



Two Pigeons for Sophia

My enjoyment of pigeons began late in life by sheer chance. I was approaching retirement from the high school classroom and to keep fit had joined a fellow teacher, my uncle, who had recently retired in “water walking” three early mornings a week at the local high school pool. He was unable attend one morning needing to go to a funeral in the southern Indiana town where he had grown up. Upon returning and the resumption of our exercise, I inquired about the funeral service. “It very moving. There was a dove release—it was beautiful,” he replied. We continued silently “water walking” the pool. Suddenly the thought -- I could do that—I could enjoy that. Having never raised anything except rabbits as a boy and cattle as an adult and seldom without a dog, I could see possibilities. Surely raising doves (white homing pigeons) would not be all that difficult. I shared that notion with my lunch buddies that noon. Edna, our library aide, mentioned that her nephew was taking some fancy pigeons, German short faced, to the Annual Young Bird Pigeon Show in Louisville in a week. “He might enjoy your company.” A week later I returned from Louisville with four white

homers and a bag of feed. Into the old rabbit hutch they went while I searched to find out what to do next. Fortunately, I discovered the Indianapolis Racing Pigeon Club. Their club meetings were less than 25 miles away. A phone call was made, an invitation offered and life changed. At my first meeting I was greeted by some great flyers and enthusiasts including likes of Don Edmonds, George Chapman, Gary Dinkins and “Legends of the Sport,” Mike Radkovic, Wayne Gritter and Mike Maloney. Soon through their mentoring and gifting along with some excellent CD’s, I was in the thick of the sport. I also raised those white birds and enjoyed the peace and joy they brought to many. The camaraderie and the sport remain incomparable .

My only regret has been that no family member embraced the fun and the enthusiasm I experienced with the pigeons and their flyer/keepers-- until now. Last summer my spicy and delightful middle granddaughter, eight year old Sophie, followed her instinctive curiosity. She continually sought to see the nests with late hatches of baby birds. She never tired of seeing them. As soon as she would get off the bus, I would hear “Can we go look at the babies, Papaw?” For her 9th birthday this coming week, I am giving her two pigeons – AU 22 INDY 430 and AU 22 INDY 431. They are out of the most beautiful silver cock I have ever owned, Carole, (I thought he was a hen). He isn’t the fastest, but always near the top of the race sheet and has never missed a training toss nor been late-- a real steady eddie. I have explained the “hard part” of pigeon raising to Sophie—the losing a bird to a hawk or no return from a training toss for some unknow reason. There are no guarantees in racing pigeons, but thrills abound. Seeing the joyful flight of a bird returning to its loft from a race has few equals.

A couple years ago, my friend Mike Radkovic shared that his interest in homing pigeons came from a book in the library when he was around 10 years old. The book was “Chanco; A U.S. Army Homing Pigeon” by Helen Orr Watson, written in 1938. Mike loaned me his copy. Sophia and I will follow the path of Mike as we read this delightful book together. I think she has the makings of a super flyer.

I am now the liberator for the Indy club. My plan is to not only have many enjoyable hours of training tosses with Sophie and maybe even with her older sister Jolie and brother Chase. Then there is the liberation possibility. My practice

as liberator is after basketing, I leave for the releasing site with club trailer and birds hitched behind my ole Red Tahoe. Bedding down in the back of the Tahoe for the night, I await the morning watering and liberating the birds. I hope that Sophia and another of her siblings might even join me on one of those trips. I also hope to get some sleep... but what fun and memory making would that be. I think there is a good chance a new generation of pigeon flyers will be well on its way.

Don Adams, On Bethel Pond, February 2022