

America's Greatest Race...and the Quiet Champion

Since its inception in 1947, the Midwest Classic race flown from Topeka Kansas, still remains America's Greatest Race. There has been as many as 7,500 pigeons released, coupled with 500 lofts in keen competition ! There is no greater prestige in the United States Pigeon Racing annals than to channel this victory.

In this modern day of pigeon racing diversity, we see the rapid influx of the "One Loft Races" There can be much financial reward for some, and short lived bragging rights for the owners of the pigeons entered. But let's face it, the owners have little to do with outcome of the race...they are mere spectators and onlookers from near and afar.

The beautiful essence of pigeon racing has and always will be watching your pigeon come home to your loft after breaking away from the pack, taking and maintaining the lead, and spurring onto victory with fierce competitors at every turn. The satisfaction of breeding, and training your pigeons, bringing them into health and condition far supercedes the accolades of any "one loft" extravaganza ! Where the pigeon has to think very little, and breaking from the flock becomes a thing of the past. (Yes there are faster ones and slower ones...but the destiny is a well traveled training course, with little to no variation from training tosses to race day .

Perhaps some of you may find my words a bit harsh, however I say these things as a purest for the sport, and will never fall into the mediocrity of believing that the "one loft" races are the future of our sport. Because if they are, then our sport will truly fade, and racing pigeons will never be the same again !

It is with these words that I honor and set apart the real pigeon men, who are the true masters, and mentors that fly their pigeons with a passion and zeal unmatched by most. The great competitors that build and admonish their beloved teams into true champions. Yes real pigeon men who possess a deep rooted vein of wealth and knowledge. Who after you have had the privilege to speak with them, you walk away knowing you have just spoken to a true master, and your mind is set a blaze with new ideas and thoughts on how you too can become like he or she is !

I now turn my thoughts and admiration towards such and individual. He is a man whose passion and drive equal his incredible results. He is unassuming (as most of the great ones are), he is meticulous and relentless in his pursuit towards his goals and objectives. He gives advice freely, he helps out beginners, and supports his club, and even his competition on the regional level with donations of his excellent pigeons, with virtually no profit to himself. He is a quiet leader, and does not seek out praise, however is well deserving of it. On a beautiful Saturday morning in October I drove 210 miles to the historic and beautiful little town of Pipestone Minnesota. Nestled in the South Western corner of the State adjacent to the Iowa and South Dakota borders just miles away to the south and West. It was there we would eventually drive



into the beautiful property and distinguished home of Mike Ludolph and family.



The lofts were impeccable, and built with one design and purpose...to win races ! Those in the know, are quite used to seeing Mikes name on or near the top of the result page on race day. His pigeons stood on their perches boldly, and showed much fire and spirit, as we walked through the sections. Mainly blues and checkers..with a bit of splash and a touch of red here and there. Mike has a family based on the Janssen strain, that predominantly emanate from his good friend Rick Mardis of The Continental Breeding

Station of America. I handled several of Mikes pigeons, and was astounded at the resounding consistency and balance they possessed. All had super feather, large thick wing butts, and a radiant health about them.

The above pigeons are responsible for : (it would take pages to list everything) but check these accolades out !

Digest Awards - 2008 1st Sprint Ace Division 5

2008 5th Sprint Ace

2008 3rd Overall Ace

2009 3rd Middle Distance Ace

ARPU - 2009 2nd Champion Loft Old Birds - All Distance

2009 7th Champion Loft Old Birds - Long Distance

2010 11th Champion Loft Middle Distance

2010 16th AU Presidents Cup

2010 15th AU Hall of Fame

Registered AU Champions = 10 (ten)

THE MIDWEST CLASSIC FLOWN FROM TOPEKA KANSAS (America's greatest Race) with as many as 7,500 pigeons released, sometimes 5,000, sometime 6,000, but always an amount that no other race in the history of American Pigeon Racing, can even come close to. These pigeons are not flying to one loft or one specific area...they are flying to several different states, going in many different directions. There has been as many as 480 lofts in recent competition. Gentlemen in my opinion it takes an incredible pigeon to win this race. There is no greater test for our pigeons than the incredible Midwest Classic ! If there is an honor, or prestige higher than winning this race, I'd like to know. Having

said that, I would like to let a certain cat out of a certain bag..please check out the unbelievable results of Mike Ludolph in this competition over the past 25 years ! Mike flies 344 miles from thje Topeka release point, and is considered in the 300 mile section.

Minnesota 300 mile section - 6x1st - 7x2nd - 3x 3rd - 30 times top ten pigeons.

Overall 300 mile Class - 3x1st - 3x2nd - 3x3rd - 27 tomes top 15 pigeons.

Overall 100 through 600 mile Class - 1st vs 5,094 pigeons - Runner-up “Outstanding bird vs 7,405 pigeons - 1st and 3rd vs 5,332 pigeons IN 2010 !!!

Perhaps now you are you are getting a glimpse of why I referenced Mike as the “Quiet Champion” There are a handful of true great American Champions..and certainly Mike Ludolph belongs in that conversation.

Mike is a 30 year pigeon racing veteran. His Grandfather is from Holland, and flew pigeons there. Presently Mike’s cousins Anton and Rene Notenboom fly in South Holland. He has been to Europe to visit the championd a dozen times, including Germany, Holland, England, and Belgium. He’s been to Blackpool, and the Olympiads, and Hooter Netherlands. He has learned from and rubbed shoulders with the likes of Serge Van Elsacker, Andre Roodhoff, Derk Van Dyke Koopman,Rick Cools, and yes the Janssen Brothers from Arondonk !

Mike flies the Widowhood System utilizing 28 cocks, and also flies about 14 yearlings solo. His basic Strains of pigeons include Janssens, Marcilas, Boors. And Van Elsackers.

It was an honor to visit and write these notes on behalf of America’s greatest race. And the Quiet Champion...Mike Ludolph.

Tom Fremont

