

KARL WOHLMACHER, EDGEWOOD WA.

By Ski Grabanski

Karl has been married to wife Dollie, for 41 ½ years. They have 4 children all grown, 3 daughters and a son. They have 5 grandchildren and 1 great grandson. Karl said that "the kids were always a part of my hobby and enjoyed training the birds and Picnics". He got into the birds at the age of 11 years old. His father was a fancier in the 50's 60's and 70's. His brother, Gary, also has birds and flies with the "Tacoma Club". Karl is a member of the very competitive "Top Gun Club".

Karl is either on top or near the top of the race sheet every week. This past Young Bird season he finished 4th Master loft, 2nd Champion Loft and 3rd Average speed.

This year in Old Birds he was 2nd Master Loft, 2nd Champion Loft and 2nd Overall Average Speed. His phenomenal racing hen 2744 AU 14 GSC was the High Point bird in the Evergreen Concourse & NW Federation with a record of: 1st vs 149, 3rd vs 129, 5th vs 120, 8th vs 193, 8th vs 620, 11th vs 142, 28th vs 487, 33rd vs 556, 63rd vs 437 & 68th vs 566. This hen flew every week of the race schedule (10) in a row without a stop. The races were between 135 and 400 miles.

You are probably asking yourself, 10 weeks in a row, I'm sure she didn't have anything left in the tank on the last race of the season.... The last race was from our 400 mile station which she won vs 149 birds. Now I can hear you saying, "Must have been a fast one". Not to be. The winning speed was 1243.107 ypm. What a special hen!!!! What a great 2015 season.

BIRDS: Karl has three different families of birds. Vandenabeele , Janssen and Van Dyke. He blends these families of birds together as crosses for racing and close breeding straight for stock. The Vandenabeele's from Rick Cool's are the best birds he has have ever owned.

I asked Karl if he's at an auction and is looking to buy a bird, what is it you look for? He said the first thing he likes to do is look at the pedigree of the bird. He wants to see a lot performance birds in the last three generations. He said this certainly doesn't guarantee success, but your percentages are much higher. He also likes to see buoyancy in the bird. He believes there is a direct relationship with the air sacs of a pigeon and it's buoyancy. After a little more discussion on this subject, he referred to an article he read years ago by Bob Koch. Thank goodness for the internet!!! I found the article he was referring to. It's in the 2010 Sept. 1st issue of the "Racing Pigeon Digest". It's title is Buoyancy-A Key Factor for Lasting Success. A very interesting read. If you don't have a copy, get in touch with Gene, you never know, he might have some back issues stored away somewhere.

HEALTH: Karl starts to medicate the breeders around October 15th. He puts them on ParaStop for 12 days. During the last 5 days of the ParaStop treatment, he also treats for Canker with Turbosole. All medication is given on the feed.

He treats the old birds prior to road training with Turbosole (canker) on the grain for 5 days. The old birds are also treated for 10 days with Tylosin and Tetroxy HCA 280 (respiratory) also on the grain. After 10 days of both treatments, he follows up with Pro Bios (gut Bacteria) 1 tablespoon per 2 lb coffee can for two days, followed by 1 day of brewer's yeast also at 1 tablespoon per 2 lb coffee.

Before he starts road training the young birds, they are given a 5 day treatment with Turbosole on the grain. At the same time, he treats with Tylosin and Tetroxy HCA280 for 10 straight days. The young birds are vaccinated for Pox after the second round is complete. The birds are also vaccinated for PMV 2-3 times before the season begins. He believes this boosts the immune system in the young birds.

FEEDING: Karl feeds a 14% protein mix from Tradewinds in Tacoma Wa. This is his base feed for old birds and young birds. He adds Safflower to the mix at about 15%. On Thursday and Friday he adds high fat foods for the longer races. The grains are Hemp, Rape and Sunflower Hearts. The Breeders will get a 16% mix with peas added for the Babies.

ADDITIVES: Karl uses Garlic and Braggs Unfiltered Raw Apple Cider Vinegar at least six days per week for the race birds and breeders. This formula allows him to go the entire race season without medicating between the races. Every Wednesday, the birds are given Brewer's Yeast and Pro Bios on the grain. The feed is dampened with Lemon Juice. The breeders get Brewer's Yeast and Pro Bios two times per week when feeding babies.

