look like?

They are average in size, have a somewhat coarser skeleton structure, they are light, have supple muscles and have an intelligent facial expression. If such a pigeons is in super form and we add a bit of speed and a touch of pugnacity, then on races at a distance of around 700 km then they can easily fly 15 to 20 minutes ahead. That is the type of pigeon that really appeals to me. First breed all the necessary qualities into the pigeon and then as the handler, allow them to work together like a well-oiled machine!

3.04 The type suited for a longer stay in the basket

In our country this type of pigeon is the one known as an "overnighter". That is the type of pigeon that between release and clocking always spends one night out. Personally I think that these overnighthers come in different types:

- a. The small long distance: races in distance between 750 and 900 km. These races are released in the afternoon between one and three o'clock depending on the wind direction. In our region these are races from Ruffec, Brive and Bergerac.
- b. The popular overnighthers: races between 1000 and 1100 km. These are released in the afternoon around one o'clock. These races would include such classics as St. Vincent and Dax.
- c. The international races: These are organized by the Z.L.U. and are released as early as possible in the morning. These would be races such as Marseille, Pau, Perpignan and Barcelona.



These are two eyes of children out of the golden pair of breeders, "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw". On the left "Het Asqrauw" the mother to "Riss" who won the 1st National from Orleans in '96 competing against 15,000 pigeons. She is also the grandmother of the 1st National Orleans winner of Jan Witteveen. On the right is the "Magic Blue Turbo", who as a yearling won the National Chateauroux 8 minutes ahead of the rest of the field. That same year he was also the 1st Ace Pigeon One-day Distance in the distance club of "Gooi & Eemland".

The small long distance type often is released at a time of day that results in the birds not always being tired when the sun goes down. These pigeons often fly at night and very early morning arrivals are not uncommon.

The type for the popular overnight races is usually not the type of pigeon possessing the most speed. In its place the ability to recuperate quickly is required. These races usually take place in the middle of the summer and after flying for 10 hours under difficult circumstances just about all the pigeons come down for a rest period during the night. Being able to recuperate quickly is a must so that the pigeon can resume its race home early the next morning. A certain amount of toughness in the muscle fibres is required. Most of these races have pigeons coming home late in the afternoon. These pigeons could do well with an extra portion of will and tenacity.

The type for the international races is the most appealing type. It requires the most perfect physical traits: very supple and elastic muscles, very little weight; not one gram extra, very tough, never give up always fight to the end, calm and self assured with a wing that has a somewhat larger surface area giving them the ability to glide at times in order to save their

strength.

All in all requirements for the overnight type cannot be generalized. There are quite a few differences. But, they are in the main pigeons with an enormous willpower, very elastic muscle, very little weight to drag along on the way home and they have a very calm and thoughtful nature.

This type does not give an explosive effort at the start and give it everything they have at the beginning; they keep enough in reserve to get home safely. They are often somewhat smaller pigeons. When I handle them I always take notice of how simple these pigeons are compared to the pigeons that fly the shorter distances and don't have to spend a night out. They lack the explosiveness. Their muscles lack the volume of the others. They don't need the volume, rather the more elastic and supple the muscles are the easier they recuperate. They don't require too much fuel to quickly refill the gas tank. Everything about them is arranged to make the task easier: flying, recuperating and keeping up a tempo, natural vitality and their softer character.

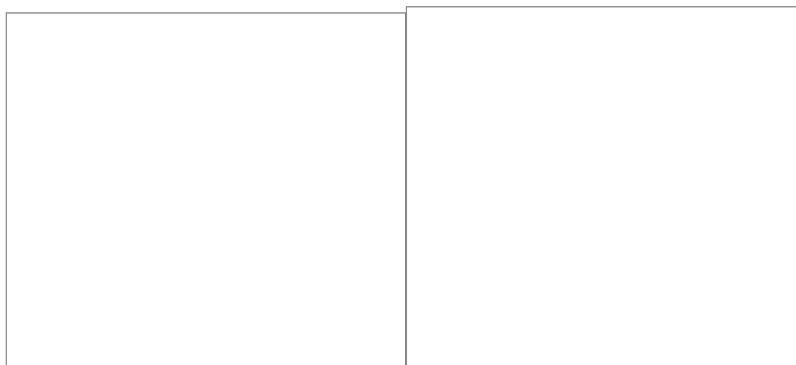
To tell the truth you have to have a deep respect for pigeons that can fly a race of 1000 km or more successfully two or three times in a season. But, in order to do this everything has to be in perfect order. The fancier has to pay close attention otherwise he won't see his favourite again. There is a saying in the racing pigeon world, "distance costs feathers", but it is not entirely true. It is the most difficult discipline in our sport to succeed in. This type of pigeon has an arduous task and has to overcome many difficulties on its journey home. You can see that when the pigeon finally comes down on the landing board. This is something the real long distance fanciers deeply respect. They prepare their favourites thoroughly for only a few races each year. They divide the team thoughtfully during the long winter hours and they endeavour to prepare their charges with rest and enter them with discretion for these marathon events. These characteristics you can see in both the pigeon and the fanciers. I believe that these characteristics are indispensable in order to participate in these marathons. There are many fanciers that want to race the long distance for a while and often spend great deals of money to obtain the necessary pigeons. But in most of these cases not only the pigeon is forced but also the fancier and he is often disappointed. This type of long distance racing is a passion. If the necessary patience and passion are not part of your character, then this is not the discipline for you.

You have confidence in yourself and your pigeons. You have to wait for your pigeons to come into super condition and then and only then enter them. Then you can wait patiently with your mind at ease for your favourites and treat them with the regard they have earned and deserve when they come home, even if they are too late. Long distance is a passion between fancier and pigeon!

3.05 Choose the discipline and the pigeons that suit you!

Whether we want to or not, in many things in this life we often have to make choices. It is no different in the pigeon racing sport. In this day and age if we want to stand out in our hobby then we will have to specialize. We have to make a choice. Not everyone has the time, space, financial resources or knowledge to be able to master all the disciplines at the same time. If that were so then those fanciers that participate in all of the 38 races for the so-called General Championship would surely end up scoring more than 35,000 points of the possible 38,000 points. More often then not a total of 30,000 is barely reached. Mastering all the disciplines and having suitable pigeons for each of them is almost impossible. That is why we see more and more fanciers specializing. Long distance is the oldest specialty followed by the sprint/middle distance races.

The one-day distance races have only become a popular specialty in the last ten years. It is the long distance for the small fancier. Everyone can send pigeons capable of racing these distances. If you have a sprint/middle distance pigeon in form then it can easily win a first prize in its area (Combine). That is why this distance has become so popular over the last ten years or so. Race this same pigeon on a long distance race and the story would end very differently.



Two eyes directly out of the old foundation pigeons. Left "De Etampes" a son of "De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw". He won 1st prize Etampes in the Long Distance Club "Gooi & Eemland" well out in front and in 1990 was also the 1st Ace Pigeon on the One-Day Distance. Three of his sons were in the first ten National in the One-day Distance and three others were in the first ten National Ace Pigeon in the One-Day Distance Races. Right "De Raket" out of "Het Boerke" and "De 150 Duif". He won in 1991 as a young bird the 1st prize in "Gooi & Eemland" against 4500 pigeons from Orleans. In Section M he was 2cnd against 18,000 pigeons and National he was 7th against 25,000 pigeons on that same race from Orleans.

Personally I began my pigeon-racing career at home with my parents by racing all the races. The general championship at that time was a desired tradition. In the "P.V. de Zwaluw" in Laren it was the now deceased Bram Lokker who totalled up the points on the blackboard every week. After basketing the race birds on Friday evening he picked up his chalk and updated the totals. Everyone watched him with great interest. If your name was moved up a position or two on that old black board then you had a bit more motivation to work a little harder the following week. At that time all of us really fought hard for those points. But with time as more and more races were added to the program most fanciers couldn't keep up with the increasing demands and specialization began to show its face in the pigeon sport.

After my marriage I moved to Hilversum and became a member of the "P.V. De Eendracht". There the members mostly raced the short and middle distance races.

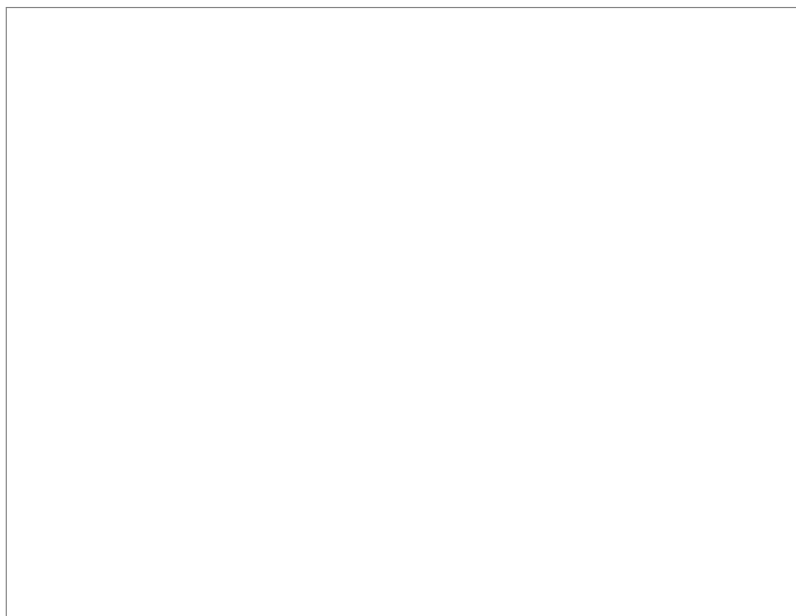
They did so at a very high level with a very different type of pigeon than I was used to: Janssen Arendonk, pure nasty speed demons. If I wanted to climb to the top against the best in this club I had to change. I used the Janssen's as crossing material. It worked like butter on bread. The Janssen pigeon in combination with the old De Smet-Matthijs pigeons formed a mix of speed, strength, intelligence and endurance. I could compete with the best. Winning the sprint against the peloton on the short track, even winning against the mob released at the short distances with an overflight of roughly 60 km. Sending pigeons as punishment a few times to races longer than 400 km, discovering accidentally that my type of pigeon could do a lot more than win short little races weekly. When my "Goede Jaarling" in 1985 flew so far ahead against the crème de la crème on Chateauroux in the N.A.B.v.P. I was naturally sold. Then you want to specialize at a different discipline, you make a choice. You begin to study what type of pigeon you need for this specialty and when you understand what is needed your choice is made you begin to specialize. You try to form a picture of the best type of pigeon for those races you want to specialize at: they have to be able to sprint for a very long time. They have to be pigeons with an inflexible frame. If the muscles are anchored to a weak frame, then they are limited at 700 km when the weather is warm and the wind is in their face. The frame begins to crack, the muscles still want to, but they can't work anymore. When we have that unbend able frame then you have to add an unyielding character to it. They have to be ready to fight to get home at all cost, from start to finish. Then the cocktail has to be brought up to taste by adding speed and intelligence. That means that bringing in a touch of Janssen from time to time is indispensable. A one-day distance pigeon should also be able to decisively win a sprint race. A necessary requirement for an athlete to excel at the middle distances is a good supply of oxygen. Therefore my type of pigeon has a wide chest containing a pair of large lungs. Ensuring that they have a short forearm solves the problem of being somewhat out of balance. This lifts the pigeon while flying a little higher. This is an advantage when flying into a head wind. At speeds above 1600 meters per minute this can be a disadvantage, but there are not to many one-day distance races flown at these higher speeds. According to this blue print, for which "De Goede Jaarling" was the model, I began to plan, select and pair. Selecting and pairing always go hand in hand. I first gave you the tools and then the building blocks. Then, in this chapter, I gave you the architecture on which to build.

Perhaps after much thought you have been able to chose a definite plan for the body type needed, for a certain type of pigeon. Together with the architect you have developed a blue print, a plan, adjusted it and now have approved the final draft.

This drawing has been taken to various contractors to get a price for the eventual construction and you have picked one to carry out the project. In pigeon language: we are now going to pair our pigeons. Lets go on to the next chapter.

4.0 Implementing the plan: making up our pairs!

Deciding on which pigeons to pair together is truly the most important aspect of our hobby. The process began last summer when we tested the new generation. They were the product of our fantasizing the year before. From these we select the material to use in the next breeding season. In November and December we begin to plan our prospective breeding pairs and with the new generation that they will produce we hope to take another step up the ladder of success. With a little luck we hope that the results of all our planning will exceed our expectations. Planning is the part of our sport that I enjoy the most. The idea, that a particular combination of pigeons that I planned will produce a super pigeon...that is what means the most to me.



This is "De Kleine Grijze" who in 1996 was the 6th National One-day Distance Ace. He was bred out of "De Blauwe Draaier" (half brother X half sister of "De 776 Duif") and "Snowwhite"(a Tournier grizzle purchased as a cross from Arie & Enne Dijkstra from Buitenpost) He won:

*1st Montlucon 1303 b and 7th Nat. 4798 b
4th Orleans 2461 b and 16th Nat. 8543 b
6th Chateauroux 621 b and 54th Nat. 5833 b
7th Bourges 881 b and 61st Nat. 5780 b
8th Montlucon 728 b and 66th Nat. 4778 b
10th Etampes 5483 b and 76 Nat 22418 b
12th Montargis 1198 b and 104 Nat. 8364 b
Now that is flying!!*

When it comes to putting together breeding pairs I am very precise and demanding and often I am accused of being too fussy. I don't mind pleading guilty to these accusations. We all enjoy and practice this hobby in our own way. We can use it as a simple pastime or we can take it more seriously and put our heart and soul into our attempt to get to the top of our chosen sport. You can be sure that I have put together two pigeons with the intention of using them as feeders because I didn't think they could possibly produce champions, but they did. Luck also plays an important part in our sport. Enjoy it when it comes along. Most fanciers make good use of such a windfall and when this lucky pair of breeders comes to the end of its career then the fancier's good performances are generally done. Personally I get the greatest satisfaction when a pair of pigeons that I put together after careful and thoughtful planning delivers the quality offspring that I had imagined they would. Carefully thinking over the pairings of our pigeons is necessary and afterwards we have to analyse the results. You learn

from your successes, but I think we can learn even more from our failures. Why, in heavens name didn't those well-planned pairings produce a single youngster that could find its way home from the other side of the city? Why not?? Consciously thinking these problems through and through will give you a more analytical mind. When finally the answer comes to you, you ask yourself why you didn't stumble over the answer earlier. It was there all the time.

Most fanciers find that planning all these pairings is a problem of the first degree. They would rather choose the option of opening the door and letting the pigeons choose their own partners. The solution isn't quite that simple. Still I can imagine that many fanciers can't see the forest for the trees when they arrive at the chapter concerned with pairing and breeding. There are so many characteristics you have to keep straight in your mind. How do you keep track of all of them?

In the last chapter I suggested that you chose a specialty. Do it, it will simplify the task greatly. If you are going to take the trouble of recognizing and evaluating all the different characteristics, then begin at the beginning. Begin with a specialty such as sprint/middle distance. In this specialty you can make fewer mistakes or in other words it doesn't make as great a difference if your assessments and conclusions don't quite agree with reality. If you begin with a discipline such as one-day long distance then simple mistakes will quickly lead to frustration and you will likely lose your enthusiasm. Start with the easiest discipline and if all goes well then think about taking the next step. Remembering and recognizing most of the characteristics after several years will become second nature, but it is being able to evaluate the worth of each one that will determine your success. We have to know how a certain attribute affects the ability of the pigeon to perform. We have to be able to judge which pigeon we can best use on the breeding loft and which pigeon to leave on the race team or maybe not? That is where the biggest problem for most fanciers lies.

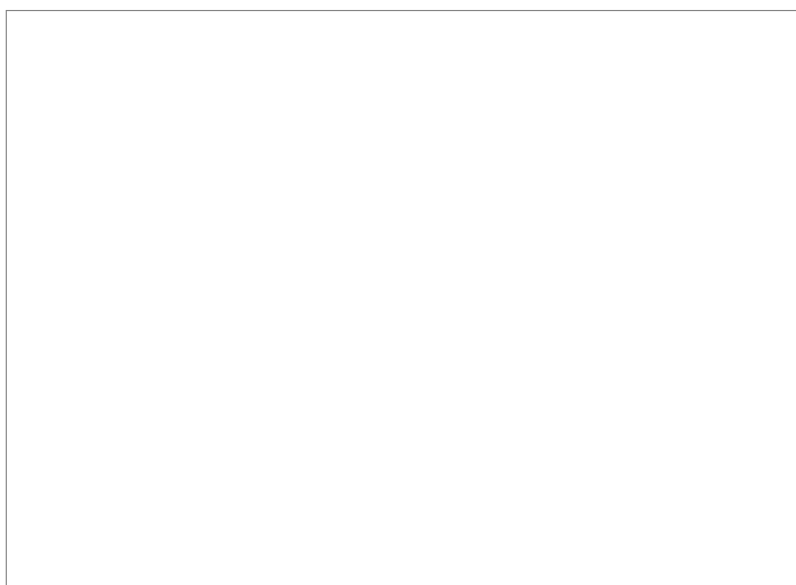
The answer is: specialize. Try to handle as many of the best pigeons in that specialty as you can. Remember, learn, feel, look and after a while the light will go on, you will know if that pigeon fits into your type or not. Maybe that pigeon is suited very well for another specialty, but that doesn't interest you in the least. Type goes with type and that is where we have to start. We have to learn what attributes are essential and which ones are not. We have to look for the functional similarities, for the golden thread. For each type these are essentially the same: mordant or character, speed, intelligence, quality of the muscles, size of the pupil, the pigmentation of the iris and the weightlessness of the body. Pigeons that fit into this mould are the ones we search for endlessly on our own loft and the lofts of other fanciers. We never have enough of these under our roof!

