

# Ken & Kerry McCall

Geelong – VIC



I visited Ken and Kerry for an afternoon to see their birds and talk about racing. After a short chat we entered the trophy room! There were so many trophies they will have to build an extension on the home and get rid of the shipping container, as some trophies have not been taken out of the boxes due the lack of room. Both have won races competing against many flyers not just a few as some flyers do. There are many so-called champions who compete against a small number of fanciers, but with Ken and Kerry this is far from the truth.

They started racing in 1989 with a mixed bag of birds they collected from different flyers from Ballarat and Melbourne. They literally collected a briquette bag full at one flyers loft. They started the first year with 130 youngsters. They lost 50 early in tosses and then another 50 from only tossing at Werribee! Although they were left with 30 birds to race they still raced the whole season and picked up one 3<sup>rd</sup> place card in their first season.

They realised that they couldn't continue to race with these birds and started to search to improve the quality of the birds. In 1990 they went to Kearsy's sale and brought 20 birds, a combination of stock and squeakers, they stocked the lot! These birds flew quite well in the early '90's, but as they were not winning the speed races, they went in search of improving their stock birds. The next step was the start to the success that they have seen, which in turn has had many fanciers seeking their birds. In 1994 they sought out some good Janssens and some Meuleman's to include in the stock loft, although cautious and still maintained the Kearsy stock. The next step was to research the systems of which these birds needed to become winners, this meant changing the racing mix to meet the bird's needs, such as 25% barley in the mix. Ken maintains he didn't chop and change the race mix for the birds, once onto the Carbo mix for the new birds he stuck to it, he said, "this was very important"! This change has led to the great success they have had as flyers! "A lot of fanciers weren't smart enough to lighten the mix and therefore got rid of their imported birds before finding out there potential"! "They have tried to race them on a heavy mix, full of pea's and then right off the Janssen's as no good", "The Janssen's are a very smart pigeon and unfortunately for some of these pigeons the flyers weren't as smart as the birds"!

The birds they have found success with have been the Meuleman's from Richard Clingan and the Superman Janssen's (Arendonk) which originate from Clwyd Lofts of North Wales Great Britain. There were 3 pairs of birds they purchased with a friend and these are now the foundation of the loft. Now when you enter the lofts you can see that not only are these fanciers good at racing but they are well ahead of most in their breeding. The birds are all on the larger side of medium and all are peas in a pod, they have been bred for performance and speed. The size of these birds indicates speed and power, which the McCall's results now show. They have had the good stock sense to develop a family of birds, which not only race, but they can produce. Other people who bought birds related to their original Janssen's have raced well but now are finding it hard to replace stock as most of the stock birds are getting to old and no young stock has been introduced to replace them in the coming years. Their Janssen's (flown pure) are now flying and winning from 500 – 600 mile events and Ken's goal this year is to get them in good time from the 700 mile races, he is confident he can do it.

The lofts were very neat and well presented with aviaries and stock lofts on each end with race lofts in the middle. When I was there the new batch of squeakers were sunning themselves on the landing board in a cage just getting familiar with the surrounds before their first free flight. Each round is kept separate until racing and then flown together. The lofts are cleaned every day and the stock birds are given a bath regularly. The stock birds are hopper fed peas while feeding youngsters and also given two handfuls of canary seed to 15 pairs at night. The race birds are given their race mix once a day and given free flight for whatever time the birds wish to fly for.

Ken buys his grain from Ian McKay in Burwood "Where the Winners Shop" and then adds the barley to the mix. "Ian always gives good advice and has helped a lot, he will put you on the right path" Ken said. The race birds are given 2 tosses a week from approx. 110 klms on a Sunday and Tuesday, they won't toss after Wednesday as they believes it takes the edge off the birds for the weekends racing. The birds are selected for the weekends racing and are not sent because a piece of paper says it is their turn. Ken selects by handling the birds (looking for buoyancy) and Kerry by watching the birds (looking for character), between them they always select the best team possible for the race. They hand feed their birds to observe as much detail as they can to see which birds are this week's potential winners. They both breed approx. 100 birds each and then once they train hard and usually both start with around 80 birds.

An interesting note is that they reverted back to the plastic drinkers, as they converted to stainless steel and then had nothing but trouble with canker. Ken noted, "the best fanciers in Europe use plastic drinkers, they fly for cars and we fly for peanuts". They now try to use the basic minimum of medication, which would means that they use medication every 6 weeks during racing and also consult with Dr. Colin Walker before racing to make sure the birds are alright.

Both these fanciers have set the standards for racing pigeons in the Geelong area and compare their results each week to the federations in Melbourne, this is to make sure they are still improving or matching the flyers in Melbourne. Most of the fanciers I have spoken to in the Geelong area rate them as the yard stick to measure against and to try a

beat. Ken said, "others seem to continue down the same path year after year and will not compete against us", "fanciers would rather pull you down to their level rather than try to improve themselves". "They both agreed that there is a lack of sportsmanship in pigeon racing and a lack of people willing to give good advice". We need to encourage newcomers into the sport and keep them; if we don't help them, they will leave the sport disillusioned, therefore there will be less and less flyers, so therefore costs are going to increase. People will spend money on alcohol and then whinge about spending money on their birds. They need to make a decision, whether they want to be winners or not. Some people are still using old outdated methods and need to move with the times.

In search of better competition they are now sending birds to the best One Loft competitions they can find, the South African Million-Dollar race, Thailand Cup and The Mallee Classic. They have tried others, but found that they either don't train the birds enough for competition or don't have professional administration people running the events. We will now not put our birds in the hands of events, which don't know what they are doing! We have taken all the steps to develop our birds and want them to be looked after while at the event. The One Loft racing is a great way for us to test our birds against the best on an even basis. The Thailand race is their next challenge; they will endeavour to get better results.

### **Some of their results:**

#### ***South African Million Dollar Race 2002***

One particular bird in the hotspots 4<sup>th</sup> (1858 birds), 15<sup>th</sup> (1093 birds) and 35<sup>th</sup> (2094 birds) – No other Australian entry was placed better than 4<sup>th</sup> in the hotspots, unfortunately the bird was a spare bird. And couldn't win any money.

#### ***The Mallee Classic 2001***

2 birds were sent and the following is their results.

160 Klm – 4<sup>th</sup> & 280<sup>th</sup>

300 Klm – 11<sup>th</sup> & 376<sup>th</sup>

500 Klm – 7<sup>th</sup>

Their main bird was also 3<sup>rd</sup> in the overall Ace bird series, it was never placed any lower than 11<sup>th</sup> and for the race series won them \$5,523.00

Loft report by Barry Trewin