

FROM A CHICK'S POINT OF VIEW JEFF SMITH – WINNER OF 2005 SOUTH AFRICAN MILLION DOLLAR RACE

BY T BEROKOFF
TBEROKOFF@HOTMAIL.COM

Jeff Smith, Tucson Desert Invitational Club, Arizona, winner of the South African Million Dollar Race in 2005, is an amazing man I recently had the pleasure of getting to know. His winner, a yearling, Four Starzz Dream, placed first in the almost 400 mile 11th Annual Sun City Million Dollar Race, South Africa.

But there is much more to Jeff than just this bird and just this win, as evidenced by the following long-distance race results compiled from 1977 to 2019. For the 600 mile races, Jeff has 32 club and combine 1st place wins, with 140 birds in the top 10 places. For the 500 mile races, Jeff has 22 club and combine 1st place wins, with 265 birds in the top 10 places. Jeff is a proven consistent winner!

Jeff graciously shared information with me gained over the last six decades, but, as usual, when getting to know someone, I like to start at the beginning and learn about them through the stories of their life, so let's get started.

THE BEGINNING

Jeff was born in Boston, MA where he lived the first 6 months of his life. "Then, as a baby, we moved and I lived 11 years of my life in Yellow Springs, OH, with the exception for six months when I was 8, we lived on a ranch in Oakhurst, CA. In CA he remembers "I had a tame, pure white pet goat, Mamie, which followed me around like a dog. At age 11, our family moved from Ohio to Tucson, AZ.

A Disney film, *The Pigeon Who Worked a Miracle*, was instrumental to getting Jeff involved with pigeons. Of course, I researched and found parts of the movie online. I could see how a young boy would be pulled into



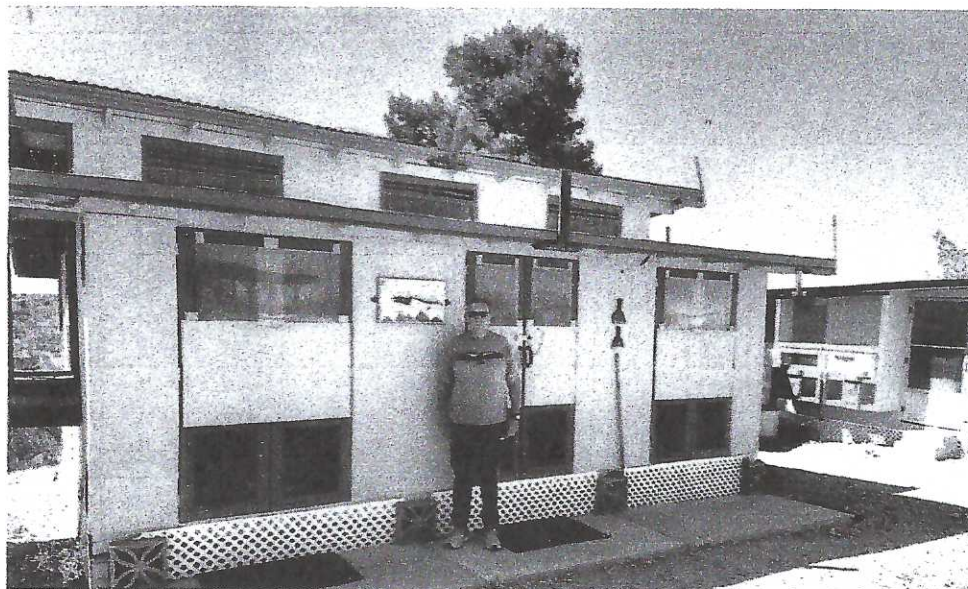
time was 6 X 10 and 6' high."

keeping pigeons after watching Chad, the boy in the movie, care for Pidge a blue bar. Jeff says, "Many neighbors of ours kept common pigeons. These were my first birds while two of my sisters, Amy and Paula, weren't interested in birds at all. But, my older sister, Peggy, had a couple of fantails. Though by the time I was 13 or 14, I convinced her that we needed to keep only racing pigeons! My first loft at this