We need each of these attributes to succeed in our breeding efforts. We have to succeed in acquiring a number of pigeons that fit within the framework of these summed up characteristics, to reproduce in our breeding loft. If at all possible they should have these attributes concentrated and inbred into them. Then all we still need is a successful cross. If we want to succeed on the racecourse with the following generation we need vitality as the connecting attribute. When we bring all these ingredients together, we can study the menu and in short order determine the first dish we can assemble to suit the palate of our clients. In other words like the chef in the kitchen we as fanciers are now ready to take our first steps as a "racing pigeon breeder".

4.01 The Next Step: Learn to analyze!

Before we make up our list of breeding pairs and enter the names and numbers of our breeder cocks and hens on it, we have to first very accurately analyse the qualities of our pigeons. Every pigeon, good or bad, possesses an entire range of various attributes and each one appears to some degree in an always-different form.

The package of characteristics and attributes that a pigeon is dealt at conception is what makes a pigeon good or bad and/or whether or not it is suited for breeding or only for racing. We have only some choices that we can focus our attention on. We all know that a good racer is not always a guaranteed success in the breeding loft. There is a good chance that its youngsters will not perform successfully when we race them. Therefore it is important that we try to develop a feeling and a good nose for recognizing those qualities that determine a pigeon's suitability for either the race loft or the breeding loft. Once we judge a pigeon to be a breeder than we have no choice. We cannot expose this exceptional pigeon to the weekly dangers of a bad release, sudden changes in the weather, wires, birds of prey, etc. We have to as quickly as possible try to reproduce its genetic package. In other words we can't get this pigeon into the breeding loft quickly enough!!



This is "Magic Junior". He delivered the General Championship in the N.A.B.v.P for me in 1993 and that same year in that competition was also the best pigeon over 6 one-day distance races in old birds. He literally won a truckload of early prizes. His father is "De Jonge Munchen" and his mother "Het Klein Blauw", that is the old Stichelbout foundation pair obtained from the Bros. Willequet from Kwaremont. This is the same loft where Gaby Van Den Abeele obtained his base pigeons. Brothers and sisters to "Magic Junior" were all extra pigeons. His brother "De Bourges" flew 2nd National Bourges and his son the 2nd National Etampes against more than 35,000 pigeons.

From the foregoing paragraph you should have learned that there is a large range of difference between pigeons and that there is also a difference between two good pigeons. In our sport there are many ingrained ideas. One of them relates directly to this paragraph: mate first prizewinners to first prizewinners. Or more simply expressed: pair good to good. But what should arouse our interest is: just exactly what is good?? What makes one pigeon better than the other?? Why was a pigeon only an average racer and afterwards unexpectedly proved to be an outstanding breeder?? This is a question of differences in quality, a difference in inherited attributes. That's why the how come is important. That's what should be going through our

thoughts whenever we work in and around our pigeon lofts. We want to become and do better: but how?

The first step is to observe and compare! Regularly handle your pigeons, summer and winter. Don't be afraid to write your observations in a notebook. Six months later you can't be sure that you remember correctly what you thought was so important earlier. A computer can be a great tool for keeping track of these observations. To day we are able to purchase programmes where all our observations and all of our racing and breeding information can be stored. Take that next step and obtain one of these modern tools. In the racing pigeon sport it is important that we recognize the important characteristics. Don't bury them somewhere deep in your memory. There they will certainly sooner or later be lost. Store them where, with the touch of a button they can be recalled and where a computer programme with all its powers can analyse our data in ways we never could ourselves. This will open your mind to new possibilities, pigeon possibilities or perhaps others. Limit yourself to learning the differences and the recognition of those attributes that are the most important for the modern racing pigeon. The sooner you have this ability ingrained in your being, the faster you will rise to the top and be recognized as one of the strong performing fanciers in our sport.

We have to have the ability to know why a pigeon won a particular contest. Was it because it was intelligent?? Or did it win because of its extra vitality?? Or was it its persevering iron will?? Take the time to closely examine your pigeons. You will learn that a pigeon is made up of many and diverse characteristics and that each of these characteristics vary in its form. Then you will never again say to a reporter that you pair "good to good" in your breeding loft. You will understand that there is a world of difference between good pigeons.

Charting all the good characteristics is not the only thing we have to do. It is also important that we do the same with the bad characteristics. It is imperative that we become as thoroughly familiar with the bad characteristics as we are with the good ones. They can limit a pigeon in its ability to pass on its extra qualities, if we give him or her a partner that scores low for this same attribute. It is important to note the circumstances in which a pigeon delivered its best and its worst performances. Again this is where a computer is an excellent tool that can help you remember all these small details.

If you busy yourself with analyzing and unravelling all the characteristics of your pigeons I can easily imagine that after a while you begin to lose sight of the main goals. There is a way to solve this problem: choose an easier specialty to begin with.

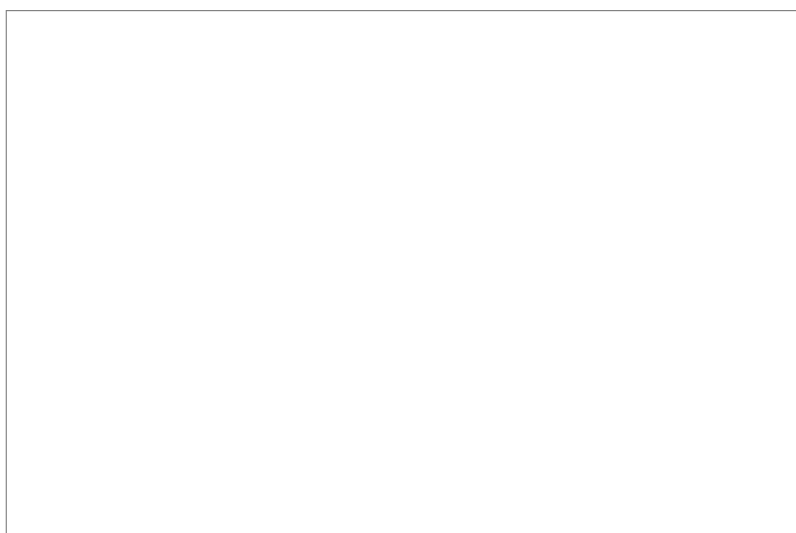
Start with a specialty where you won't be hit with heavy losses of your pigeons or have a very difficult time putting your name on the race result. Start at the beginning with races up to and including 400 km. With these types of races you can analyse your pigeon data every week.

When you stop making mistakes and have reached the absolute top in this discipline than you may think of adding the challenge of another specialty or perhaps changing over to a more difficult discipline entirely. If you have gained experience in a certain specialty then you will recognize and evaluate the differences in the top pigeon in the other categories with greater ease. Ultimately you will be able to truly judge and evaluate pigeons. If I give you a pigeon to judge you will be able to evaluate within 100 km the distance this bird can excel at.

This is one of the responsibilities of the modern racing pigeon fancier. We can no longer send everything in our loft to the long end, pigeons, which are suited along with pigeons, which are not suited for this distance. The media and non-pigeon racing public will frown on us if we continue to have races that end up in heavy losses. It is in our own self-interest to educate the next generation of pigeon fanciers and make sure that they enjoy the pleasures of all the various aspects of our sport.

4.02 When pairing many factors have to be taken into account

Just because we are now discussing pedigrees don't think that I believe it is the most important factor in deciding a pigeon's worth. I don't believe a pedigree is important unless the pigeon in question has my full attention. Only then do I want to know as much as possible about it, not any sooner! Still the pigeon's ancestry is an indispensable aid when deciding on our pairings. It can show how much a pigeon is inbred or if it is the product of a cross. When pairing this is important information, because if a pigeon is inbred, then we are going to immediately cross it with a pigeon from another strain or we are going to pair it with a crossed pigeon that carries 50% of its own blood and that has been very successful. This is the way that we can assimilate different blood into our own strain. In principle the crossed pigeon was a trial. If it and its brothers and sisters had not come up to expectations, than its parent, the one with totally unrelated blood would have quickly disappeared from the breeding loft. All its children on the racing loft would also be immediately removed. It simply didn't fit with our own pigeons. We do not pair the new introductions to our loft together, because any success would introduce a new line into our loft and ultimately because we have too many strains and lines in our breeding loft we would not be able to see the forest through the trees. If a newly introduced strain does not produce crosses that meet my expectations after two years it is completely removed. The information that I read from a pedigree is firstly whether or not the pigeon in question is 100% my own strain, or if it is only half or less or perhaps not related at all.



This is "Steven" the super breeder for Niels Anker Pederson from Taastrup Denmark. It borders on the unbelievable what this small fancier accomplished when shipping only ten or so pigeons descended from this cock. He is a son of "De Klaren II" (son out of the wonder pair "De Goede Jaarling" and "het Schoon Blauw") with "Tosca" (out of "De Bonte Jaarling", son "De Goede Jaarling", with "Het Eitje" out of "De 08 Duif" line) Here again we have a product of inbreeding and then when we cross...

Most fanciers want a pedigree that is as complete as much as possible to accompany their pigeons. In fact such a pedigree has very little practical value. The pigeons that have a direct influence on the next generation are the parents and the grand parents. The rest of the information is only page filler, but not entirely. A pedigree can show if the breeder of the pigeon in question was moulding a strain and how he was going about it. From the more distant generations we can determine which pigeons were the most important to the base of the family. Often a pedigree will show whether or not inbreeding was done to these base pigeons. When I am deciding on how to pair my own pigeons than I will always study the pigeons lineage very carefully. If the pigeon in question is the product of a cross then I look at

the part of the pedigree that shows my own strain. I try to dissect which pigeon has the most influence. I then select a partner that as closely as possible matches with that strain influencing pigeon and not one that has other pigeons that have less influence on my strain. Otherwise we will create a pedigree hodgepodge and in the following generations we will have difficulty making suitable pairings. Lets make it easy for ourselves in determining which road we are travelling. That is by far the simplest.

I usually don't let it get to the point where a strain making pigeon gets pushed deeper into the pedigree through thoughtless and rash pairings. If possible I attempt to keep such a pigeon dominant in the first generations through purposeful pairings. Pairings such as half-brother x half-sister, nephew x niece, uncle x aunt or sometimes closer: x with its own child. It is important that when we do this that we only use the best children and grandchildren. If we follow this scheme long enough, then in one of the new generations sooner or later a new strain-making pigeon will be born and then the game starts all over again.

When I put a pigeon into the breeding loft, then it or it's brothers and sisters have shown that they are capable of top performances on the racecourse. Flying at the head of the peloton has to be a characteristic that is bred into the strain and the offspring, as fruit of that strain cannot fall too far from the tree. When you purchase a pigeon it is very important to research these matters very carefully. It is important to me that such pigeons can fly head prizes at all the distances of my specialty (between 100 and 700 km). The types of head prizes make a difference, early prizes earned in rainy weather, in smash races and blow homes, are a bonus. It makes the pigeon more complete. But the most important early prizes are those earned in real pigeon weather. Races fought out under azure blue skies, in warm weather, wind on their nose and at speeds between 1100 and 1200 meters per minute. This is the battleground where the real champions compete. This is the fairest weather, not meteorological obstacles or distorted magnetic field, no excuses. The best has won; these are the pigeons that I have always been interested in and even more interested if the same fancier has more than one classified at the front of the race result. That's no accident and if he repeats it, don't wait any longer, immediately obtain some pigeons to use as crossing material.

It is also important to know ahead of time whether or not the newly purchased pigeon will click with our pigeons. You probably are asking: how can I know that ahead of time? You can easily discover this by thoughtfully reading all the pigeon papers and magazines that you can get a hold of. In principle all the published loft reports are of successful fanciers. We should be interested in more than the performances of these fanciers; we should be very interested in how their best racers were bred. These are mostly crossed specimens. If these outstanding racing pigeons were bred out of a combination of Janssen x Pieterse pigeons then we store that information on the hard drive between our ears. If that same successful combination of crossing pops up in more top lofts, then we know that if we have an inbred family of Pieterse pigeons in our loft our crossing material will have to come from a Janssen family.

That is if we are looking for a cross that has a good chance of success. This is a case where we can apply knowledge learned and practiced by others. If we have spent the time to study and learn the qualities good and bad of our own family, then we know precisely the shortcomings of our pigeons. With this carefully acquired knowledge we can calmly begin a search for material with which to make an untried cross. This is real breeding. Attempting to constantly increase the quality of your own collection of pigeons. Always searching for better, searching for the exception, planning pairings that will bring you closer to perfection.

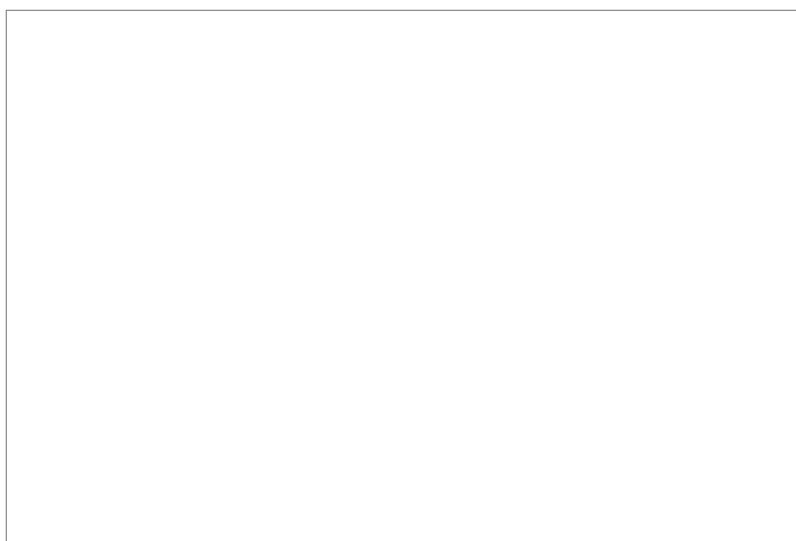
If your loft is to increase in overall quality, we now look for a pigeon with specific qualities. A pigeon that brings with it those qualities we are looking for, not those of a distant relative. Its own qualities are the most important and secondly the qualities of the balance of its family. A

pigeon that qualified as average descending from an outstanding family would be left sitting where it sat. I would rather have a pigeon with outstanding qualities descending from an average family to add to my breeding loft.

Due to the many factors that come into play, pairing is for me and now for you a fantastic pastime. It becomes an attempt at creating something new. Every pairing we create will produce a surprise and that surprise may or may not come up to your expectations. The new individuals will always be different, always composed of different amounts or qualities of specific characteristics. Each time they will appear in a different form, almost never the same. If you have bred the same family for a long time and your performances have reached the highest levels for some time, then suddenly, without your prodding, fanciers begin to talk about your strain, because your pigeons possess specific traits. These you have bred into them through years of painstaking testing, analyzing, selecting and pairing. Isn't this the ultimate goal of every true racing pigeon fancier?

4.03 Would you break up an outstanding breeding pair??

Most fanciers wouldn't break up a good breeding pair too quickly. When a breeding pair produces several good racers every year then we would all be inclined to put such a pair back together again and again and deservedly so. Good breeding pairs are like money in the bank and ensure our future. Because every racing pigeon fancier's goal is to take part in the races, he has to replenish his racing loft yearly with good quality young racers. If you can be sure that there will be several cracks amongst them that will often provide us with a feeling of reassurance. A good breeding pair can easily keep the performances of a loft at a high level for 5-8 years. That is if they merely produce good flyers. If the youngsters have sufficient quality to shine on the breeding loft and the owner likes to busy himself with the breeding phase of racing then the successes on the racecourse can last much longer. Personally I like both aspects of our hobby. However I like the breeding aspect the most.



This picture was taken in front of the lofts of Hans and Jorg (on the left of the picture) Grube from Lubeck. Just like Horst Schwerdtfeger (2nd from the left) from Stockelsdorff (next to Lubeck) they introduced the murderers from Gooiland successfully to their lofts. These fanciers became 1st and 2nd young bird champions in their division in 1999. On the second last young bird race of the season between them these fanciers took the first 50 prizes in their area. Horst is standing besides Steven van Breemen (left) and Rico Koene (right)

By nature I am very curious and this makes me want to know if either the cock or the hen of an outstanding breeding pair would perhaps breed even better youngsters with another partner. Naturally that could sometimes happen. If you change partners then you will also get to know the individual value of both partners of the good breeding pair. Sometimes you can pair one partner to whomever you want and it keeps producing first-class offspring. The other partner may have more difficulty following suit. In this case you will know on which partner you will have to base your future breeding. Sometimes both partners produce very good youngsters with other partners. In this case both partners of the good breeding pair have few weak points.