BREEDERS: Depending on the weather, breeders are usually put together between mid January and the end of January. Before he brings them together the cocks are put on around 14 to 18 hours of light for three weeks and the hens for about a week. After they are mated they are on 20 hours of light. He separates the breeders in May they are put into the aviary on the back side of the breeding loft. This is where they stay (feed and watered) until December. When I handled some of the breeders in late October I couldn't believe the health and feather quality of the birds. FANTASTIC!!!!

WIDOW COCKS/HENS: The first thing I noticed when I walked into the Widow Cock section was how content, relaxed and happy the cocks were. When walking inside the loft, the cocks that were relaxing on the floor didn't bother to move out of the way. To me, it showed a great trust between the birds and their owner. I have included a picture and once you see it, you'll understand what I mean.

Karl flies cocks and hens on the Widowhood system. He has around 20 Widow cocks and selects some of his best flying young hens to go with 3 old hens for racing. A total of about 10 hens, sometimes he will go with 12. He usually pairs the flying team around mid February and separates them a week or two before the first race in April. The team is flown around the loft in the AM each day, once they are flying 30-45 minutes and leaving for awhile, he will begin road training starting at 10 miles. These birds are all experienced, so he can start out a little farther. He trains on his own out to 30 miles and then he will partner up with fellow club mate, Bruce Gordon for the rest of the road training all the way to the first race station 105 miles. They have been training together since 1998. After the races start, there is no training for the cocks and sometimes the hens will go 25/30 miles on Thursday prior to the race. If the hens are tossed, they are allowed to enter the cock section and stay with the cocks until shipping Friday

night. He ships both cocks and hens to the same release and has had no problems trapping if both sexes arrive home at the same time. He separates the cocks and hens about an hour or two after they get home. For those that arrive late, they have less time with their mates. In fact they might not even see their mates if they get home too late.

Three weeks before the last race, he no longer separates the sexes. The last three weeks the birds are raced to the nest. After seven weeks on the widowhood system, he believes they start to lose their edge and by keeping them together, it gives them that little extra motivation.

After the last old bird race, the cocks are put into an aviary until sometime in October.

YOUNG BIRDS: When the young birds are weaned, they are put on lights for 18 hrs per day. They are kept on 18 hrs until about June 1st. A week or two before the third flight is all the way in, he cuts back about an inch on the 9th and 10th flight. After the third flight is all the way in, he pulls the 9th and then the 10th a week later. He does not lock them up after pulling the 10th flight. He believes by locking them up, you do them more harm than good.

He flies the sliding door system for young birds isolating hens and cocks from each other for the week. Prior to any road training, the birds must be flying 45-60 minutes and leaving the loft area for at least 15-20 minutes. This has never been a problem for him because the birds are healthy and ready to go. His first toss is around 5-7 miles. He increases the distance to 15 miles once the birds come straight home. Then he jumps them another 10 miles until he reaches the 30 mile mark and then hooks up with Bruce for the remainder of training all the way to 105 miles. The birds are released together. At this point they space their training out so they can loft fly in between the tosses 2-3 days. Karl believes this is very important! He thinks if you train them almost everyday, they will decrease their flying time around the loft and that is something he doesn't want to see.

One of the things I found of interest in his young bird loft is how he waters the birds. The waterer is setup to look like the back end of the shipping crates where the birds are watered when there being transported to the race stations. This is something I'll incorporate into my loft very soon.

I've know Karl for at least 35 years and believe me, you can't find a more stand up guy. He goes out of his way anyway he can to better the sport. He has been the Race Liberator for the Evergreen Concourse, Puget Sound Combine and the NW Federation for the last 3 or 4 years. As everyone knows that's been in our sport for a few years, the Liberator position is by far the most difficult and thankless job an individual can have in our sport. He is more than willing to help not only those new to the sport, but also those that have been flying for a number of years. Not only by giving them advise, but also some birds that might help them out. I have seen more than once where Karl will buy a bird or two at an auction and turn right around and give them to junior members as a gift. As I said what a stand up guy!!!!

I spent the good part of the morning with Karl asking about his thoughts and methods of flying the birds and about our pigeon sport in general. I really enjoyed our conversation and went away knowing that with individuals like Karl in our sport, our sport is in good hands.

If you have any questions for Karl, he can be reached by email at: kwohlmacher@yahoo.com