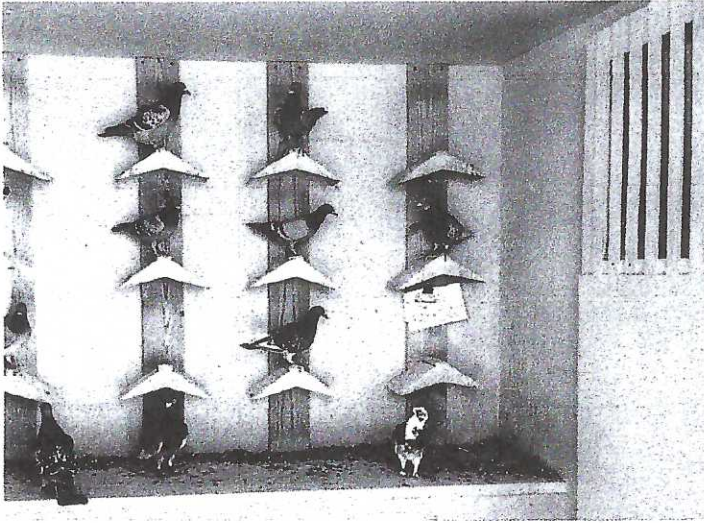
THE WESTERN FLYER BICYCLE

Instrumental in Jeff's acquiring knowledge about pigeons and some birds, was his blue Western Flyer bicycle. According to Jeff, "I rode that bike everywhere! It had a steel frame, balloon tires, and long-horn handle bars. I wish I had that bike today! I rode it all over town. Back during that time it seemed everyone had a coop and birds in their backyards. My free time was spent riding long distances around town, even 3 miles one time from home to my local high school with no hands! I just wanted to see if I could ride that far without touching my hands to the handle bars. I had a friend, Ernest Ray, in front of me telling me to slow down, speed up, and watching out for me. (Ernest is still a good friend of mine since 6th grade!) Incidentally, I made it!"

"I liked to ride around on my bike and visit with pigeon fanciers. One man I visited actually became my mentor, John 'Mickey' Christie, who was a top flyer for many years. He was a close friend of mine for 30 years. Unfortunately, he died too young at 55; from leukemia. Mickey was the one who got me interested in the pigeon club, taking me with him for shipping and on training tosses. He even helped me earn some money by doing yard work for his mother-in-law."



Jeff Smith in front of his lofts, showing the 2nd floor loft sections



Individual perches

"Other pigeon fanciers with racing pigeons I would ride over and visit were Harry Chambers, Roy Soza, Dennis Clayton, Joe Preter, Carl Beard, who was a year older than me, and Bill Vaughn."

"By the time I was about 14 years old, I had acquired some homing pigeons from Tracy Prader, who lived in the Tucson foothills 15 miles away from my house. My trusty Western Flyer got me over there to visit with him. Tracy was a captain with the Pigeon Corp in Belgium during WWII. So, when the war was over, he brought some pigeons back with him, and naturally, he brought back some from the world famous George Fabry. I visited George Fabry in 1971 and I felt I had died and gone to heaven. He was such a gracious host and showed me many birds and lofts. I was very impressed with his birds."

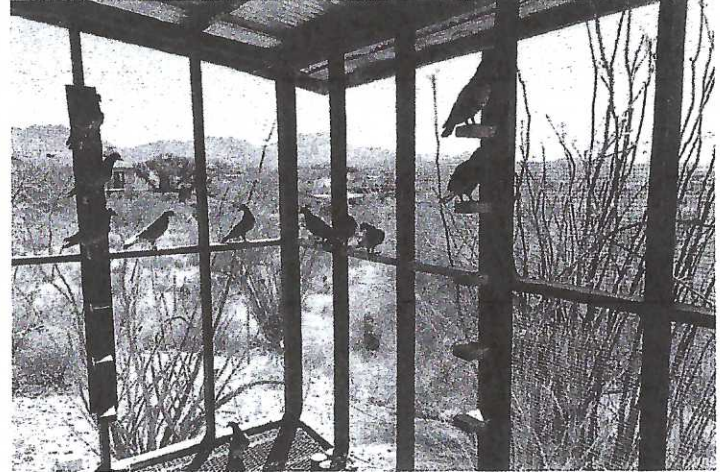
"Some of my original birds, once I was in high school, came from Tracy Prader, Ray Honea, and Mike and Pat Choate. When I started to race in the Tucson Club, I needed a second loft, so my dad, who was a good carpenter, helped build that one for me too. By this time, 1961, I was 16 and became a Junior Member of the Tucson Racing Pigeon Club."