You can safely and easily build a very good family out of their offspring. It can also happen that neither partner of the good breeding pair will breed successfully with other partners. In this case we will leave them together for the rest of their breeding career and use their youngsters on the race team. Successful breeding pairs such as these are often a question of

luck. With their youngsters we will undoubtedly have a difficult time reproducing their parents breeding success. Personally I think that the breeding ability of the good breeding pair's offspring is the most important of all. If a breeding pair produces many good racers and every once in a while produce an extra good racer, than to me they qualify as being good. On the other hand if their offspring also have the ability to breed good flyers and breeders then I rate them as an exceptional breeding pair. Such breeding pairs provide for decades of pleasure in the racing pigeon sport and I think that no one would question the difference between "breeding pairs" and "breeding pairs".

Sometimes in discussions over breeding you hear fanciers say that when breeding pigeons become older that their offspring will be of lesser quality. I would agree with them if they mean that they will have less ability to raise their brood when in the nest. Older pigeons indeed have more difficulty in feeding youngsters. Older breeding pigeons may also have more difficulty in producing fertile eggs, with that I would also agree. But when it comes to the genetic package that the older pigeons pass on to their offspring then I would totally disagree with them, most certainly from your old breeding cocks. If you ensure that your breeding hens are provided with sufficient nutrients with which to produce the embryo which will develop into the youngsters in the egg, then older breeding hens can produce good quality youngsters till they reach a ripe old age. If you want to get rid of yours then you know where I live. But we were talking about how long to leave an outstanding breeding pair together. How do I do it?? As a racing pigeon fancier you have to think about keeping both the racing loft and breeding loft up to snuff. In principle I pair my breeders to produce youngsters for the racing loft. The youngsters of the first two or three rounds are without exceptions destined for the race team. If you have good race results then there are fanciers knocking on your door all summer looking to purchase youngsters.

There is nothing wrong with selling some youngsters, the costs have to be covered and good pigeons for crossing are not given away. But the last round is another story. It definitely is not sold.

The best breeders are repaired. Doing this so late in the season means that they are not really all that interested anymore and it can become quite a disruption for some of the repaired widowers. So why go to all this bother of repairing them???

If the youngsters from your best breeders are always of the same origin, then it quickly becomes difficult to make suitable pairings to produce the next generation. You will be namely dependent on the youngsters of the good breeding pair for breeding success, because as soon as you have an outstanding youngsters from them, then you can only make uncle and niece or aunt and nephew pairings or later nephew and niece. I don't want to wait that long. In the fall I repair my good breeding pairs. The following year I can make half brother and half sister pairings and in this way remain much closer to the good source.

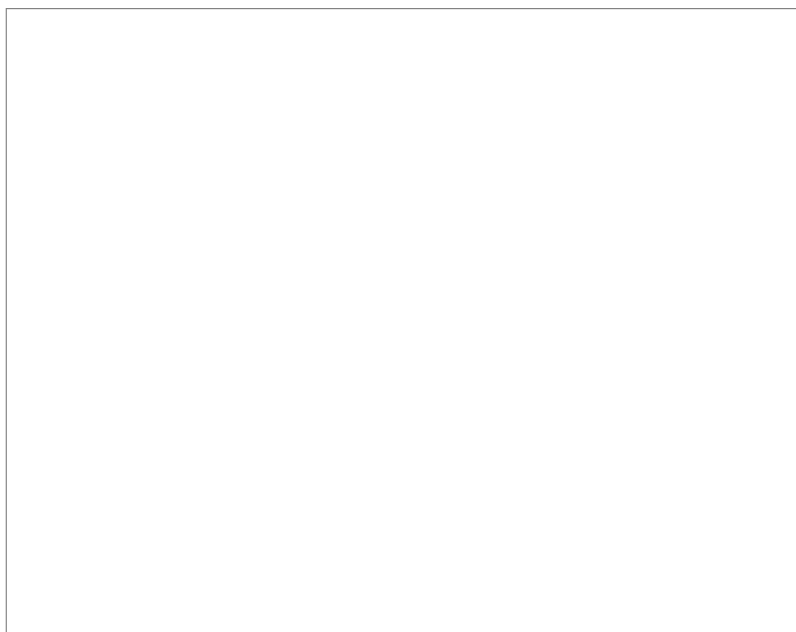
Late summer is the time to breed breeders. Real breeders have a concentrated genetic package, this means they are inbred and therefore less suited to use as racers. Inbreeding should be done in the fall and crossing should be done in the spring, because that is the time to breed good racers. If you are a breeder then you pay attention to both elements of this sport: racing and breeding. Everyone knows how important good breeding pigeons are. Everyone prefers inbred material when searching for crossing material, because we know from pigeon racing history that the very best breeders were often produced out of closely related pairings. Most fanciers don't like late youngsters. If you own an outstanding breeding pair and if you are planning to race well for the foreseeable future then you will have to consider whether or not you should perhaps breed a pair of strongly inbred youngsters this fall for the future of your loft.

4.04 What do we watch for when purchasing pigeons??

Have you ever looked in the lofts of other fanciers and asked what sort of pigeons they have? In our country you very often get answers like: they are Janssens, Klaks or Aardens. This tells you that these families of pigeons breed well. Which in fact means that the breeding abilities of the fanciers where these pigeons came from were of a the very highest calibre and that the foundation pigeons of these lofts had enormous breeding potential.

Fanciers watch the performances of other lofts with great interest and want to know what families of pigeons they have. As soon as specific names are mentioned again and again then it quickly becomes apparent that the breeding strength of the loft from which these pigeons originate is extraordinary. If you think these pigeons might possibly bring you success at your own discipline than it would serve you well to begin assembling as much information as possible on the loft of your choice.

You have to try to discover precisely what the starting point of this loft was. If all the good pigeons descend from the same breeding pair then it becomes quite simple. We have to order youngsters out of that one pair. The other fanciers have already figured that out and shown you that they have breeding potential. If it seems that the actual foundation pigeons are already several generations removed in the pedigrees, then in fact you have already missed the boat. You are already to late...



"De Wittentik" is a son out of the super breeding pair "De Bonte Jaarling" and "De Bourges Duivin". Five sons out of this pair flew the first five positions on a National One-day distance race. "De Wittentik" in 1996 won the 5th National Chateauroux against 7108 pigeons. His brother "De Witkop" won the 2nd National Bourges and the 4th National Orleans. Another brother "Magic Olympic Grizzle" was the 2nd National Ace Pigeon Overall One-day Distance. He was 5th Overall at the Olympiad.

Carefully reading the pigeon papers and assessing the actual worth of the loft reports and the reported race performances is one of the first prerequisites to ensure that we won't miss the boat. If you have arrived at these paragraphs of this book, then you have been able to learn from the preceding chapters which traits are the most important for breeding, which are less suitable and which ones we can effectively disregard. If you go somewhere to obtain pigeons,

it should be because of the extra quality that loft has and we want to take some of that extra quality home with us. We have to know what that extra quality looks like. How it feels. How it is expressed in the way they carry themselves. How you can recognize them. You have to know how. In most cases the breeder doesn't much care. You can choose what you want out of a basket full of squeakers. You pay the asked for price or you don't buy anything it makes no difference to him.

Many fanciers have money burning a hole in their pockets and just have to go home with a pair of squeakers in their basket. When they come home their wives could rightfully say, "What, you wasted a whole day for nothing?? The next time you want to go away I can find something for you to do." This is how pigeons are often purchased blindly. I wouldn't do this. For me the main concern when purchasing is the quality of the offering. The quality has to be exactly what I am looking for. Often this means a youngster out of a special breeding pair and even they will produce rubbish. I have to be sure of my choice.

Be careful when buying; use your eyes when you go somewhere to obtain a youngster or two out of a good breeding pair. There are pigeon sellers that are real "salesmen" in the full sense of that word. They will talk the ears right of the side of your head. They make you feel like you are a long lost relative; provide coffee and cake and sometimes a glass of beer and a piece of cheese. You feel right at home and in reality the youngsters are already sold, because after such a welcome you almost feel obligated to buy a youngster or two. Actually these fanciers have something to hide. Fanciers such as "De Klak" and the "Janssen's" don't have to say too much in order to sell their youngsters. Their attitude is "take them or leave them". I'll come back to why a little later. What other fanciers try to cover up with their friendliness and sociability is the quality of their pigeons. They are outstanding at one specialty or another: they are true pigeon handlers. Give them a bad pigeon and they will make a prize flyer out of it. Give them an average pigeon and they will turn it into a crack. Give them some good quality pigeons and they will win nationals by the truckload. Remember that the handlers' abilities can be a large part of the performance standards of a loft when you are looking to buy youngsters. It can go hand in hand with the quality of the pigeons on his loft, but then you will have to take your place in line...

That's the way it was at the "Janssen's" and at "De Klak's" in the past. At that time they still had their youthful enthusiasm and energy and used it to turn the race results inside out in their areas with the performances of their pigeons. Klak still does it from time to time... Even to this day, if you want to buy a youngster from either "De Klak" or the "Janssen's" you will have to wait your turn in the long line at their door. Why???? Because, their pigeons are breeders in the true sense of the word, they easily pass on their outstanding class to the next generation. That and only that is, what is so decisively important when buying pigeons!

My advice would be that if you want to bring in different pigeons and especially if you are looking for foundation material to start over with, than buy from a fancier that is building his own family or strain. Most fanciers aren't serious breeders. They know that the best racing pigeons are very often the product of a cross. Therefore they cross to their heart's content.

They leave the inbreeding to the real craftsman. That is where I would buy if I weren't such a technically knowledgeable pigeon breeder. Less knowledge and ability is needed in order to cross breed successfully, you quickly know whether or not your crosses result in winners.

I would like to give you some practical advice you can use when you are out looking to obtain young pigeons. You know that proven lofts, management methods and racing methods aren't wrapped up in a neat package along with the fanciers' knowledge for you when you take the youngsters home. From the moment you pay for your youngster you are delivered over to the

pigeon racing gods in a manner of speaking. In fact: delivered over to yourself! That is usually the first and only reason why some fanciers have such bad luck with pigeons they bring into their lofts. The cause is not just the pigeons. The loft the youngsters are brought to is often the source of their bad luck.

If your pigeons regularly have respiratory problems then please fix the problem. Don't always look to your veterinarian for all the answers. He will prescribe pills and powders, again and again... The problem lies with your loft.

Make some well thought out changes to your lofts ventilation, heating and the ability of the sun to get in, let your lofts make your birds healthy and keep them healthy.

Only buy pigeons when you get your lofts healthy, but first I would try to get out of my own pigeons as much as I could.

You have to try to develop your racing, feeding and training methods to the point where it makes sense to obtain different pigeons, because it is only then that you can get out of them what they are capable of. You have to have a good loft, knowledge, experience and proven methods and then there is still something else you should watch out for. If you are not a neat freak yourself then you have to be extremely careful when buying pigeons from someone who cleans and polishes twice a day and mops his floors every other day and if you notice that he has a well-filled medicine cabinet then be very, very careful. His pigeons are accustomed to these pills and powders and the pigeons are selected on racing ability, health and condition caused by their use. You can be sure that nine times out of ten these same pigeons will have health problems in your lofts. Look for lofts where fantastic results are obtained using straightforward methods. You can be sure that if you acquire pigeons from such a loft, then with your care and management methods you will get much more out of them. These kinds of purchases make more sense!

Most fanciers purchase young pigeons because they simple don't have enough money to purchase proven older pigeons. If you purchase young pigeons at four weeks of age then you can't know anything about their racing abilities. Judging young birds at that age in the hand is something that I seldom try, because it is so devilishly difficult. It is very easy to misjudge them at that age. Then what do we base our decision on? We use, as a starting point is its ancestry; make sure the important breeders are at the top of the pedigree and if possible concentrated and inbred. Don't be misled by nice stories about the pigeons in the seventh and eighth generation, they are used to build dreams. Purchase young pigeons from a family that has proven breeding abilities and from one where line breeding and inbreeding has been done and make sure the youngsters come out of that family. I would also suggest that you have a good look at its parents and especially their most successful offspring. Don't we want our own new acquisitions to resemble them?? If all the champions out of the good breeding pair without exception are all blue bars, then don't be obstinate and chose a chequer out of them. The chance that it will succeed will be one out of I don't know how many. You already knew that I'm sure.

Watch for inborn vitality. They have to look bright and alert. They have to be born wringers, if they don't do it now they will never do it...

Now a somewhat easier subject, purchasing older pigeons. Here the information, in a manner of speaking, is more tangible. The pigeon has participated in the races and this provides us with vital information. It has bred youngsters and these have also raced. More information. Because an old pigeon is full-grown it exhibits all of its potential attributes and qualities to their fullest.

We know that in order for a pigeon to race well it needs a substantial dose of vitality and that we cannot depend on this vitality to be passed on with any amount of reliability to the next generation. Therefore, the pigeon we have our eyes on should possess the attributes from the group that contains mordant, intelligence, muscle quality and speed then we know our chances increase considerably that this pigeon will be a successful breeder.

We also have to search for those pigeons that are strong in that attribute in which our own loft lacks strength, so we can add its strong point to our own loft. Search for lofts that can deliver remarkable performances or are strong at the type of racing where we lack strength. We have to know our weaknesses; then we know what we have to search for to increase the quality of our loft!!

Finally don't forget to look at the breeding potential of the pigeon in question. It should not be the only good pigeon in its family. It should have other good brothers and sisters. They also should have shown that they are capable of passing their good qualities to the next generation.

Ultimately our goal should be to purchase pigeons that are capable of performing on the breeding loft. If you doubt their breeding potential, leave it sit on its perch. If it meets all your requirements and you have enough money in your pocket: buy it! Now all you need is that little bit of luck that it will fit with your pigeons and that last bit of certainty no one can give you!

Afterword

Pairing, breeding and selecting are on the mind of all racing pigeon fanciers every day. Selecting pigeons is a daily task. I don't mean culling but getting an overall picture of individual pigeon so that in the end you have a perfect image of all of them in your mind. You pair them keeping this overall picture in front of your minds eye. You then use it to measure and match the attributes of these individual pigeons and try to put all the puzzle pieces in the right place when making pairing decisions. Then we breed and the young birds are born and grow up. Now you can observe daily whether or not you put all the puzzle pieces in the right place. Then the cycle starts all over again. Breeding pigeons with an ideal pigeon in mind is something that as a pigeon fancier has provided me with many hours of pleasure. I hope that this book can bring a bit of this enjoyment your way and that you will spend many pleasant hours pairing, breeding and selecting your pigeons in the future!

Steven van Breemen.

ps: I would like to say many thanks to Nick Oud who has spend so many hours translating this online book for you all!

The Development of my Strain

Introduction

The basis of my successful pigeon sport of nowadays is based, besides full attention for the keeping, health and selection, especially on building up an own strain. I started with that idea very serious about 30 years ago. My first pigeons of the De Smet-Matthijs (Nokere, Belgium) strain, which showed their value with fabulous race results, are nowadays in direct line present in the breeding and in the racing lofts. That is shown by the severe inbred methods very clearly. How that exactly was done, I have written down in my book "The Art of Breeding". That is online available on [Winning Magazine](#).



Generation after generation I used inbred methods and in the end I bred the birds as I had them in mind in the beginning. Pigeons who bred after a severe selection on high results National Ace pigeons and breeders in which the breeding value was present in a very high percentage.

It was soon very clear to me that importing new bloodlines into the heavily inbred strain was necessary but very dangerous too. Necessary because the pigeon meets degeneration after having been severely inbred for years. I think it is hardly impossible to maintain the racing ability of a strain without bringing in new fresh blood from another loft c.q. strain.



However this is not without any danger. When you do not succeed getting success bringing in new blood into the own strain, you will meet a set-back for several years. Especially in the inbred method, the crossbreeding and the selection I had the most pleasant days of my pigeon sport.

When I describe the pedigree's of my pigeons it will be very clear to you which pigeons I imported, that brought me success and what pigeons even brought me a fortune. Let me say that I'm most grateful for pigeons from the Janssen Brothers, by way of the loft of the late Mr. Jan van Erp from Hilversum, Holland. And for the Valere De Smet-Matthijs pigeons I became from Georges and his son Andre Veys of Elsegem, Belgium.



So far the short introduction of my pigeons and the breeding methods in short of what I believe were the start of my success, which is mainly based on own experience. It's developing played an important part in my life and lead to unbelievable results and worldwide accepted breeding methods.

I wanted to create an own strain of racing pigeons with the will to win and that carried at the same time high breeding qualities in them and possessed the capacity to pass those qualities on easily to the next generations.

The beginning with De Smet-Matthijs pigeons

My first pigeons of a pure strain came middle of the sixties from the loft of the late Georges Veys of Elsegem, Belgium.



