

Positive Publicity and Professional Promotion

By Paul Gibbs

The key to the future of Pigeon Racing in this country lies within the adoption by individual fanciers, Clubs and Federations to a more professional approach in how we market and promote our sport. Time and time again I read and/or hear fanciers comment on the decline of the sport with regards to falling membership, costs incurred, bird losses and the poor perception that our sport has in the general community.

The only way we can reverse this trend is to address how we promote and publicise our sport. A more professional approach needs to be implemented at all levels by individual fanciers, clubs and federations. There's that much individual fanciers can do themselves, for example try and get local neighbours, friends, workmates and family involved. I knew of one fancier that use to run a sweep each week with his neighbours, each one putting in a dollar and drawing two pigeon numbers from a hat (so to speak) with the first bird home from the two taking the pool. This use to create a lot of interest with the neighbour's anxiously waiting each week for the birds to return.

Another interesting concept that I have heard of is to form a syndicate of non-pigeon flyers and enter birds into one of the many "One Loft Races" held around the country. I've been told that this creates a lot of interest and excitement once the tossing and lead-up races commence, especially those One Loft Races that continually give you up-dates along with toss results on their web sites.

I would always try and gain the interest of my neighbours and their children by inviting them in to either wait for the birds to arrive and/or let their children handle the "trappers" and young birds during the breeding season. I would loan them DVD's to watch, especially the basic ones, along with pigeon magazines and books. It was always interesting to gain their feedback and response. Many a time their prospective regarding pigeons in general would change.

I would take a lot of my old pigeon magazines to work and leave them on the table in the lunch room and it's amazing how often work colleagues would pick them up and browse through them with many asking all manner of questions regarding the keeping and racing of pigeons. I also use to have a couple of framed photos hanging on the wall of my office, which would start many a conversation. There are probably many other things that an individual can do to promote the sport; educating individuals even in such a small way has positive outcomes for us all.

Individual clubs need to do much more in their local area to promote pigeon racing. Far too often club officials and members all say they are too busy or say who is going to do it. Most clubs have a publicity officer, but it shouldn't necessarily be left to them to promote the sport in the local area, after all we are all busy, besides it's our

sport we are trying to promote with the hope that we “may” attract new members along with promoting the sport in a positive light.

Things that can be done locally are to conduct open days at the club, hold information evenings, attend school fetes and other community events, invite a local council representative to the club’s presentation to present the trophies/awards, conduct a fund raiser for one of the local charities etc. On ANZAC Day organise a pigeon release at the local dawn service, place race results and the occasional photo in the local newspapers. There are countless ideas that can be undertaken at a local level, but it’s up to the members of your local club. Two or three events annually in your local area would be a great way to publicise and promote the sport.

All Federations, now more than ever before need to be more involved in the publicity and promotion of our sport. Far too few have no business plan when it comes to how to grow, publicise and promote the sport, this should be one of the main functions of all federations. All successful business has both a short term and long-term business plan of which promotion and marketing are a main part to both help grow the business or at the very least to maintain it’s current position.

The major Federations in the capital cities and larger regional areas should look to appoint a member as a “Public Liaison, Marketing and Promotions Officer”, someone with the skills to negotiate with a large range of organizations and businesses, someone capable of promoting a positive image, someone ideally with a business or professional background. Many may say that’s this is a tall order, but as I stated earlier it is now more important than ever, especially in light of what’s happening in the Greyhound Industry.

Federation’s need to liase with their State/Territory Minister for Sport and Recreation, TV and Radio Sports Commentators, Newspaper Sports Writers, other Sporting Personalities and other high profile people in the community. A tall order you may say, but with the right person driving any initiative headway can be made. Most successful organizations become successful by promoting a positive image and through continual perseverance. Things never happen over night, but as they say, “if you don’t succeed at first, try, try again”.

An initiative I would like to see most federations undertake, is to advertise our sport in the various ethnic newspapers, as most of the growth in membership these days is coming from people from Asia, the Middle-east and to some degree Eastern Europe. Many people from these countries may have had attachments to pigeons in their homeland, how else are they going to know that they can pursue their passion for pigeon racing here unless we try and attract them by advertising. (My message here is to leave no stone unturned).

In my mind, the most important event to happen recently in our sport is the formulation of the “Australian National Racing Pigeon Board” (ANRPB). Such a board with National standing is long overdue in this country; we are “light years” behind Europe, Asia and the US when it comes to having a National body. In this day and age

we really do need to catch up. A National Code that governs and protects both fanciers and their birds has been needed in this country for many a year.

Although ANRPB is in it's infancy, it has I believe, already began to make headway and for it to become a truly national and representative board we all need to support it's members and contribute whatever it takes that will make it truly representative of all fanciers.

Recently as many readers would be aware, the ANRPB conducted an inter-net fund raising auction as a start to help raise much needed funds to pay for many of the overheads involved in structuring such a board. Although I am not privy to much of what has, or is currently being undertaken by the board I can only assume that future fund raising will be an important part of its establishment.

As such I would hope that all clubs and federations Australia wide would support any future fund raising efforts that may be required. Once the ANRPB is operating fully, I firmly believe that all Federation and/or Club Members (if not affiliated with a Federation) should pay a compulsory annual fee to help in the continual funding operation of the board.

Keep in mind that any National Body regardless of what or who it represents cannot function on thin air. There will be many on costs involved. One thing I would like to see developed in the future is a professional "Australian Pigeon Racing DVD" produced by a professional, someone of the likes of Jim Jenner who would be known to many fanciers that have purchased pigeon DVD's from the ARPJ. Such a DVD could be distributed to various local government agencies, schools and community groups, I feel sure that such an investment would be well worth it.

While on the subject of DVD's it would be well worth clubs and individual fanciers to obtain a copy of the DVD by Jim Jenner entitled "Young Wings – The Power of Pigeons". This would be a great resource for use on information days, dealing with local councils, community groups and schools. Another good resource is a book I have just finished reading (see attached front cover photo) simply called "Pigeons" written by Andrew D. Blechman, written by a non-pigeon fancier, mainly for non-pigeon fanciers. It provides a lot of very useful information for when dealing with councils or neighbours and for use with people who just want to know more regarding what pigeons are all about. A simple read aimed at those with little or no knowledge of pigeons.

In closing, I would like to quote Mahatma Gandhi, who once said – ***"The future depends on what we do in the present"***.