FIRST "RACE" EXPERIENCE

"I got some of my first racing pigeons from the Choate brothers. My first races were against the Choate brothers, and much like this one that I've remembered. Mike (14) and Pat Choate (13) and me (14) would load up our birds in our crates and take them on our bicycles to the reservoir. We'd release them and then get on our bikes, racing home to see when our birds got home. Then we'd call each other to see who won! I had a really good racer, Bruno, who was actually a hen. I entered her in a show, but she was disqualified because she had one bull eye and one red eye."

SCHOOL AND LOFTS

"By the time I was in junior high school I had racing pigeons. I loved science, art and drama in high school. I



Fly pen

loved building set designs for the drama department, not acting. My dad was a carpenter, so I'm sure that's where my love of carpentry came from and it came in handy when I needed a loft to keep my birds."

"My dad and I got some chicken wire that had been used on a float. This 'loft' was 10' X 6' and had a trap door in the back. That trap door opened up to the fence behind the loft and was very important to me. Here's why, my mom, said, 'you can keep only 6 birds.' But, if someone gave me a bird, I'd sneak it in through that trap door from the alley and then I'd come through the gate into the yard looking very innocent. I remember one day, she came out to the loft, and after counting birds, said, 'Jeff, I think you have more than 6 birds, right?' Of course, I just looked innocent and didn't answer! Yeah, I was that kid! Eventually she gave in and was more lenient in how many I could keep, and I added the flying loft which was 6' X 8'."

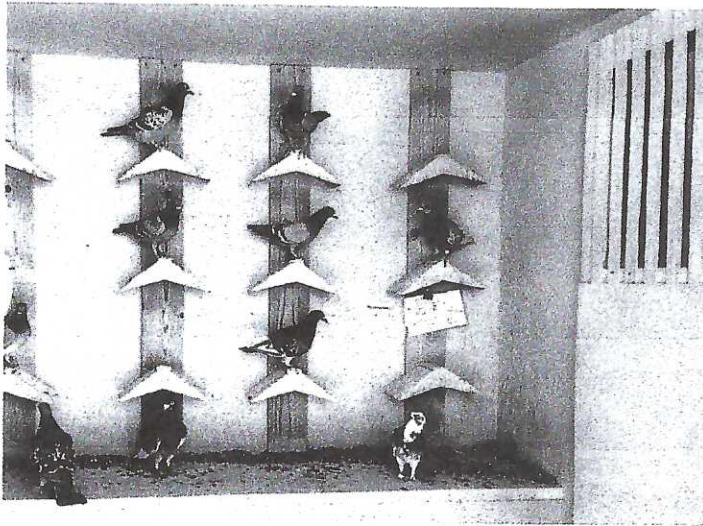
COLLEGE/WORK

"I had to put myself through college, so it took me a few more years to finish, but I graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelors of Arts degree in 1970. I worked a couple of interesting jobs during this time, an underground copper miner which was dangerous as I was working with dynamite, a bellman for a hotel and a main framer for the phone company. I studied genetics in school because of my interest in birds and yet I had no birds during my time in school, except for my last semester and then, I did fly some birds."

"Over the years I have worked as a painter and General Contractor and eventually owned my own General Contracting business, building custom adobe houses, remodeling homes, and even built a library."

LOFTS

Putting his contractor, building, architectural experience to good use, Jeff built his passive solar adobe home in Tucson in 1988. The walls are 18" thick and serve as a buffer against the Arizona heat. Not only did he build his



Individual perches

home, but he also built his numerous pigeon lofts, some being split level. The lofts include one 20' X 12' with 6' X 20' of it a designated a flying loft, another 16' X 16' which is the flying loft, and two more 20' X 16' and 8' X 14'. In the loft that houses the breeders, Jeff uses a double-door entry. "In the past I have had birds that flew over my head when I opened the door and out the birds went, gone forever, imports included! I learned my lesson, hence the double-door entry I now use."