Georges Veys with "De Kleinen"

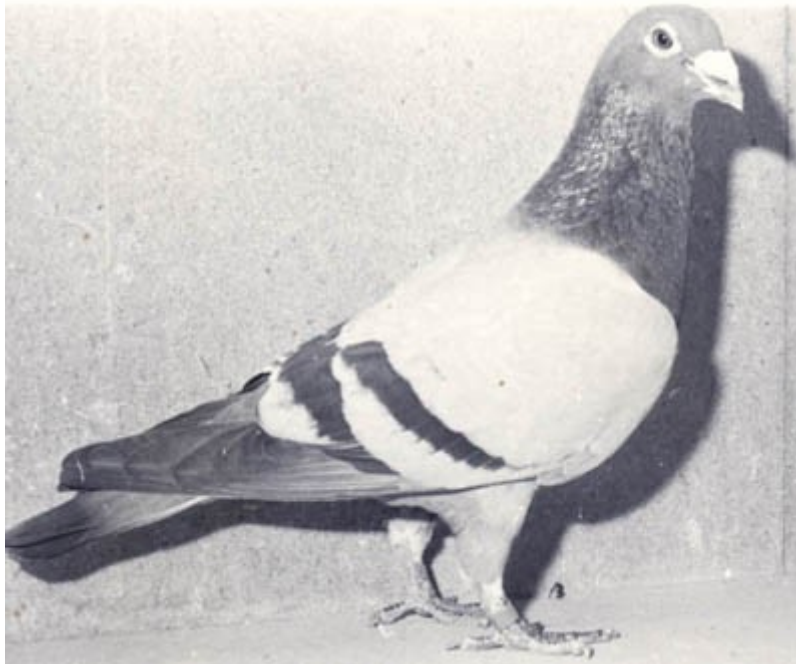
This fancier with only a small number of birds possessed a strain of pure De Baere Brothers and Valere De Smet-Matthijs pigeons both from Nokere Belgium. With his famous "Kleinen" (son of "De Poele", halfbrother of my "Slimme") and his even famous race companion "Het Boerke", full brother of "De Derby" (both sons of "De Oude Roden", the line of my foundation breeder "Het Boerke"), were always on top of the basketing list.



Georges Veys with "Het Boerke"

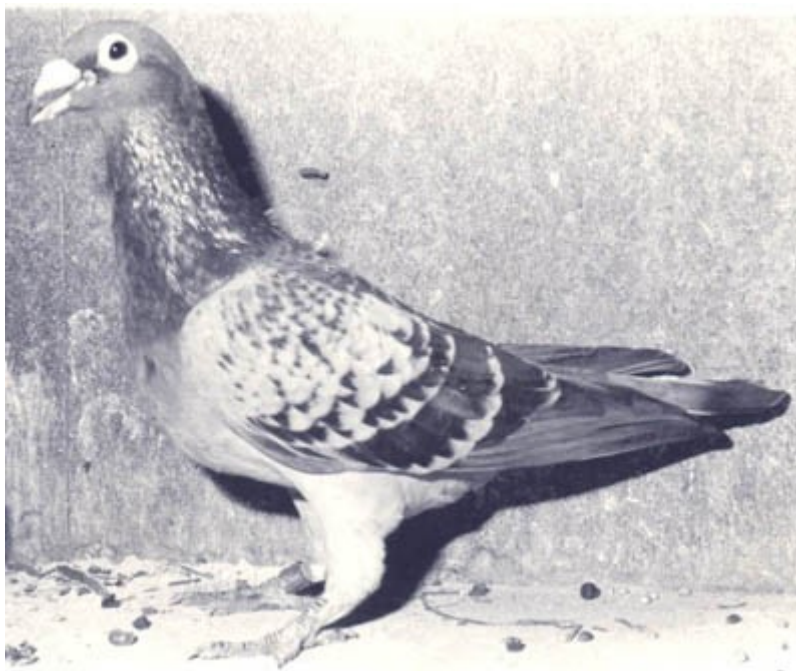
These two birds made Georges Veys seven years at a stretch the champion of his region, the very same region where De Baere Brothers and Valere De Smet-Matthijs were racing their

worldfamous champions!!! This is unique in pigeon sport and indicates the quality of these two birds!! Both cocks won over a hundred prizes in the races and how many firsts I do not exactly remember but the number was countless!



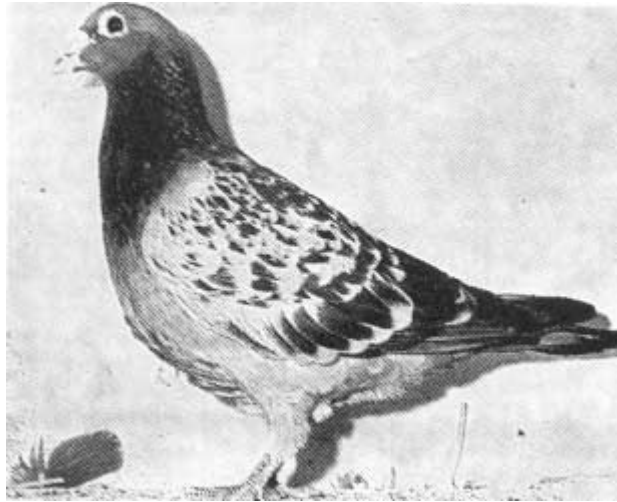
"De Ballon" of Georges Veys.

The foundation of the Georges Veys loft was the bloodline of "De Oude Rosten" (direct descendants are e.g. "De Poele" and "De Oude Witteslag", see his daughter "De Klare Witteslag") of De Baere Brothers, the halfbrother of the worldfamous "Oude Klaren of '46" of Valere De Smet-Matthijs and the line of "De Blesse" (direct descendant is "De Oude Roden"), the other halfbrother of "De Oude Klaren of '46".



"De Poele" of Georges Veys

These bloodlines were "crossbred" amongst eachother with great success. "De Argenton duivin", daughter of "De Poele", won as a youngster the 1th prize National from Argenton and was in her year of birth 1th National Ace Young of Belgium. "De Barcelona duivin", daughter of "De Oude Witteslag", with her 99th prize International from Barcelona and her full brother "De Klaren" with his impressive race results, "De Derby", brother of "Het Boerke" and "Het Prinseske", daughter of "De Bozen", with both their 1th prizes in the famous "Oostvlaamse" Provincial Derby from Orleans were a few of the many very impressive champion pigeons from the loft of the master breeder Georges Veys.



"De Schonen" of Desmet-Matthijs

The old foundation lines were inbred all the time and "crossbred" with the line of the "Oude Klaren of '46". To realize that he bought at great expenses a direct daughter of the worldfamous "Oude Klaren of '46". He also possessed a full brother of "De Vechter"(2nd National Brives), a brother of "De Mieroge" (in 1964 the 1th National Ace of Belgium) and a son of the worldfamous "Plastron" of De Baere Brothers. It will be clear to you that this fancier direct out of the neighborhood of the wellknown pigeon village Nokere owned a treasure of pigeons!!!

An own (in)breeding program

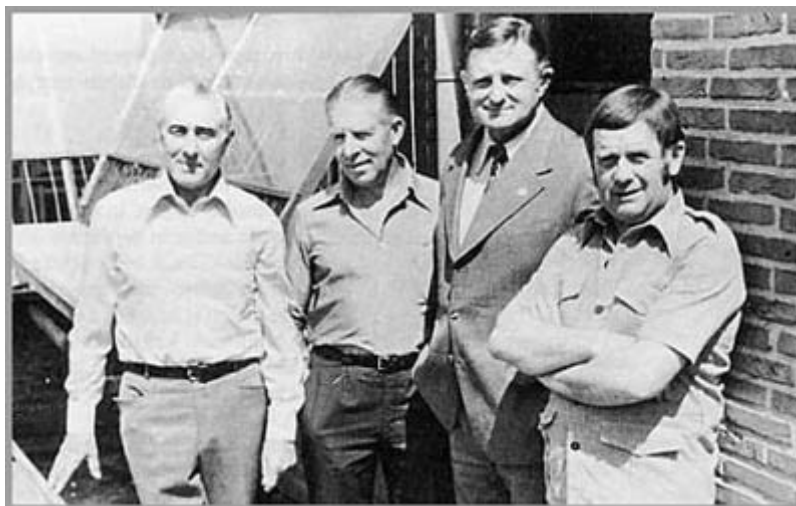
When Georges Veys passed away in 1973 most of his pigeons came over to my loft. The breeding tradition of "cross-breeding" the lines of "De Oude Rosten" with the lines of "De Oude Klaren of '46" brought me too great successes.

In those years I visited Professor Alfons Anker of Kaposvar, Hungary, the great geneticist, in order to discuss the best way to breed back the bloodline of "De Oude Klaren of '46" by way of severe inbreeding. To realize that a special inbreeding program was designed (described here on this site by in "The Art of Breeding"). www.winningmagazine.nl.



Professor Alfons Anker in his time Champion of Hungary

On a certain moment there were 15 grandchildren of "De Oude Klaren of '46" in my breeding loft. They were direct descendants of: "De Schonen", "De Groten", "De Jonge Klaren", "De Oude Grijsoge", "Het Prinseske", "De Klaren II" plus direct children from "De Kapoen", "De Rik", "De Ballon", "Het Stuur" etc.



Left to right: Jules Rijckaert, Jef Sijmons, Prof. Anker en Raoul Verstraete.

For several years at a stretch all attention was put on the inbreeding of those birds and I did not took part in any races at all. When my breeding loft contained enough valuable inbred material I searched carefully for crossbred material especially of the Janssen strain. The

fantastic results just out of this single crossbred combination made my name go round the world. I'll describe with what birds this was done into detail later on.



The old loft of Desmet-Matthijs.

Now 40 and more years later they all are legendary pigeons but they all are of that quality, that they are nowadays still mentioned often in the international pigeon magazines. The name De Smet-Matthijs as well as the name of the Janssen Brothers is often used wrong and exploited.



Valere Desmet and his old champions

When I write here that the direct descendants of almost all mentioned basic breeders of the De Smet-Matthijs strain are the most important column of the uprising of my own strain, than is no word spelled wrong. I am very proud of what I achieved thanks to those strains. I always took special care to maintain this superb strain in the bloodlines of my family of pigeons. I am very satisfied that I succeeded in doing that so well.

The construction of the Steven van Breemen strain

One day I saw a little blue hen of the purest Janssen blood in the loft of the late Jan van Erp in my hometown Hilversum. She was just like a dream. Everything "De Oude Kapoen" did not possess she did: she was built like a jet plane, streamlined and athletically, she showed temper, speed, feathers soft as the finest chinese silk and wings constructed as they should be. And then her muscles, lots of fysiotherapists never got them under their hands!

After a few seconds it flashed through my mind: this was the hen for "De Oude Kapoen". Her name and ringnumber? NL71-813108 "De 08 Duif"! The first youngster from this pair was my world famous champion NL77-990312. What this bird did on the racetrack is almost unbelievable:

Race results of NL77-990312:

St. Ghislain	220km	6726 b	1st
St. Quentin	300km	6464 b	1st
St. Ghislain	220km	4718 b	1st
Duffel	135km	4020 b	1st
St. Ghislain	220km	2219 b	1st
Compiègne	360km	1442 b	1st
St. Ghislain	220km	2421 b	1st
Strombeek	160km	4701 b	3rd
St. Ghislain	220km	7146 b	4th
Compiègne	360km	1303 b	4th
Strombeek	160km	3454 b	5th
St. Ghislain	220km	3164 b	5th
Roosendaal	100km	4423 b	8th
Zundert	100km	5347 b	15th
Compiègne	360km	1656 b	29th
Strombeek	160km	4335 b	30th
St. Ghislain	220km	3296 b	38th
Strombeek	160km	2745 b	39th
Compiègne	360km	3248 b	40th
Compiègne	360km	3624 b	46th
Duffel	140km	3289 b	71th

1st St. Ghislain 6726 duiven,
 1st St. Quentin 6464 duiven,
 1st Duffel 4020 duiven,
 1st St. Ghislain 4718 duiven,
 1st Compiègne 1442 duiven,
 2nd St. Ghislain 2219 duiven,
 4th Compiègne 1303 duiven,
 5th Strombeek 3454 duiven,
 6th St. Ghislain 7146 duiven,
 8th Roosendaal 4423 duiven.
 4th asduif Vitesse 'Brabantse Reisduif' 1979.
 4th asduif Vitesse 'Brabantse Reisduif' 1980.
 2nd asduif Oude Duiven siring Hilversum & O. 1980
 1st asduif General Holland 'Brabantse Reisduif' 1980



St. van Breemen
 - Hilversum -

P. Schipper

National Ace titles:

1st National Ace Overall 1980
 2nd National Ace Short Distance 1981
 4th National Ace Short Distance 1979
 4th National Ace Short Distance 1980



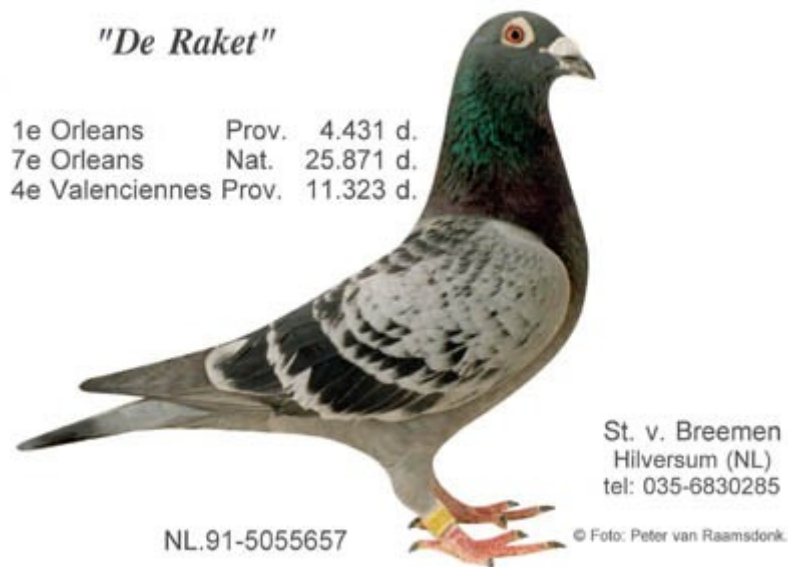
The eye of my 08 Duif Foundation hen

In 1982 he moved for a sensational amount to Mr. Fuji in Japan where he bred in his first breeding year already a National winner.



NL78-2026411 base breeder of the loft Steven van Breemen

One year later, in 1978, "De Kapoen" x "De 08 Duif" gave birth to NL78-2026411. He too raced so spectacular that fanciers in the neighbourhood still talk about it. Mated to his halfsister NL77-990309 (both had the same mother: "De 08 Duif") he gave birth to "De 150 Duif" and "De 646 Duif". Two hens that stand the closest to all the successes of my loft at this very moment.



De Raket Provincial winner from Orleans 535 kms

"De Raket" a direct son of "De 150 Duif" wins in 1991 the Provincial Orleans race beating together with a loftmate 4451 competitors. A grandchild wins in 1989 the 1st National Orleans against 8000 birds at the loft of my good friends Vonk Brothers, Cor and John, of Nigtevecht who win in 1990 1st National Etampes with a descendant of "De 08 Duif" plus the title of 2nd Semi-National Champion NABvP with almost all direct Van Breemen birds out of the Janssen base.



Witpen Compiegne National winner from Etampes 475 kms

In 1994 a full brother of this Etampes winner was mated on my loft to an inbred hen out of the basic pair "Het Boerke" x "De 150 Duif". In 1998 this cock wins as a 4 year old the Orleans

National with 5 min. ahead against 21.000 birds. Three cock's out of the same mother finish on the very same race in the top twenty of the same National!!

Her sister "De 646 Duif" was even better as a breeder: it did not matter to which cock she was mated to, she always gave birth to excellent youngsters. The most important thing in pigeon sport always have been: try to get birds that pass-on their excellent qualities easily to the next generations and so keep the strain on top of the race sheet.

Almost all descendants of this wonderful base breedingpair "De Oude Kapoen '67" x "De 08 Duif" bloodline possess this quality! To my belief there are only two Belgian strains that founded the most champion lofts in the world. Their names? Valere De Smet-Matthijs of Nokere and Janssen Brothers of Arendonk. Birds from these two lofts mated together everywhere brought phenomenal results. So it could hardly not miss: "De Oude Kapoen '67" and "De 08 Duif".



"De Kleinen" 1st National Orleans fastest bird of a release of 50.000+ birds!!!

"De 08 Duif" was born out of the finest bloodlines in Arendonk when the quality still was there: her father was a son direct from "De Donkere Stier '63" with "Het Kleintje '65" which made him a full brother to the worldfamous "Oude Merckx '67". Her mother was a daughter from "De Oude Geeloger '67". The never had better birds in Arendonk!

Have there ever been better breeders and racers in Arendonk? I doubt it. The full brother of "De 08 Duif" was the famous "De 10". He won 7 times first in big competition races. He became the grandfather of the fastest Dutch bird in the 1984 Barcelona National (1225 kms) of Mr. Henk van Ginkel of Hilversum, sold for a fortune to the country of the rising sun.



The fantastic Compiegne bred from the finest Janssen blood available!

"De 08 Duif" mated to her own father brought "De 05", who became father of "De Compiegne" (4 times 2nd in big competition every time after my "De 312") , "Mr. Orleans" (3 years in a row within the top ten prizes of National Orleans each time far over 10.000 birds in each race) and the earlier mentioned basic breeder of Vonk Bros. loft "De Blauwe Compiegne". All birds became later on first class breeders as well! In the total auction after the death of Jan van Erp I bought "De Compiegne". It was the most expensive bird. His son "De Blauwe Compiegne" was lent to Vonk Brothers and bred as said the 1st National Etampes and many other super birds. His daughter went to Thailand to be the mother of the 1st International Chiangray winner of my friends Prapat & Prapon Pilunthanakul of Bangkok. That's what's count: breeding qualities that pass-on for many generations!