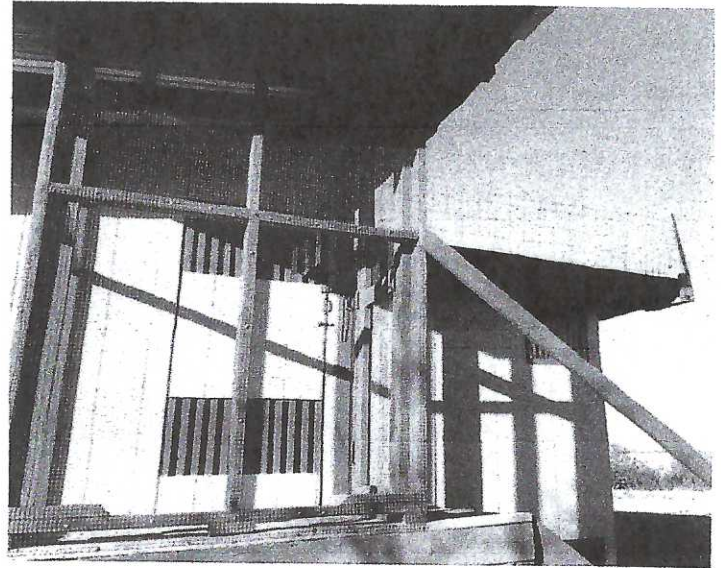
"I made all the nest fronts and boxes, most of which are hinged. I also use feeding tables. I have 5 tables that I can fold up or down whether or not I'm using it to feed the birds. It is at chest level which makes it easy for me when feeding the birds. I got the idea it from the book *The Greatest Pigeon Fanciers of All Times*, pp. 70-71 by Ad Scharelackens."

VENTILATION

Jeff's 3.3 acres sit on top of a hill. He purchased this property, keeping with the importance of ventilation not only for his home, but for the pigeons in mind. Because the temperatures in Arizona reach highs of over 100 degrees during the day and can fluctuate between 50-80 degrees at night, ventilation is a key factor. *Being on the hill gives the lofts plenty of cross-breeze, so no fans are used. The top of the lofts have slated openings that allows for the warm air to rise and go out.*

FLOORING AND PREDATORS

"I use expanded metal flooring on 2' X 4', 12" to 16" apart in the lofts. I use a metal rake to clean up the droppings and have skirting around the outside perimeters to keep the dogs, coyotes or bobcats out. I have some trouble with snakes like rattlesnakes, and Sonoran Coach Whip snakes, but more trouble with gopher snakes. I saw one just the other day about 6' long. They can slither through the grates. But, the most trouble I have is with the bobcats. They have gotten through the stall trap openings twice and have killed 50 of my birds each of those times. Now, I close off my landing boards early, (by 7 pm is best) to keep the bobcats at bay. I



Screened in "security" room leading into loft

scrape the slated floors of my 8' X 16' loft 2 to 3 times each day, but not the other lofts as they have expanded metal flooring."

"I have had kangaroo mice underneath the loft, but the most problems come with the pack rats. Those pack rats have eaten the cabin air filter off my truck, the one that is in the glove box. Now, since they don't like light, I have to leave the hood of my truck up at night and hang a light in there so they stay away."

"I have trouble with the Cooper hawks going after my birds. I don't have trouble with the Red Tails because they are too slow. The Cooper's hawks affect my trapping, which really affects my results. I have one dropper, a hen. She is half race bird and half a fancy breed. I rarely use her though."

FAMILY OF BIRDS

"My birds are mainly Devriendts and Janssens. Import birds that had the most impact were two birds. One, from Thomas Peeters and Son of Belgium, a nephew of Diego Armando Barcelona, and the second bird, which was from his son-in-law, Jos Thone. These cocks were of good long distance blood lines and produced a number of excellent long distance birds for me."