Two fantastic base pigeons

You are not astonished anymore that I'm a big fan and give highly up of the old De Smet-Matthijs strain. Luck was on my side undoubtedly when I got hold of a fortune of direct De Smet-Matthijs birds from Georges Veys, who found their roots directly in the birds of the golden fifties and sixties.



"De Oude Kapoen '67" foundation cock of the Steven van Breemen strain

I just want to tell you something about "De Oude Kapoen '67". His father was "De Oude Kapoen '60" grandson of "De Goede Zwartten" with a daughter of the worldfamous "Prins" of Hector Desmet. "De Kapoen '60" won the 1st National St. Vincent and the 1st National Brives. The mother of "De Kapoen '67" was "Het Prinseske" daughter of "De Oude Klaren '46" and a daughter of "De Schonen", so "De Oude Klaren '46" was put together with his granddaughter! I dare to say that he was a world-class breeder. Why??

Did ever fly a better pigeon than his son "De 312"?? On his prizelist are 7 first prizes on 7 different races in big competition against thousands of birds, a title as National Ace and three National Ace titles in three years time on the short distance within the best 4 in a National competition. I invite you to give me the name of a better pigeon.

And: his own brother "De 411" is at this moment THE basic breeder of my loft through his daughters "De 150 Duif" (the partner of "Het Boerke", the halfbrother of "De Goede Jaarling") and "De 646 Duif" (the mother of e.g. "De Goede Jaarling").

Vloog er ooit een betere duif dan zijn zoon "De 312"?? Op zijn erelijst prijken 7 zuivere eerste prijzen in groot verband tegen duizenden duiven, een 1e nationale Asduif titel en drie titels binnen de eerste 4 nationale asduiven op de vitesse op drie jaar tijd. Ik daag u uit mij de naam van een betere duif te noemen.

Results of NL78-2026411:

St. Ghislain	220km	2219 d	2e
Compiègne	360km	1303 d	2e
Zundert	100km	5347 d	3e
St. Ghislain	220km	2234 d	3e
St. Ghislain	220km	2421 d	4e
Duffel	135km	3289 d	7e
St. Ghislain	220km	3296 d	9e
Compiègne	360km	1656 d	10e
Strombeek	160km	2745 d	14e
St. Ghislain	220km	4718 d	19e
St. Ghislain	220km	2174 d	41e
Zundert	100km	3568 d	52e
Strombeek	160km	3610 d	62e
Strombeek	160km	4335 d	79e
Strombeek	160km	4701 d	85e



11th National Ace Pigeon Short Distance 1979 9th National Ace pigeon Short Distance 1980

After "De Oude Klaren '46", "De Kapoen '60" was at the De Smet-Matthijs loft the most important breeder.

The basic breeder of Prof. Norbert Kricke of Düsseldorf (Germany) was a son of "De Kapoen '60" and "Het Prinseske" (daughter to "Oude Klaren '46"). He had tremendous breeding results into the sixth generation with these birds.

I think next of "De Notekraker", son of "De Kapoen '60" and a daughter of "De Kleinen", who won on his own the Belgian National Long Distance Marathon.

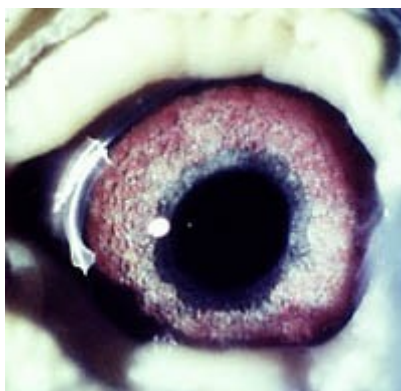
The world famous double St. Vincent National winner of Thomas Peeters & Son of As is a grandson of "De Kapoen '60". Numerous Ace pigeons and National winners have this bird in the second or third generation. For instance De Baere Brothers of Nokere, Daniël Van Ceulebroeck of Balem and the late Stan Raeymaeckers who kept them quick by the crossing with the Houben's. That's why "De Kapoen '60" is the most important breeder of the De Smet-Matthijs strain after "De Klaren of '46".

Results of NL78-2026412 (nestbrother of "De 411"):

St. Ghislain	220km	6726 b	3e
Strombeek	160km	3610 b	4e
Duffel	135km	4020 b	6e
St. Ghislain	220km	7146 b	7e
Compiègne	360km	6143 b	9e
St. Ghislain	220km	2421 b	62e
Compiègne	360km	1917 b	66e
St. Quentin	300km	1467 b	71e
Strombeek	160km	4335 b	84e

3rd National Ace Short Distance 1980

But let me be honest to tell you that I was not very much impressed in the first place of "De Oude Kapoen '67". He was very big and skinny, but showed however enormous will-power and personality. In your hands he kept on fighting, struggling to get away. Pure character and will-power. Athletically build, not in a way: his breastbone was deep and his feathers were not that soft as you would expect.



The super eye of "De Oude Kapoen '67".

But his eyes..... ohhh, so beautiful. You hardly ever have seen such a full iris with so many spots in lilac and grey in it. The wings he got were so big and apparently missed speed. But as a racer "De Oude Kapoen" won 6 first prizes on races out of Clermont 160 kms; 1-1-1-1-1-1-2-2-3-6-7-7-8-11-11, so he was as fast as lightning with his big body! So he had excellent qualities that could be improved much for sure.

The "De Oude Klaren" and "De Goede Jaarling"

At this moment I find "De Oude Klaren '46" fully back in the racing and breeding results of my "Goede Jaarling". He is the son of "De Bels", the 4th National Ace Short Distance and "De 646 Duif" (daughter of "De 411" which was 9th and 11th National Ace Short Distance when mated to his halfsister, also daughter of "De 08 Duif", namely "De 309"). "De Goede Jaarling" won several first prizes, under which just like "De Oude Klaren '46" the 1th prize National Chateauroux 650 kms (which is 200 kms flying distance more than "De Oude Klaren '46" had to fly) with headwind and flying 18 minutes ahead of nr. 2! Is that a coincidence??



"De Goede Jaarling" base pigeon of the Steven van Breemen strain. His offspring wins 1st prizes in National competitions into 7 generations !

As a yearling he was the 2nd National Yearling Ace and when one time at the basketing table there was not made a mistake in writing down the number of the racerubber, he would have been the best. His prizelist is fantastic, but nobody knows that the exact number of first prizes in our region with back then 500 members would have been around 15, if "De Goede Jaarling" entered his loft after the each race normally.....



Everything you can dream of about eyes you find here!

The youngsters of "De Goede Jaarling" are of a very high quality and with each hen he was mated to he delivered excellent youngsters. Most of his children went straight into the breeding loft because of their fabulous passing-on power of their gene material. May I say this when I state here that his straight family line produces National winners in 7 generations spread over the whole world??

With a difference of almost 40 years we find in the pedigree of "De Goede Jaarling" the very best bloodlines of the old De Smet-Matthijs strain: "De Schonen", "De Klaren II", "Het Kleintje" (daughter of the miracle breeding pair "De Schonen" x "De Angouleme duivin"), "De Groten", "De Dikke Blauwen", "De Sturen", "De Kapoen" and "Het Prinseske". All lines go directly and straight back on the most famous breeder that ever lived: "De Oude Klaren of '46"!! This is an example how I bred on with the De Smet-Matthijs pigeons and how successful I was on the races. I could describe lots of other birds of my loft in almost the same way!

The red Klaren gold

My second basic line, next to the one of "De Goede Jaarling" is the one of his halfbrother "Het Boerke". The hen that was always mated to "Het Boerke", "De 150 Duif" was the full sister of the mother of "De Goede Jaarling". This fact makes that my family of birds is quite inbred. "Het Boerke" is the son of one of my old an very inbred De Smet-Matthijs foundation pairs "De Bels" x "De Rode Duivin", daughter from "De Derby"(1st Prov. Orleans) the full brother of "Het Boerke" from Georges Veys with its over 100 prizes.



"Het Boerke" foundation cock of the Boerke line

My foundation cock "Het Boerke" is heavily inbred on the world famous "Oude Klaren '46" of Valere De Smet-Matthijs of Nokere. In his pedigree you only find this precious blood and nothing else. For 10 years at a stretch "Het Boerke" has been mated to "De 150 Duif", the daughter of another worldfamous foundation pair "De 411" x "de 309 Duif", halfbrother x halfsister to my famous Janssen hen "De 08 Duif". The loft partnership Leo van Leeuwen & Hans van Grieken from Aalsmeer (8 times overall champion of the Amsterdam Provincial) own several first prize winners out of this breeding pair.

Vonk Bros from Nigtevecht has a daughter that bred them the 1st National Orleans 1989 against over 8000 birds.

Their direct offspring:

"Het Boerinneke II": mother of 1st National Orleans 1989!

"De 157 Duif":

18th National Orleans 23546 birds;
78th Provincial Peronne 22276 birds.

"Simply Red":

86th National Orleans 23546 birds;
10th St. Ghislain Prov. 8061 birds;
132nd St. Ghislain Prov. 13193 birds;
252 Prov. Strombeek 12630 birds; 7
9th Minderhout 1881 birds.

"Het Licht Boerke": father of a provincial winner.

"De Schone": 1st Prov. Compiegne and a hell of a breeder:

"De Zwarte Baron" already mentioned but not his full brother:



"De Black Magic" wins:

Orleans Prov	1889 b	1st
Chateauroux Prov	1694 b	1st
Orleans National	5540 b	2nd
Chateauroux National	5009b	3rd!!!

"The Guld Parret cock" of John Engel father of: 1,2,3,4, National Hannover;

"De Blauwe Engel" 2x1st Gluckstadt and father of my Rode Engel 1st National Bourges 9300 birds;

"De 689" mother of "John" winner of:

Skanderborg	1996 b	2nd
Abenraa	1383 b	2nd
Neumunster	763 b	2nd was here also 2nd National of 4000b
Vejen	1720 b	4th



"De Raket": 1st Provincial Orleans 4431 birds and Int Prov 18250/2nd. He is father of "De Jonge Raket" at Rico Koene's loft father of "Barbara" 1st Ace Young. Also great-grandfather of 2nd Nat Ace in Germany.

"Het Boerke 816":

12th Prov Dourdan 1332 b
33rd Wuustwezel 4949 b
36th Chateauroux 1239 b

"Het Boerke 817":

5th St. Ghislain 4395 b
6th Etampes 2720 b
21th Orleans 1506 b
36th Chateauroux 1239 b
x



"Het Boerinneke":

6th	Orleans	1342 b
8th	Soissons	1412 b
16th	St Ghislain	1538 b
22nd	Wuustwezel	1585 b
24th	Heverlee	1623 b
25th	St. Ghislain	2616 b
47th	Heverlee	2992 b
61th	Nationaal Orleans	28542 b
103e\\r d	Prov. Soissons	11141 b
188e\\th	Duffel	1931 b
337th	Prov. Wuustwezel	12766 b

She breeds:

"Vanessa" mother of a provincial winner;

"Gisele" a superbreeder. She won:

Pont	4896 b 8th
Pont	7430 b 17th
Cambrai	5482 b 42nd
Orleans	4711 b 64th
Orleans	2604 b 37th

Four of her children are top ten National winner!!!!



"De Kleinen": 1st National Orleans 1998 5 minutes ahead against 13.500 birds!!!

"De Vooruit"

5e Moeskroen	Prov.	6.628 d.
10e Peronne	Prov.	6.552 d.
19e Arras	Prov.	6.353 d.
44e Strombeek	Prov.	5.690 d.



St. v. Breemen
Hilversum (NL)
tel: 035-6830285

NL.92-2635803

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"De Vooruit" of Peet Kester 5 weeks in a row 1st!!!!!! Full brother of "Magic Mealy"

"Magic Mealy" *3e Nat. Asduif Dagfond*

5e Chateauroux	Prov.	5.009 d.
6e Orleans	Prov.	7.671 d.
4e Valenciennes	Prov.	11.323 d.
11e Bourges	Prov.	6.319 d.



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"De Magic Mealy" full brother of "De Vooruit" wins:

Valenciennes 1971 b	2nd
Chateauroux 355 b	2nd
Orleans 489 b	3rd
Valenciennes 11323 b	4th
Bourges 418 b	5th
Chateauroux 5009 b	5th (Nationaal)
Orleans 7671 b	6th (Nationaal)
Chateauroux 545 b	8th
Montlucon 510 b	10th
Bourges 6319 b	11th (Nationaal)

"Magic Mealy" is 3rd National Ace Dayraces 1994.

Father of a regional winner of St. Ghislain 3000 birds & best youngster regional 1996!

"Het Voske" was put directly on the breeding loft. There she was mated to "De Autowinnaar" the 1st National Ace Overall 1983 and winner of 7 first prizes in big competition. From this mating came:

"De 197": 1st Prov. Peronne 15304 birds; 11th National Orleans 23546 birds. She was sold in a charity auction for US\$ 3000 to a Japanese fancier.

"De 172": 9th National Orleans 23546 birds.

"De 196": 38th National Orleans 23546 birds.

And I may not forget to mention a super halfbrother of above bunch:

"De Grote Zwarte"(mother is a daughter of "De Donkere Supercrack"). He gives:

1st Provincial Roze 7700 birds. And "Mandy" mated with "Magic Mealy" mother of a regional winner & 1st Ace Young. She won:

Orleans	1853 b 7th
St Ghislain	4371 b 10th
Orleans Prov	3383 b 14th
St Ghislain Prov	6751 b 17th
Cambrai	3485b 34th

The Janssen's came, saw and conquered

"De 08 Duif", the halfsister of the famous "10" with his 7 firsts in big competition and 65 early prizes without missing his prize on one single race(!) of the late Jan van Erp of Hilversum, was sole responsible for a line on my loft that is extremely successful over 15(!) generations now.



The eye of "De 08 Duif"

Several years after her introduction I decided to form a separate line in my loft on this famous breeding hen. Fifteen of her direct children won a 1st prize in great region with thousands of birds competing. Should'nt you have done the very same?

On the total auction after the death of Jan van Erp I bought his famous racer "De Compiegne" who won four times 2nd in big region:



"De Compiegne" of Jan van Erp

Results of NL79-1082475 **"De Compiegne"**:

Zundert	100km	5347b	2nd
Zundert	100km	3568b	2nd
Compiegne	360km	3125b	2nd
Compiegne	360km	1442b	2nd
St. Ghislain	220km	3573b	15th
St. Ghislain	220km	3363b	16th
Compiegne	360km	2291b	17th
St. Ghislain	220km	4817b	20th
St. Ghislain	220km	7146b	27th
St. Ghislain	220km	9218b	46th
St. Ghislain	220km	6727b	50th
Zundert	100km	5715b	78th

He won his prizes each time after my supercrack's "De 312", "De 411" or "De 420" and that should tell enough about his qualities on the races.



"De Blauwe Compiegne" foundation cock of Vonk Bros

The cock of the famous breeding pair of the Vonk Brothers of Nigtevecht is a direct inbred son of "De Compiegne" when mated to "De 309 Duif", a direct daughter of "De Crack 32" x "De 08 Duif". So very inbred on the Janssen base. "De 309 Duif" won: Strombeek 4335/2nd; Soignies 2699/7th, Roosendaal 4249/13th etc. She could have scored a lot better, but she was a notorious trapper.

"Magic Favoriet"

3e Etampes	Nat.	1.832 d.
9e Etampes	Nat.	6.500 d.
14e Etampes	Nat.	10.982 d.
23e Montluçon	Nat.	3.616 d.
43e Chateauroux	Nat.	4.680 d.



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"Magic Favoriet" from the Vonk miracle pair.

In 1984 I mated at Vonk Brothers loft "De Van Den Bosch cock" with a hen direct from Meulemans. They were responsible for the 1st Provincial Ace and the 6th National Ace Overall '86. In 1985 I mated "De Blauwe Compiegne" with a full sister of the 1st Provincial Ace '86. The result was a super breeding pair that made Vonk Brothers in 1990 2nd Overall Semi-National NABvP Champions in the races from 470-900 kms in a competition of 25.000 fanciers. They too had the 1st Ace bird, a cock direct from "De Blauwe Compiegne".



"De Witpen Compiegne Vonk" 1st Nat Etampes & Semi-National Ace Pigeon father of "De Kleinen" 1e Nationaal Orleans.

The 6th National Ace was mated against a daughter of the miracle pair "Het Boerke" x "De 150 Duif". This pair became the parents of the 1st National Orleans 1989 in Section V against over 8000 birds! Later on this miracle hen came over to my loft for breeding.



1th National Orleans of Gebrs. Vonk

From this very same line, son of "De Blauwe Compiegne" gives NL94-1092546 "De Kleinen" the 1998 1st National winner of Orleans 13.500 birds with 8 mins. ahead on my own loft.



"De Kleinen" 1th National Orleans 13.500 birds and fastest of 50.000 birds

Some years later the father of "De Compiegne", "De 05" came to my loft for a short period. "De 05" was bred by Jan van Erp on my advice out of the foundation cock "De 583" with his own daughter "De 08 Duif"! "De 05" is father of lots of superior champion racers e.g. "Mister Orleans" who won 3 years in a row within the first 10 prizes National from Orleans against plm. 15.000 birds.



"De Fijnen" super breeder!!