SOUTH AFRICAN RACE WINNER – Four Starzzz Dream

"Four Starzzz Dream is the great great-grandson of Diamond Cock and Lady Blue from Jim Calia. The father, DCC, a DeBieve, came from Ed Minvielle. The BChen was ¾ from the Calia/Janssen line and ¼ Hartog/Janssen. Four Starzzz Dream and one of Richard Cass' birds won 99th to win first American Team \$10,000 and Four Starzzz Dream was first in the South African Race overall and won \$200,000 in the final 392.71 mile race against @ 2,648 birds (only 24 day birds came in out of the 2,648 total). The race was tough, 77 degrees, scattered thunder storms with head

winds.”

“Now, let me tell you about the father of this winner.”

INTERESTING STORY ABOUT FOUR STARZZZ DREAM (2538 TDI-05-BBC)

“In 2004 I attended an auction with Russ Beekman in Phoenix, AZ. We actually came in halfway through the auction. At the end of the auction I was walking around looking at the birds that weren’t sold because they didn’t meet the minimum opening bid. I saw a bird I really liked, owned by Ed Minvielle and asked if I could buy it for the opening bid of \$100.00; he said yes. This cock was out of a pair of Jean Claude DeBieve imports. You never know what treasures are sometimes overlooked at an auction because this cock went on to father Four Starzzz Dream when he was 5 years old. The mother, the hen, that I mentioned above, was 6 years old and had won a 600 mile race by 4 ½ hours and also had other very good race results. She was the grand- daughter of Diamond Lady from Jim Calia, a double grand-daughter of the 180 hen of Vernazza.”

THE MIRACLE HEN

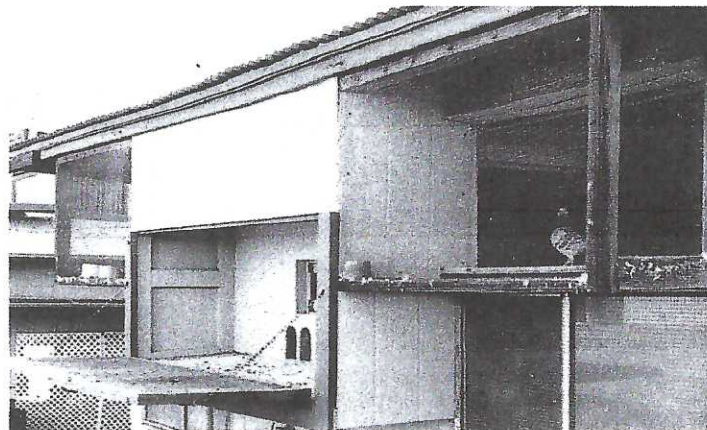
“It had to be about 2013, and I got the Miracle Hen from Warren Galbrieth, Tucson, AZ. This is her story. Warren purchased her parents from Foy’s from the Dream Boy line of Janssens’. A friend obtained her when she was just a weaned baby. She had never been out of the loft at Warren’s. The friend had her for two years and then one day, she got out and went back to Warren’s loft where she was hatched! Warren named her Miracle Hen because of that feat! I now have her daughter and son and (208 & 209, nest mates and both are good flyers) and other full brothers and sisters to them.”

“A quick story about this son of the Miracle Hen I just mentioned. I sent him to a 600 mile race, but he didn’t come home. Then I received a call from a woman who owned a ranch in Florence, AZ, which is 50 miles short of Tucson. So, I guess he flew a 550 race since he didn’t make the 600 miles home! Anyway, when I got him home he was so exhausted he couldn’t fly to the landing board. He had lost all of his weight. I didn’t fly him anymore that season, but the following year, he flew a 500 mile race and did pretty well. He went on to produce a daughter that was a 2nd place winner in a 500 mile race. The Miracle Hen is from a good line of birds.”

FEED

“I use Leach Feed, Breeder Conditioner, Super Race and Royal Race. I also use Volkman’s out of Colorado, their Winners’ Cup Gold. I also buy extra safflower, corn (popcorn size or larger) and whole re-cleaned barley. I also use Nutra-Blend pellets (Green and Gold).

“The breeders get Winners’ Cup, Royal Race, Breeder Conditioner, and the pellets because I want the youngsters

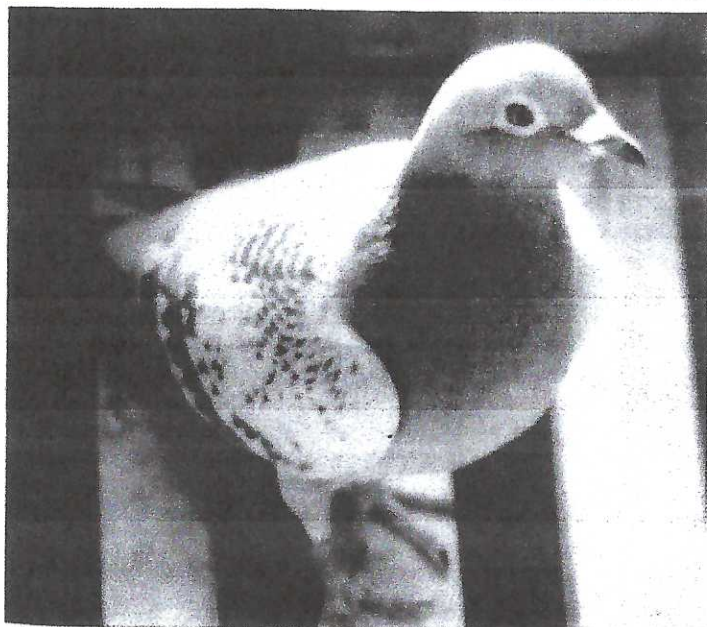


Trapping, landing board

to have the best nutrition. When the birds come home from a race I give them barley and pellets for 1 or 2 days then switch them over to the race mixtures. One or two days before I ship the birds, I have given them whole Spanish peanuts in the past; @ 6 per bird is good. On the longer races, I add corn and safflower because I want them to have the extra carbohydrates and fats to burn.”

GRIT

“I use the natural and red grit from Belgium. I also like the natural Pick Pots. About two to three times a week I put out fresh grit.”



Diamond Lady



The 11th Sun City
**MILLION
DOLLAR**

Prizes

Subject to terms and conditions of entry.

First.....	US\$ 200 000
Second.....	US\$ 120 000
Third.....	US\$ 75 000
Fourth.....	US\$ 50 000
Fifth.....	US\$ 25 000
Sixth.....	US\$ 20 000
Seventh.....	US\$ 15 000
Eighth.....	US\$ 10 000
Ninth.....	US\$ 9 000
Tenth.....	US\$ 8 000
11th - 15th.....	US\$ 5 500
16th - 20th.....	US\$ 4 500
21th - 30th.....	US\$ 3 500
31st - 50th.....	US\$ 2 500
51st - 75th.....	US\$ 2 000
76th - 100th.....	US\$ 1 500
101st - 150th.....	US\$ 1 250
151st - 200th.....	US\$ 1 000
201st - 250th.....	US\$ 500

Plus!

- 50 First Sun Prizes US\$ 7 000 each
- 1st Best Race Pigeon US\$ 5 000
- 5 Classic Prizes US\$ 5 000 each and many more US\$ 1 000 prizes
- 1 Kinross Cup Winner US\$ 25 000
- 10 magnificent gold pendants
- Two Best Competitor \$ prizes US\$ 2 000 each
- National Championships Prizes
- 2 Cans
- Sun City Race Pigeon US\$ 10 000



Million Dollar Winner - Four Starzzz Dream

MEDICATIONS

"Where I live the dry weather means it's very rare that I have a sick bird. If I do see one that's not well, I isolate it and treat it individually. I rarely flock treat. That's why I like to have pills available so I can give it to an individual bird as needed.

"On a regular basis, once a year, I do vaccinate. I learned the hard way, not to be lax on this because when I was, I paid the price. So, I vaccinate for PMV and Salmonella. I treat for coccidiosis, respiratory and canker mostly on an individual basis. Twice a year I put a few drops of Ivomec down the throat for worms and parasites."