I mated "De 05" against the mother of "De Goede Jaarling", "De 646 Duif" (bred from "De 411" x "De 309" both direct children of "De 08 Duif"!!) in order to try to maintain the old Janssen-08 line. The result of this highly inbred combination was "De Lichte Jaarling", father of the foundation breeder "De Fijnen", father of "Magic Orleans" (triple provincial winner within one year!) and the grandfather of Willem de Bruijn's best breeding hen, mother of the 1st National Ace Overall 1997!

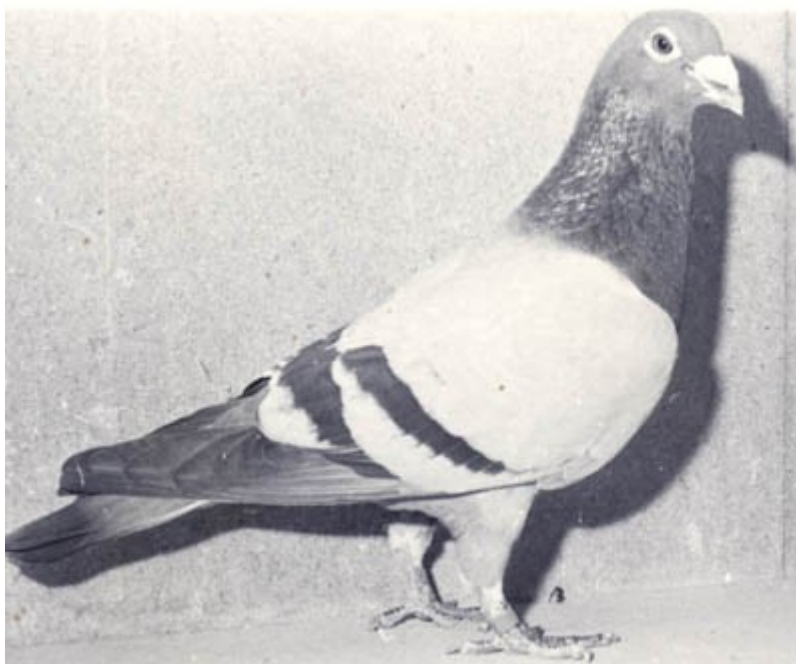


"Magic Orleans" 3 times Provincial winner within 1 year !!!

These Janssen birds can stand easily strong inbreeding and therefore they are the best for crossbreeding. Especially at my loft with the De Smet-Matthijs pigeons this combination gave superbirds! Knowing this other fanciers tried this combination too and each time with great successes!

De Bels x De 646 Duif a fantastic foundation pair

The grandfather of "De Bels" was "De Ballon" of Georges Veys. "De Ballon" was a super racer. His full brother won at the loft of Opsomer & De Merlier of Maarke-Kerkum in 1964 the 1st prize International from Barcelona against 8217 birds with an hour ahead of nr. 2.



"De Ballon" of Georges Veys.

With the history of "De Ballon" goes a remarkable story. One evening very late when the pigeons were expected from St. Vincent Georges Veys caught (before his dog could) in his garden during a thunderstorm a soaked wet pigeon. This pigeon in great need was the world famous "Kapoen '60" of Valere De Smet-Matthijs. Because the bird had two race rubbers Georges knew it was flying the important St. Vincent race. When it had dried up, the weather and the bird, close to nightfall the bird was launched into the sky to win a few kilometers further at Valere's loft the National. It was the only day bird! Only 5 minutes later Georges was phoned because of the on the ring attached message. He was offered a great sum of money as a reward, but he refused to take it. Then one evening Valere came to the house of Georges with a 4 weeks old youngster in a basket. This youngster lateron became Georges supercrack "De Ballon"!!!

Results of "De Ballon":

Breteuil	385d	1e
Arras	392d	1e
Creil	450d	1e
Creil	462d	1e
Orleans	480d	1e
Chateauroux	556d	1e
Orleans	616d	1e
Chateauroux	780d	1e
Dourdan	391d	2e
Creil	490d	2e

Creil	685d	2e
Creil	392d	4e
Angoulême	502d	4e
Creil	520d	4e
Poitiers	782d	5e
Orléans	1250d	5e
Arras	280d	6e
Creil	582d	6e
Orléans	1251d	6e
Creil	399d	7e
Orléans	2160d	15e
Dourdan	316d	16e
Breteuil	321d	17e
Angoulême	422d	17e
Orléans	490d	21e
Orléans	860d	24e

Speechless aren't you..... So "De Ballon" became in heavy inbreeding (nephew x niece over and over again on "De Klaren of '46) the grandfather of "De Bels" NL76-1691462.



The eye of "De Bels"

Results of NL78-1691462 **"De Bels"**:

St. Ghislain	220km	3384d	3e
Strombeek	160km	4410d	6e
St. Ghislain	220km	2742d	10e
St. Ghislain	220km	6550d	11e
St. Ghislain	220km	2421d	23e
Strombeek	160km	3610d	47e
St. Quentin	300km	6464d	49e
Soignies	200km	3984d	49e
St. Ghislain	220km	2174d	50e
Compiègne	360km	3248d	58e
St. Quentin	300km	1467d	67e
St. Ghislain	220km	3296d	74e
Roosendaal	100km	4423d	84e
Duffel	135km	4020d	87e

4thNational Ace Short Distance 1978.

Already on the racing loft "De Bels" was mated to "De 646 Duif". Out of this mating came:

Mr. Gerard Bus from Laren had a cock from this pair who won three successive years in a row early prizes from Barcelona 1225 kms. He too won from St. Vincent 1070 kms, Dax 1075 kms and Pau 1065 kms early.



Mr. Jan Manten from Breukelen wins with a daughter of his "Prinseske" (daughter of "De Bels" x "De 646 Duif") 3rd National Orleans against over 28.000 birds. In 1990 a brother was Ace Pigeon in great region.



At my own loft "De Apollo" wins: St. Ghislain 3322/1st; Creil 2776/2nd; Soissons 2525/4th; Dourdan 1332/8th etc. Inbred on the old 08-line, with a daughter of "De Blauwe Compiegne", "De 106 Duif". She wins as a youngster out of 7 races: St. Ghislain Prov. 8061/37th; Orleans Prov. 12178/37th; Duffel Reg. 5744/54th; Minderhout 4925/94th. She is breeding since 1990 in the lofts of Jesse Wu and his brother in Taiwan.

Mr. Klaas Visser of Oude Mirdum, the former coach of the Dutch National women ice skating team bought two youngsters off "De Bels" x "De 646 Duif". The result: two super breeders.



"Leo" son of the base pair of Klaas Visser.

The hen, "Klazien", is the mother of "Hein de Allrounder" who won the 2nd National from Creil against 8995 birds. He mated this hen with a pure Hector Desmet cock. Together they were a fantastic breeding pair giving first prize winners already into the sixth generation! My "De Kapoen '86" is direct off this pair and bred with three different hens winners in great competition. His best son "De Bonte Kapoen" was 9th Provincial Ace Young and as a two year old he won the 1st Regional Etampes against 1500 birds. He was transferred later on to Mr. Simon Lin of Taiwan.



The cock, "Klaas", came in 1989 back to my loft. With the daughter of "De Compiegne", "De 776 Duif", he bred the 1st and 2nd winner in a Provincial Race from St. Ghislain. Both youngsters won in a strong headwind with 4 minutes ahead against over 8000 birds in the race!

De Goede Jaarling Champ of the Champs!

And last but not least "De Bels" & "De 646 Duif" produced: "De Goede Jaarling". He was as a yearling the 2nd National Ace Yearling and won in 1985 the 1st prize National from Chateauroux 650 kms against 8139 birds with 10 minutes ahead!!! He has been the best breeder I ever owned. Why?? Because his offspring wins National races into 7 generations.



"De Goede Jaarling" champ of the champs! He won 1st Nationalaal Chateauroux with 18 minutes ahead of nr. 2. His offspring wins 1st prizes in Nationals into 7 generations!!!!

Race results of NL82-448368 "De Goede Jaarling":

Chateauroux Nat.	650km 8139d	1e
Etampes	475km 1489d	1e
Dourdan	470km 974d	1e
Bapaume	300km 3907d	5e
Wuustwezel	100km 4736d	9e
Dourdan	470km 1796d	9e
Strombeek	160km 4792d	15e
St. Ghislain	220km 6001d	17e
Orleans	540km 1506d	19e
Soissons	330km 2539d	20e
Noyon	330km 4367d	20e
Etampes Nat.	475km 10374d	21e
Duffel	135km 5075d	30e
Bapaume	300km 4206d	33e
Compiègne	360km 2655d	40e
Pont St Max.	375km 1805d	48e
Etampes	475km 1990d	48e
St. Ghislain	220km 4491d	51e
Zundert	100km 5614d	58e

Compiegne	360km	2034d	59e
Zundert	100km	9022d	64e
St. Ghislain	220km	3477d	69e
Dourdan Nat.	470km	6470d	70e
Dourdan Nat.	470km	8565d	70e
Orleans Nat.	540km	7988d	79e
Dourdan Nat.	470km	14420d	84e



The super breeding eye of "De Goede Jaarling".

These results could have been easily a lot better if "De Goede Jaarling" would have been a better trapper! He could have won around 15 firsts in above mentioned competition! That would have made him the undefeted worldchampion and it would have been very hard not to sell him. I think "De Goede Jaarling" his bad habit was my luck, because as a breeder he immediately showed his fantastic passing on power with every hen he was mated to.

De Goede Jaarling and Het Schoon Blauw: Top Class!

"De Goede Jaarling" and "Het Schoon Blauw" a hell of a mixture responsible for National winners and Ace pigeons!!



On the total auction of Mr. Gerrit van Maasdijk of Wijchen I bought in 1986 several of his finest Janssen Arendonk based birds. Amongst those his famous foundation breeding hen "Het Schoon Blauw", a full sister of his "Olympiade" .

Results of NL76-820984 "De Olympiade":

Duffel	135 km	6975d	3e
Wernhout	90 km	6061d	3e
St. Quentin	300 km	5119d	4e
Compiègne	360 km	3764d	9e
St. Ghislain	220 km	6109d	10e
Wernhout	90 km	5984d	11e
Compiègne	360 km	2156d	13e
Compiègne	360 km	3195d	18e
Orleans	530 km	3274d	23e
Duffel	135 km	6947d	28e
St. Quentin	300 km	1660d	33e
Roosendaal	90 km	6082d	34e
Soissons	320 km	6178d	43e
Soissons	320 km	3269d	51e
Compiègne	360 km	4199d	77e
Sittard	150 km	6062d	89e

Results of NL83-306887 "De Turbo Twin I" 3r Nat Ace Young '83:

St. Ghislain 220 km 2806d 2e
Soissons 320 km 3401d 3e
Duffel 135 km 7067d 4e
St. Ghislain 220 km 5136d 4e
Compiègne 360 km 2334d 5e
Strombeek 160 km 3591d 7e
Compiègne 360 km 4047d 10e
Chantilly 390 km 2168d 10e
Strombeek 160 km 6960d 19e

and "De Turbo Twin II" (1th Ace Long Distance '85).

Results of NL84-441615 "De Turbo Twin II":

Duffel 135 km 2742d 3e
Chateauroux 650 km 2480d 6e
Bapaume 300 km 6260d 22e
Ruffec 780 km 1756d 66e
Orleans 530 km 3063d 147e

This line of excellent Janssen's possesses an enormous physical strength and vitality. Not many Janssen's are so allround like these specimens out of the Turbo family. Their level of performances is between 100-900 kms! The two Turbo brothers were sold to Pilunthanakul Brothers in Bangkok, Thailand.

In 1987 I bred together with superstar Jan Ouwerkerk from Lekkerkerk. He brought to me "Janneke" to breed with "De Goede Jaarling". On my loft from that combination came "Yasmine", mother of the 3rd Ace Young '89, the 1th Ace Young '90, the 2nd Prov. Orleans '91 against 4431 birds plus 9th Ace Young the same year. Her full sister "De Strik" went as a partner with "Turbo Twin I" to Thailand. They became the parents of "Miss Universe" Th90-12199 winner of the 1st National Chiangrai and many more winners of big money races.



"Miss Universe" 1th National Chiangrai Thailand

"Het Schoon Blauw" is next to "De 08 Duif" the very best breeding hen I ever set eyes on. The first youngster she gave me together with "De 151" was "De Turbo 17" a hen that was as a youngster 5th National Ace. Another daughter from the same combination is "De Gebroken Slag" a hen that passes on her qualities very easily and winners are reported from everywhere. The years that followed she produced with "De Goede Jaarling" a superbe family of pigeons that spread my name through racing & breeding results worldwide.



"Magic Blue Turbo": the winner of 1992 National Chateauroux (same like his father!!) against 5523 birds with 6 minutes ahead of nr.2. His was as a youngster 7th regional Ace and as a yearling he was the best bird in the region on the long distance. He further won:

Orleans 676d 10e
 Duffel 2943d 16e
 Cambrai 1586d 21e
 Bourges 453d 22e
 Duffel 5657d 25e
 Orleans 2655d 35e
 Cambrai 4949d 57e

"De Bles": 12th National Orleans 28542 birds; now in Thailand where he bred the National winner from 900 kms all the way from Laos through the jungle to Bangkok.



"Het Sjaboke": 141th Orleans National 28542 birds; 17th Strombeek 1699 birds. Her daughter "De 158 Duif" won 37th Strombeek 3406 birds; 8th Prov. St. Ghislain 8061 birds; 39th Prov. Orleans 12178 birds and was sold to Taiwan. Also "Roxane" a super hen and her brother "De Bonte Kapoen" winner of 1st Etampes 1554 birds..



"Het Asgrouw": 14th Duffel 1923 birds; 37th Heverlee 1360 birds; 13th St. Ghislain 1609 birds. She is the mother of: "Magic White Flight.

Her daughter gives: 1st National Orleans '97 of Jan Witteveen of Hilversum. "Riis" at my loft in 1996 winner of 1st National Orleans 11439 birds and the fastest of the country that day of the total release of over 50.000 birds!!!!



"Champion Canon Ball":

Peronne Prov.	22276d	5e
Chantilly	1636d	8e
Duffel	1931d	12e
Creil	1973d	47e
St. Ghislain	1286d	51e
St. Ghislain	2820d	55e
Orleans	3001d	66e
Strombeek	2306d	84e

He was as a youngster 3rd Regional Ace.



"De Klaren II":

Orleans	12178d	11e
National		
St. Quentin	1851d	12e
Peronne	2642d	45e
St. Ghislain	1286d	48e
Minderhout	1044d	66e
Strombeek	2306	92e

As a youngster 17th Regional Ace.

His daughter "Katinka" is a wins:

Pont St. Max	2434d	7e
Duffel	3005d	8e
Pont St. Max	7430d	16e
Roye	1753d	21e
Roye	2198d	24e
Duffel	6061d	34e
Roye	7709d	46e

She is now breeding at the lofts of Willem de Bruijn. Her sister gives in Denmark the 1st National Altona.

"The Blue Pearl", his daughter makes me 1th Champion NABvP (20.000 fanciers) 1996.

"Romario", his son "De Derby" wins the 1st Orleans Derby 1853 birds and in 1998 1st Niergnies 4400 birds.

"Susan" . She breeds: "De Vliegenvanger" 3rd Prov Ace Dayraces and winner of:

"De Vliegenvanger"

3e Prov Ace Dayrace:

Strombeek	4678d	3e
Chateauroux	621d	5e
Montlucon	728d	10e
Chateauroux	1296d	16e
Montlucont	1286	19e

And: "De Witpen Etampes" winner of :

Etampes	15670d	1e
Nationaal		
St Ghislain	3310d	2e (na "De Kleinen")
Montlucon Nat.	7927d	10e
Laon Prov.	6457d	38e

With other hens:

"Vanessa" (mother is "Het Boerinneke") mother of a Provincial winner.

"Fabiola" (mother is a pure Janssen hen). Her daughter gives at John Engel's loft in Denmark: 1-2-3-4 on a National Race of Hannover. All 4 came out of the same pair direct off my loft!!! Also the provincial winner from Itzehoe of Arne Porsmose Denmark.

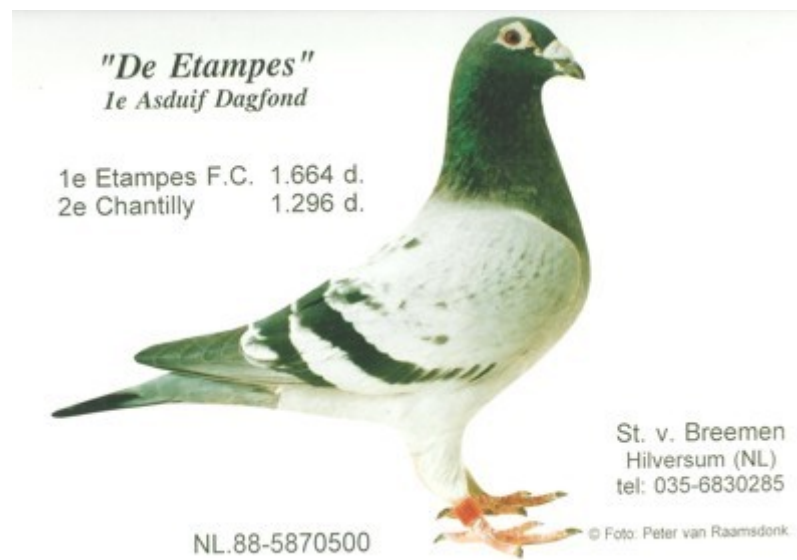
A son is "De Stier" who won:

Roye	3286d	1e	
Etampes	1554d	2e	(na "De Bonte Kapoen")
Orleans	2604d	7e	
Orleans	4711d	8e	
Pont	4896d	13e	
Etampes	12089d	23e	
National			

"Esmeralda" (mother a granddaughter of "De Goede Jaarling") winner of 1st Prov Cambrai 5442 birds.