BATHS

"All birds get a bath once a week. I've used Fabry, Siegel's bath salts and Natural bath salts in the water. I never give them baths right before a race because it would mean they have less bloom and would have a harder time in the rain."

LOCKED-OUT NEST BOX SYSTEM

"I have flown widowhood in the past. Now I am flying the locked-out nest box system that I came up with on my own and have used the last five years. This system discourages the birds from laying eggs. My racers are left together year around. During the race season I will eventually open the boxes and they can then lay eggs. In the meantime, they can sit on the perch in front of the box, but the box itself is closed off. I like for the birds to be on 10-14 day old eggs for the long races. I fly both the cocks and the hens."

HUEY JR.

"I tend to breed from older birds also. As long as the birds are giving me quality birds, their age doesn't matter to me."

"I had a bird, Huey Jr. (BBC 1998), who was still breeding at 18 years old. His father was from Ray Honea and his mother was from Campbell Strange, a grand-daughter of Striker. Huey Jr. was what I call an 'intelligent smart' bird. I have a hen, 596, and many others just like him. This type of bird doesn't over or under react in the loft. They will follow you when you put the food down because they want to get the specific type of grain they like. They don't move around a lot in the loft, just as needed to feel safe."

BREEDING

"Pedigrees are important to me because I like to see the family, the more I see, the better I like it. I don't want any weak links, I look for strengths everywhere. I have purchased birds sight unseen and have never had any problems doing so."

"I have no preference for line breeding, inbreeding or cross breeding as I have had good results all three ways."

MEMORABLE ONE LOFT RACES

"Mega Classic, San Diego, 2005. Two birds landed together, and my bird, Hoss (or Mega Man) 2509 TDI-05 won. Ed Minvielle later bought Hoss from me along with some other birds."

"San Diego Classic, 2010, I won money with a DeVeriendt. Thinking about it, all the money I've won in the California races has been from straight DeVeriendts, with the exception with one that was over half DeVeriendt in the Snow Bird Race."

MEMORABLE RACES/BIRDS

"This 1978 combine race is memorable for me because it was a 600 mile day race for the first time in Tucson history, and I had 6 of 22 day birds. They took 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 16th. To this day, I have the most day birds through the history of the 600 mile races in Tucson, AZ and the most diplomas. Over 50 years of flying birds, I have been a consistent winner of top positions in the 600 mile races, which was my goal as 'coach' of the teams I coached. I coach, they fly. Fortunately, I have had many outstanding athletes over the years."

"In 2019, my bird won first the Iron Bird 500 miles Band Race. In the regular 500 mile race running the same day, I also I had 8 of the top 10 birds in the TDI, winning 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, etc."

"I remember a 250 mile club race that I lost because of a tame bird, Sweetie Pie. This hen was extremely tame, to the point she would sit on my shoulder when I was in the yard. She liked to 'flirt' with me. When she was hatched she was smaller and wasn't getting fed too well, so I would move her



Jeff Smith in breeding section

around to other nests for other birds to feed her. I think she realized I was helping her so she became tame and thought of me as "daddy". Well, in this 250 mile race, she was first home, but she stayed out for a few seconds 'flirting' with me and then trapped and lost the race by those few seconds."

"In the early 2000s, I had one bird that flew a 700 mile race. I would drive 130 miles one way to ship with the Arizona Federation to fly the 500 and 600 mile races with them. I remember a race with the AF from Wadsworth, outside of Nevada. I sent one bird to that race. It flew 611 ypm and got back in race time which was 3 days. I lot of that, at least



NO GRIT NO GLORY!



"Seeing what this mineral does to your birds is mind boggling! For the breeders, males are more likely to fertile their eggs. Hens lay a smoother and even larger egg - the overall health is very noticeable! I honestly think you will race 25 - 40% better using this mineral mix!"

- Give 40 birds an 8 ounce can the day they return from race and every day fill the day before shipping race. Mix the mineral grit with the feeds so the special mineral powder will coat their feed to bring on their condition.
- What you will notice when using the mineral mix - the birds will stay in condition longer - feathers will be softer - birds will be much healthier - race birds will blow up like a balloon, very buoyant due to the great condition!