"Smokey Blue Lady" (mother is a daughter of "De Donkere Supercrack") she bred 1st Prov. Pont 7659 birds. She is in Thailand now. And her sister "Jantine" also a super breeding hen.

But the best son of "De Goede Jaarling" x "Het Schoon Blauw" comes finally at last:



"De Etampes 500":

Etampes FC	1664 d 1e	(8 min. ahead)
Chantilly	1296 d 2e	
Prov. Chantilly	4761 d 5e	
Creil	1682 d 23e	
National	9313 d 24e	
Etampes		
Compiègne	1965 d 41e	
Chateauroux	1386 d 47e	
Strombeek	2306 d 50e	
St. Ghislain	2000 d 67e	
Montlucon	1470 d 85e	

He breeds "De 600" 9th Nat. Ace Dayraces a gift to the Dutch National Olympic Committee and sold for a small fortune to Thailand. He won in the Nationals: 5th Etampes, 5th Bourges and 33rd Chateauroux against thousands of birds.

With "Gisele" daughter of "De Zwarte Baron" x "Yearlings Blue Lady" , "De Etampes breeds:

- 2nd National Bourges 1997 clocked in the same second as the winner and spoiling 2 minutes by flying around the loft!!!
- 10th National Orleans 1998 of 13.500 birds and of:



"De Grote Jaarling" 7th National Ace Dayraces 1996 and winner van:

Montlucon	1303 d 2e	(na "De Kleine Grijze")
St Ghislain	4371 d 4e	
St. Ghislain	6751 d 5e	
Bourges	1639 d 6e	
Duffel	4320 d 7e	
Montlucon Nat	4798 d 8e	
Orleans	2461 d 16e	
Duffel	6289 d 21e	
Bourges	5780 d 31e	
National		
Orleans National	8543 d 49e	

And already father of a winner!

De Bonte Jaarling from the old 08 Janssen foundation

The first hen "De Goede Jaarling" was mated to on the racing loft was "De 776 Duif" (please don't underestimate the role this hen played on my breeding loft!). She was the daughter of "De Compiègne" an inbred cock on my Janssen foundation hen "The 08 Duif", when mated to "The Baard van Reet hen" bred out of a son of the golden pair "De 411" x "De 309 Duif" (both directly bred out of "The 08 Duif") when mated against a daughter of the worldfamous "Merckx" of Staf van Reet. When you remember that the mother of "De Goede Jaarling", "De 646 Duif" was bred the same way, it was clear from the start that the youngsters from this mating would be perfectly for breeding. Late in 1986 "De Bonte Jaarling" was born and he stayed all his years in box 38 in the breeding section.



De Bonte Jaarling

Late 1987 he was mated for the first time. I had borrowed a pure Janssen hen from Mr. Bert Bouwman of Amersfoort who possessed in those years a loft full of direct Janssens. We decided to split the eggs and so I got "De Merckx". In 1989 he was mated in close relationship with "Het Fijn Geschelpt", the daughter of "De 646 Duif" with a Tournier cock (halfsister to "De Goede Jaarling").



Het Ooievaartje 1th National Ace Young WHZB 1987

That Tournier cock also was the mother of the 1st National Ace Young of Holland 1987 on my loft. From this combination I bred in 1989 three hens: "the 134", "the 135" and "the 235" winning 7th, 9th and 12th Ace as a youngster in my association/combine. These three hens were sold to Thailand and after being very successful over there (1st National Ace pigeon & Carwinner) lateron the whole basic pair was sold for a fortune to south-east Asia as well.



I kept one son "De Jonge Merckx" that became the father of "Carel" a provincial winner of over 6000 birds. Plus father of the 4th National Bourges 1997; also 2nd best youngster regional 1996. The full sister of "De Jonge Merckx" was provincial winner of Pont Ste Maxence against 7659 birds.

In 1988 he was mated for against "De Helmstedt duivin", a hen I bought from Heynen & Son from Gronsveld after she won 1th National Helmstedt, 50th National Orleans and 44th Provincial Moulins. The first year this mating proved to be very succesfull. They became the parents of "De Gehamerde" who won the 1st Ace Title in the region as a youngster with:

Roosendaal 1723d 4e
 Chimay 1609d 3e
 St. Quentin 1556d 2e
 Soissons 1412d 10e

and his nestbrother "Ajax" who won:

Creil	1682d	5e
St. Ghislain	9440d	8e
Prov.		
Orleans	1342d	9e
St Ghislain	1286d	12e
Strombeek	2306d	26e
Pont	1651d	26e
Cambrai	3969d	31
Orleans National	28542d	134e

"Het Asgrouw"

Moeder:

1e Orleans Nat. 11.439 d.

3e Orleans Prov. 7.671 d.

7e Bourges Prov. 6.319 d.



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NL.88-5896439

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"Het Asgrouw"

In the passing-on this mating was not so successful. Except in the National Orleans 1997 winner from Mr. Jan Witteveen of Hilversum we find "Ajax"(son of "De Gehamerde" x "Het Asgrouw", out of "De Goede Jaarling") represented in the pedigree. And one pigeon I may not forget to mention:

"Magic White Flight"

3e Orleans Prov. 7.671 d.

7e Bourges Prov. 6.319 d.



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"Magic Whiteflight" won:

Orleans National 7671d 3e

Bourges
National 6319d 7e

Strombeek 2470d 12e

St Ghislain 3299d 13e

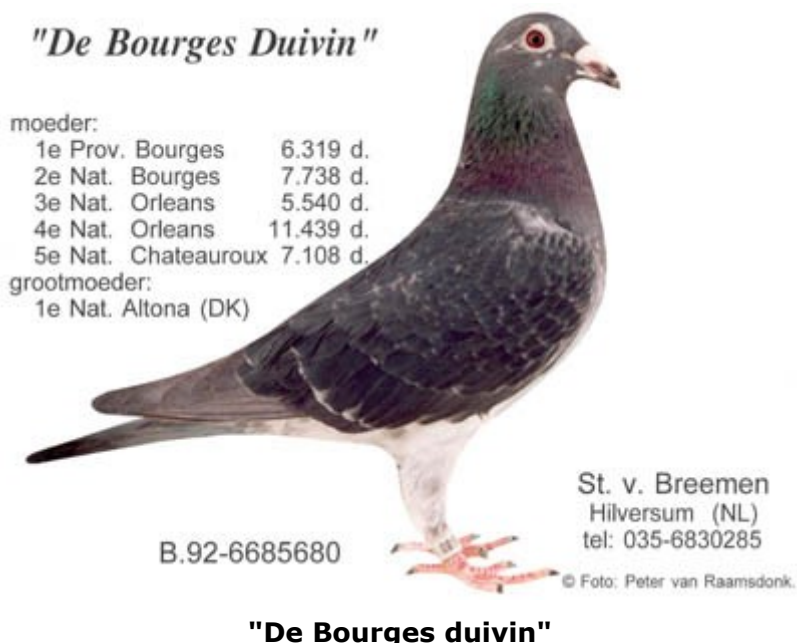
Montlucon 1510d 13e

Strombeek 4619d 13e

"Dunja" (when paired to an inbred Janssen from Jan van Erp: "Het Eitje") is a fantastic breeding hen. With "Magic Orleans" she bred several winners and when mated to a son of "De Goede Jaarling" she bred "Estelle" and her sister who made me 1st Champion NABvP in 1996.

And I may not forget to mention "Dunja's" full sister "Tosca" the grandmother of the 1st National Altona "Arne" in Denmark. She won Minderhout 5799/4th; Cambrai 2558/7th; Orleans 2501/25th; Duffel 3301/36th.

After a few matings that were not quite so successful in 1993 "De Bonte Jaarling" was mated to "De Bourges duivin".



This hen I choose as a latebred in the loft of Daems & Son from Bevel (Belgium). She happened to be the full sister of his "Bourgesman" winner of the following National toppositions from Bourges against 7000-39.000 birds in the race: 1st, 2nd, 8th, 17th in 4 successive years! These are the kind of bloodlines I like to import into my family. When the old hen of "De Bonte Jaarling" stopped laying eggs he was given "De Bourges duivin" as a partner. Their first youngster was only two weeks flying around the loft when he was baskened for his first training toss: NL93-2353516. In the beginning this young grizzle cock had some difficulties to get home but in the end of his first year he scored some good positions. The next year as a yearling he immediately scored toppositions one after another and by the end of the year he got an invitation to take part in the Dutch Racing Team for the Utrecht Olympiad. There his prizelist was the best of all Yearlings of the whole wide world!!!

"Magic Olympic Grizzle"
5e Olympiade Utrecht Allround

1e Bourges Prov. 6.319 d.
 3e Orleans Nat. 5.656 d.
 9e Chateauroux Nat. 5.283 d.
 2e Nat. Asduif Dagfond
 2e Nat. Asduif Totaal



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NL.93-2353516

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Results of NL93-2353516 "Magic Olympic Grizzle":

Bourges Nat	610 km	6319d	1e
Orleans Nat	533 km	5540d	3e
Etampes	475 km	672d	3e
Valenciennes	240 km	3947d	4e
Chateauroux N.	650 km	5009d	8e
Orleans	533 km	2542d	11e
St. Ghislain	220 km	4265d	16e
St. Ghislain	220 km	2944d	17e
Strombeek	160 km	4619d	43e
Orleans	533 km	4711d	43e

was his Olympic score and good enough to be: 5th Allround Olympic Champion!!!

In the National Ace pigeon competitions he scored:

2nd National Ace Pigeon Overall 1994.

2nd National Ace Pigeon Dayraces 1994.

But this miraculous breedingpair brought more Aces:

"De Witkop": 2nd National Bourges and 4th National Orleans. "De Wittentik": 5th National Chateauroux.



"De Wittentik": 5th National Chateauroux.

And it goes on with:



A daughter breeds: "De Jonge Sturen" 2e Nationaal Etampes.

"Arne"

1e Nat. Altona	4.000 d.
1e Altona	627 d.
1e Neumünster	762 d.
3e Abenra	1.383 d.



Breeders & Racers:
John Engel & Arne Porsmose
Strain:
Steven van Breemen

DAN 0212-96-0726

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A son breeds: "Arne" 1e National Altona in Denmark.

Foundation breeder De 776 Duif

A few chapters back I wrote about "De Compiegne". Years ago I was able to lent a direct daughter of the famous "Merckx" of Staf van Reet of Belgium. Piet de Weerd described him in those days as nr.1 in the world of sprint. His "Merckx" won numerous firsts and his daughter I put on "De Baard" a son of my Janssen based miracle pair "De 411" x "De 309". Out of this mating came "De 776 Duif" a little blue tickle eyed hen.



"De 776 Duif" starbreeder

On the widowhoodloft she was mated to "De Goede Jaarling" and out of this mating came "De Bonte Jaarling" also a superbreeder who I'll describe lateron. Then "De 776 Duif" was lent out for a couple of years to a good friend and when she came back she was mated to "Klaas" (full brother to "De Goede Jaarling") and together they bred:



"De Tornado"

St. Ghislain Prov.	8061d	1e
Minderhout	2383d	3e
St. Ghislain	2302d	9e
St. Ghislain Prov.	9440d	10e
Wuustwezel	3969d	27e
Orleans Prov.	12178d	45e
Compiègne	1065d	46e
Pont St.	1589d	56e
Maxcence		
St. Ghislain	2820d	70e

As a youngster 10th Regional Ace. In 1992 father of the 1st Regional Ace "De Blauwe Draaier", the father of another superbird "De Kleine Grijze" 6th Nat. Ace Dayraces 1996 and classified 9 times in the first 100 on a national dayrace!

"De 103 Duif" (nestsister of "De Tornado"):

St. Ghislain Prov.	8061d	2e
Orleans Prov.	12178d	7e
Peronne Prov.	22276d	18e

And she bred: "De Blauwe Barones":

Strombeek Prov.	4678d	1e
Orleans Prov.	4844d	5e
Orleans National	13759d	30e

And: "De Poema":

St Ghislain	3286d	3e
St Ghislain	5998d	11e
Roye	8581d	12e
Chateauroux	5157d	14e
Duffel	3005d	41e

and he bred **"De Grijze Poema"** winner vof Orleans Prov 3190/1th & National 10744/9th.

"De Sproet":

Compiègne Prov.	6427d	10e
Chantilly	1636d	29e
Peronne	2642d	51e
Strombeek	1775d	60e
St. Ghislain	1109d	71e
Creil	973d	89e

Was Yearling Ace pigeon winning 13 out of 13 races! With a Houben hen he gives "De 757 hen" winning 9/9 as a youngster and was 5th Regional Ace '91. And with a Tournier hen:

"De Witte Prinses":

Pont Prov. 7659d 2e (after a loftmate)

Pont Prov. 20948d 6e

Roye 1747d 6e

Roye 9968d 11e

She is the mother of "De Grijsze Poema" also a provincial winner from Orleans 3190 birds.

"Catherine". She bred with "De Grote Zwarte (son of "Het Boerke" x daughter of "De Donkere Supercrack") the 1st Prov. Roye of 7700 birds; "Naomi" mother of winners and "Mandy" mother of the best regional youngster '96; 1st regional St. Ghislain 3000 birds and a provincial winner of 7600 birds.

"De Bonte Jaarling" see his own chapter lateron.



His full brother "Voyager Yearling" who became with another daughter of "De Donkere Supercrack" the father of "Jessica". Her full brother won: Bourges National 7359/3rd; Orleans Prov 3021/ 11th and Orleans National 10474/56th.

"Turbo's Lady" when mated to "Turbo Twin II". And She became the mother of a cock to be one of the future foundation breeders: "De Fijnen" (His father was a son of "De 05 Van Erp" x "De 646 Duif", the mother of "De Goede Jaarling"). His race results were:

He won:

Etampes	1989d	3e
Orleans	1321d	16e
Strombeek	2306d	38e
Minderhout	1871d	40e
Duffel	2152d	50e
Orleans	1607d	53e
Strombeek	4645d	60e
Orleans		
National	23546d	79e



To inbreed the line of "De 776 Duif", "De Fijnen" was mated to "Jessica" and another fabulous breeding pair was formed! They produced "Magic Orleans"

He was in 1993 the fastest birds flying on the Orleans National over more than 500 kms out of a flock of 54.000 birds!!! He won:

Chantilly Prov	3065d	1e
Orleans Prov	4711d	1e
Orleans Prov	2193d	1e
Orleans		
National	7671d	2e



"Magic Orleans"

And his children are pure winners also: "Marissa", "De Witkop" etc. "Judith" a fantastic racer:

Pont	2434d	2e
Roye	1753d	5e
Roye	2198d	9e
Pont	7430d	11e
Orleans	1395d	16e
Roye	5157d	18e
Orleans	4711d	22e
Roye	7709d	23e
Roye	31861d	58e
Orleans Nat.	20509d	123e

She is the mother of the 1st Prov. Orleans 1994 and 8th in the National.

The best breeding hen of Willem de Bruijn of Reeuwijk best dutch fancier of the year 1997 too comes out of this pair. She bred for him the 1st National Ace 1997 and several more winners!!!!!!

Now back to the best daughter of "De 776 Duif":

"Yearlings Blue Lady"

moeder:

1e Nat. Etampes	11.789 d.
1e Prov. St.Ghislain	6.751 d.
1e Minderhout	2.562 d.
1e Etampes	1.072 d.



NL.89-2835406

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"Yearlings Blue Lady".

"Yearlings Blue Lady". You probably will have understood that she is the daughter also of "De Goede Jaarling". With 3 different cocks she is breeding winners already, but the best results she gives with "De Zwarte Baron":

"De Jonge Baron"

1e Etampes	Nat.	11.789 d.
7e Strombeek	Prov.	6.183 d.



NL.95-5552628

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"De Jonge Baron": 1e National Etampes 1996 against 11946 birds!!!! Plus:

Roye	2728d	25e
Strombeek	4239d	6e
Strombeek	6183d	7e
Montlucon	1303d	22e



"Orleans Star" (nestsister of "De Jonge Baron):

Orleans	1853d 1e
St Ghislain Prov.	6751d 1e
Minderhout	6350d 7e

"De Rik":

Roye	1897d 8e
Roye	1797d 8e
Roye	5801d 10e
Roye	6602d 14e
St Ghislain	3591d 35e
Duffel	3301d 38e
Duffel	6760d 60e

and to preserve the line mated to "Patricia" daughter of "De Fijnen" x "Jessica" he bred

"De Blauwe Rik":

Strombeek	5788d 1e
Houdeng	5218d 10e
Valenciennes	4859d 12e
Houdeng	2478d 17e

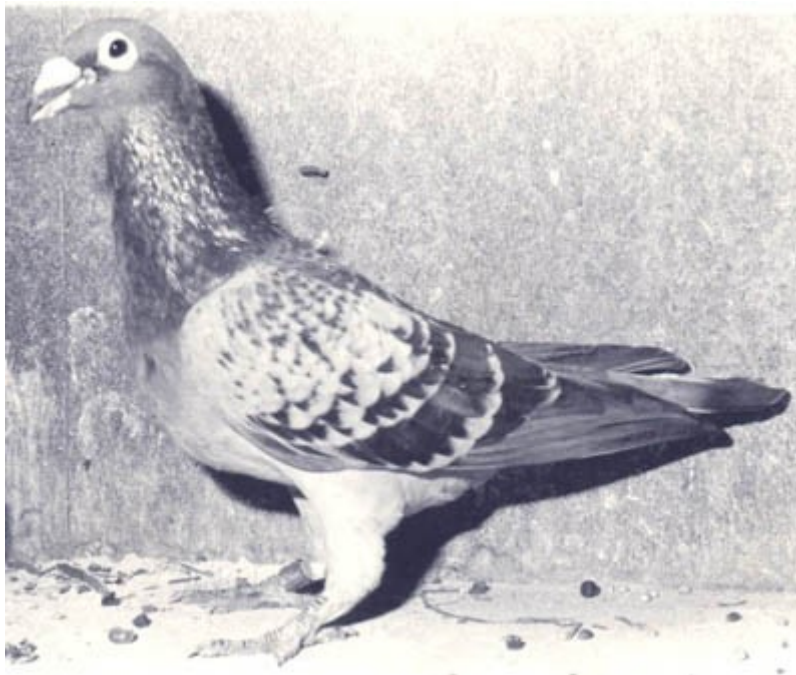
Another fantastic foundationpair

Een ander superkweekkoppel dat ik niet vergeten mag te vermelden is "De Slimme" x "Het Bruinoogske".



Left the eye of the "Slimme", right the eye of "Het Bruinoogske"

Ik kocht "De Slimme" als jonge duif van Georges Veys juist nadat hij zijn 5e eerste prijs had gewonnen. Hij kwam uit "De Poele" een rechtstreekse zoon van "De Oude Rosten" de halfbroer van de wereldberoemde "Oude Klaren '46" toen die gekoppeld zat aan "Het Meesterke" de moeder van de al even beroemde "Plastron" van de Gebrs. de Baere uit Nokere. Zijn moeder was "Het Prinseske" dochter van "De Bozen" en "Het Oud" dat ook een rechtstreekse dochter van "De Oude Rosten" was.



"De Poele '60" foundation breeder of Georges Veys.

Ik kocht "Het Bruinoogske" omdat zij een rechtstreekse dochter was van het superkweekkoppel De Klaren II x "Het Kleintje" van Valere De Smet-Matthijs. "De Klaren II" was een rechtstreekse zoon van "De Oude Klaren '46" met een dochter van "De Genaaiden". "Het Kleintje" was een dochter van een ander topkoppel van Valere: "De Schonen" x "De Angouleme duivin".

Het koppel "De Slimme" x "Het Bruinoogske" was dus langs alle kanten gekweekt naar "De Oude Klaren '46"!

Tot 1977 was ik helaas met beiden niet zo heel erg succesvol in de kweek. Omdat het zonde was om ze op te ruimen besloot ik ze samen te zetten om ze als voedsterkoppel te gebruiken. Omdat "Het Bruinoogske" een trage legster was kwam daar niets van terecht en mocht ze haar eigen jongen grootbrengen. Dat was dus mijn geluk. Hun eerste jong was NL77-990335 een super vlieger die in 1980 2e Asduif in de Kring was na "De 312" van mijzelf. Een jaar later schonken ze me beide nestbroers NL78-2026420 en NL78-2026421, opnieuw twee supercracks! "De 420" won als tweejarige drie weken op rij de eerste prijs in de Kring wat nadien nooit meer is nagedaan. In 1981 wint Van Oers uit Roosendaal met een kleinkind van "De 420" de eerste Nationaal Orleans tegen 150.000 duiven!



"De 151" foundation breeder of Steven van Breemen.



The eye of "De 151".

Lateron "De 420" was sold to Japan too. This is the bloodline of "De 151", the father of the 5th National Ace Young 1987:



Resultaten van NL 87:1725217 (volle zus van "De Gebroken Slag"):
Reims Strombeek St. Ghislain Peronne St. Ghislain Duffel 350 km 160 km 220 km 300 km 220 km 135 km 3302d 1818d 2728d 1637d 1760d 1990d 1e 2e 3e 5e 36e 48e 5e Nationale Asduif 1987.

and the grandfather of the 1st National winner of the British Isles at the loft of Matthew Rakes of Bristol through their first son "De 335". "De 151" became also the father of "Het Asduifje" (as a youngster 1st Ace pigeon in great region and winning totally 5 firsts at the lofts of Ton van den Brink). Her son "De Kleine Autowinnaar" (also winning 5 firsts) was the fastest in the 1988 provincial Autorace of 13.597 birds!!



Resultaten van NL 88-5896401 "De Kleine Autowinnaar":
St. Quentin Chimay St. Quentin Wuustwezel Wuustwezel Chimay St. Ghislain Soignies
Minderhout Pont St Max 300 km 275 km 300 km 100 km 100 km 275 km 220 km 200 km 100

km 375 kms 13.196d 1.760d 1.556d 1.586d 12.766d 13.597d 2.000d 1.875d 2.614d 921d 1e
1e 1e 1e 3e 7e 9e 18e 28e 30e

His son "De Kleine Etampes" wins as a yearling 1st on the regional Etampes race. His son "Magic Mealy" wins three times under the top ten in a national dayrace and was in 1994 the 3rd National Ace Dayraces. His daughter wins 1th regional St. Ghislain and his granddaughter is in 1997 8th National Ace Overall bred by Willem de Bruijn of Reeuwijk and raced by Herman Roos of Bodegraven. You see it goes on and on and on.....

Resultaten van NL 77-990335:

Strombeek Compiegne St. Ghislain Duffel Strombeek St. Ghislain Strombeek St. Quentin St.
Ghislain Compiegne St. Quentin St. Ghislain 160 km 360 km 220 km 135 km 160 km 220 km
160 km 300 km 220 km 360 km 300 km 220 km 3454d 1442d 2234d 4020d 3610d 4718d
4410d 6464d 6550d 1656d 1467d 6726d 6e 6e 8e 38e 49e 50e 56e 66e 69e 72e 87e 90e

One time I mated "Het Bruinoogske" together with "De Oude Kapoen '67". Their son "De Witpen Kapoen" went to Prof. Alfons Anker in Hungary as a gift. In the International race to remember the 10th Anniversary of his death we find this cock in the pedigree of the overall Ace bird, that ends in 4 races 3 times in the first 5 prizes!! The best bird in the Swiss Olympiad '97 belonged to a hungarian fancier. Also in his pedigree we find "De Witpen Kapoen". This bird was lateron sold to the famous dutch fancier Hans Eyerkamp of Zutphen, who became in 1997 great regional Dayrace Champion with pure birds bought from my loft.....

The Supercrack family

When I was told that Mr. Aart Griekspoor on top of his fame was considering giving up pigeon sport in order to spend more time on his family, I bought his three foundation pairs that had brought him in the headlines of the international pigeon magazines. His best pair was "De Donkere Supercrack" x "Het Ganske".

"De Donkere Supercrack" is a son of the famous "Reims" bred and raced by Aart Griekspoor, whose children brought the wellknown De Wit Brothers of Kouderk a/d IJssel fame all over the world.

"De Reims" won:

Reims	1450 d 1e
Hannut	1996 d 5e
Provins	1102 d 8e
Montargis	1178 d 11e
Montargis	634 d 35e
Reims	825 d 36e
Rethel	1890 d 38e



"Jessica" is the daughter of "De 111 or Triple One", daughter of "De Donkere Supercrack" and "Het Ganske".

In his pedigree we notice the names of wellknown Janssen basis pigeons such as: "De Bange", "De Stier" and "De Jonge Merckx". His mother is an inbred hen on the superracer "De Schoorsteenveger" of Daan van der Schalk of Rotterdam who was in 1965 1th Semi-National Ace pigeon in the NABvP with 30.000 competitors. "De Donkere Supercrack" was an excellent racer. As a yearling he won 15 out of 15 and was 1th Provincial Ace pigeon.

He won:

Soissons	4417 d 4e
Soissons	3793 d 4e
Strombeek	8757 d 12e
St. Quentin	6936 d 13e

Duffel 9129 d 20e
Duffel 9678 d 21e

His son **"De Jonge Supercrack"** won:

Noyon 4544 d 1e
Chartres 8158 d 7e
Chantilly 4539 d 44e
Soissons 9694 d 45e
Moeskroen 10611 d 90e
Chantilly 6271 d 164e

One year later his brother "De Goede 14" won the same title with 14 out of 15 races! From Soissons he won the 1st prize against 4417 birds. The 2nd National Orleans '88 from Mr. Anders-Straathof is a grandchild of "De Donkere Supercrack". His brother is the best breeder at the lofts of De Wit Brothers in Kouderkerk aan de Rijn.

The hen of the famous breedingpair is "Het Ganske". Her father is "De Stuntman 2000". This cock wins in 1979 a car and 1st prizes from Noyon until Limoges. He won 18 times all the big money there was to win with the following prizes: 3x1st, 5x2nd, 4x3rd, 2x4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th etc!! "Het Tombeurke" a full brother of "Het Ganske" wins in 1981 a car too!! Mother from "Het Ganske" is "De Argenton duivin" out of "De Oude Dromer" x "Het Bontje Devos". Once mated against "De Donkere Supercrack", "Het Ganske" laid golden eggs!!

Out of this breeding pair came:

NL84-489405: Corbeil 5312 birds: 4th.

NL84-489422: Soissons 6872 birds: 20th; Aalst 13513 birds: 32nd; Chateauroux Provincial 1st.

NL84-489429: Corbeil Provincial 1st.

NL85-587632: Aalst 12796 birds 20th; Chartres 4011 birds 12th.

NL85-587652: Chartres 9904 birds: 1st.

NL85-587653: Soissons 11013 birds: 1st.

NL86-847732: Moeskroen 11297 birds: 22nd; Soissons 11013 birds: 52nd.

NL89-5936110: St. Ghislain 8061 birds 54th; Orleans Prov 12178 birds: 1st, National 23546 birds 5th.

NL89-5936111: Strombeek 12630 birds: 22nd; St Ghislain 13193 birds 7th, Peronne 22276 birds 185th, Orleans Prov 12178 birds: 4th, National 23546 birds 8th, Minderhout 4925 birds 7th.

I also bought his famous breeding hen "Het Juweeltje" daughter of "De Imbrechts" direct from the famous Espoir-line from Germain Imbrechts of Bornival. Het mother is "De Mooie Blauwe" from De Smet Brothers of Semmerzake. "Het Juweeltje" wins the 1st prize from Dourdan with 4 minutes ahead plus 44th National La Souterraine against 6923 birds. Her halfbrother "De Brave Imbrechts" wins: 1-2-2-3-6-13-18-22-23-24-25 etc

The mate of "Het Juweeltje" was "De Superstar" bred from "De Oude Zwarte Verstraete" x "Het Geyterken". "De Superstar" was as a yearling 2nd Provincial Ace, won a car and scored 4x1st; 4x2nd; and 4x4th.



"De Schonen" is a grandson of the miracle pair "Superstar x Juweeltje".

Their youngsters won:

NL84-489404: Minderhout 10098 birds: 15th; Peronne 10406 birds: 62nd.

NL84-489431: Chartres 4225 birds: 1st; Noyon 647 birds: 1st; Creil 6480 birds: 22nd.

NL85-587627: Haasdonk 2691 birds: 1st.

NL85-587628: Peronne 11150 birds: 1st.

NL86-847715: Soissons 2257 birds: 40th; Chantilly 10192 birds: 98th.

NL86-697401: Orleans National 8000 birds: 1st.

NL89-2835421: Minderhout 3969 birds 1st.

A new line: the Stichelbout's of Willequet

The breeding loft became a lot stronger with the introduction of the old foundation pairs in 1987 of Joh. van Riezen of Lippenhuizen a small village up north in the dutch province called Friesland. These birds came out of a collection of pure inbred birds of the Willequet Brothers of Kwaremont (Belgium), the very same loft where Gaby Vandenabeele got his foundation birds too. Their bloodlines go straight back to the famous birds of Alois Stichelbaut. A very important bird in this colony is the famous "08" of the Willequet brothers. This supercrack won three times within the first 15 prizes International up to St. Sebastian (1000 kms). Van Riezen bought his birds direct from Willequet, off Georges de Jaeger from Melden (his "Pursang" is worldfamous) and off Stan Jacobs (Piet de Weerd describes him often in his books); last two fanciers did it with the pure Willequets. It is no secret that Jef Carlens from Zepperen (two times National Barcelona winner) bought his first class birds direct from the Willequet brothers. Joh. van Riezen kept these birds during several generations close together in perfect quality. His excellent racing performances were wellknown in the Northern part of Holland were St. Vincent is 1200 kms. Three years in a row Van Riezen had the fastest three bird team in the National Munchen race over 750 kms!!

One of the basic birds I brought in from this Stichelbaut family was "De Kleine Bleken". This cock came from Van Riezen's foundation pair 353 x 496, which contains all famous basic pigeons of the Willequet strain: "De 08", "De Goede Jaarling" and "De Pursang". At my loft I mated "De Kleine Bleke" with "Het Vetblauw". Their daughter "Het Klein Blauw" is a fantastic breeding hen. She is the mother of:

"De 117" the 1st Ace Young 1989 also winner of:

Prov.	4.089 d	1e
Soissons		
St. Ghislain	8.061 d	6e
Peronne	22.276 d	69e
Strombeek	6.914 d	173e



"Magic Junior" 1th Etampes & 1th Semi National Ace N.A.B.v.P

"De 590" 1st Strombeek 4500 birds

"De 118" 10th St. Ghislain 13193 birds; 48th Peronne 22276 birds; 82nd Nat. Orleans 23546 birds etc.

"De 202" 21th Soissons 4089 birds; 75th St. Ghislain 8061 birds; 14th Nat. Orleans 23546 birds etc.

"De 116" 37th Peronne 22276 birds; 27th St. Ghislain 8061 birds; 34th Chateauroux 1852 birds.

The superbreeder of Pilunthanakul brothers in Bangkok father of a National winner plus 1st Ace Long Distance of Thailand.

He is a superior breeder:

1st National Ace in Kuwait

2nd National Creil 35.000 birds

Best regional youngster etc.

They are also close family to the National Montauban winner in Belgium and the 1st Nat. Ace 1986!

My loft setup

If you want to race wel you really don't need loft like palaces. Pigeons feel perfectly at home on simple but good functioning lofts.



The racing loft on the kitchen roof. The left 2/3 is for the cock's that are raced on double widowhood. The left 1/3 is the hen section. In the meantime the tiles have been changed into old Dutch tiles with the proven good ventilation. Notice the open part where tiles and the plate on the back of the roof meet: excellent ventilation. The louvers under the windows are only used in summer to provide extra fresh air. The loft is facing SE not the rainy and windy side. On top of the house the roofwindow lights are to be seen of the breeding loft. Below the seen windows are 2 traps that cannot be seen on the picture that are providing day and night fresh air.



Right: The old Dayrace widowhood loft. Only 2 meters wide and 2,5 meters deep! But on this loft 10 Nationals were won. When it is hot the door is open during the day. Birds enter the loft

in the trap in the roof next to the tiles. Inside is in front of the nestboxes a closed ceiling of 40 cms which goes up from there to the tiles. For the rest birds are under tiles only. Ventilation is excellent.



Downstairs sections for widowhood hens(left) and latebreds(right). Both lofts have an open front and forced ventilation(fan) in the ceiling at the back to provide excellent ventilation.



The youngbirdloft which houses in summer 140 youngsters. The loft has forced ventilation(fan) of which the speed can be changed when the weather is cold, wet or hot. Outside (above part) are 2 compartments where the youngsters enter after training or race and where they are fed.

When done they enter the loft. Underneath are 2 sputniks that are open day and night to provide fresh air.

In closing



"Het Ooievaartje 207" was in 1987 the 1st National Ace Young. Later on she was sold to CP lofts (Mr. Dhanin) in Taiwan where millions of \$ were won with her offspring. Her full brother won in 1988 the 2nd National Orleans against 28.500 birds and was sold to a Maltese fancier.

Professor Alfons Anker taught me exactly how to breed with these birds in close relationship. He knew the breeding qualities of the old De Smet-Matthijs strain like nobody else. Until a certain point I knew how to go, after that point (his sudden death in 1979) I had to go on on my own, but he advised me over and over again how to breed back the best crossbred birds into the old strain. The results of that would be astonishing for him if he would have got the time for it.

Very soon I discovered a new generation of champions of the finest crystal. You must not underestimate the role played by the superb breeding hen "De 08 Duif" (she bred with different cocks 15 first prize winners in great competition and was responsible for hundreds of winners worldwide). Especially the youngsters from "De Bels" x "De 646 Duif", "Het Boerke" x "De 150 Duif" and the offspring of "De 776 Duif" possessed miracle breeding qualities of the good old Janssen's. They raced like world champions but what was more important: their breeding qualities. I think this will last for many years and it's my personal challenge to see to it that this comes true.