JOVATI MINERAL GRIT
\$30.00 **\$16.00**
 22 lbs. BAG 11 lbs. BUCKET

Actual shipping charges apply to the mineral grit. The 22 lb. bags can be shipped for \$13.35 each!

INGREDIENTS: Seaweed grits - silex - calcium - oyster shells - stomach grits - loam - carrots - egg food - tovo plus vitamins: A - B1 - B2 - B6 - B12 - D3 - and E. This grit mineral mixture covers the birds full need of minerals and trace elements needed.

ORDERS: 1.877.848.5464 PHONE: 1.219.733.0011
ADDRESS: 10258 S. 1150 W. Wanatah IN 46390

WWW.VitaKingProducts.com



130 miles, he flew solo."

"Thinking about winning, I have a shelf above the closet that holds trophies. I even have the beautiful trophies from Jim Hamilton, Pueblo Club, after he died. I have plaques from numerous 500 and 600 mile races. I think a new member appreciates the awards, as they are very meaningful to them. But, after a while, those trophies, etc. just get put away."

HOME LIFE

"Barbara and I have been married for 46 years. Barbara is a retired educator after working for 39 years in public education. We have one son, Brian and three granddaughters, Sera, Maya, and Chloe. Both my son and wife have helped me vaccinate birds and care for them as needed over the years."

"Now that I am retired from my contracting company, I now focus on the birds, exercise and bass guitar that I started playing at age 69. When I was in my 30s, I ran 6 marathons; one in Scottsdale, 26.2 miles that I ran in 3 hours, 7 minutes, 5 seconds. I was running a sub-7 minute mile. Running really helped me appreciate the long distance pigeons! Also, at the tender age of 63, I wanted a new challenge and I now have a 3rd degree black belt."

"Four days a week I volunteer at our local animal shelter and walk dogs for a couple of hours. I've done this now for over 5 years. I usually take out the medium and large size

dogs. There are a few special ones that are my favorite. My favorites often get adopted. I try to spend one on one time with them, which helps get them socialized and makes them easier to adopt."

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

"I'd like to remember, Mickey Christie, my mentor. The man responsible for getting me started in the sport and who was my longtime friend.

Ed Minvielle, for selling me the sire of the Million Dollar South African Winner, but more importantly, for being a great friend.

Russ Beekman, for being a good friend for over 50 years and fellow long-distance enthusiast.

Jim Calia, for selling me Diamond Lady, the hen which was the great grandmother of the South African winner. Also, for selling me a number of good birds over the years and for being a gracious host when I visited his loft in CA.

Hank Vernazza and Armond Zazueta, friends who I enjoyed visiting and having lunch with when I was in California.

Richard Cass, for getting our birds into International Races.

Finally, all the many friends I've had over the years as a result from being in the sport."

FUTURE OF THE SPORT

"There are fewer members, more one loft races because of the money interest, and fewer long distance races. In long distancing racing you can see good results year after year, from 100-700 mile races. It takes a special bird to fly 600 miles. I wish there were younger members coming up in the clubs. The change that's taking place, with the move to one loft races, doesn't work for everyone. This means the majority of fanciers are probably not going to be participants on a major scale."

FROM A CHICK'S POINT OF VIEW

Jeff Smith is a consistent winner including the distinction of being a South African Million Dollar Race winner. It was an honor to have Jeff work with me so I could bring his life stories to the page.

From this Chick's Point of View, I want to thank you, Jeff, for all the word pictures you painted for me as you shared your life. I especially liked the story of Sweetie Pie, who saw you as her daddy, even though that kept her from winning the race! I'm happy to be able to call upon you for other topics that are "on the drawing board".

Don't Miss Out...
JOIN THE IF NOW

www.IFPigeon.com

Annual Dues:
ONLY \$20.00

For more information
please contact:

Val Matteucci
516.794.3612
P.O. Box 374
Hicksville, NY 11802
valmatteucci@optimum.net

