

PRO-ACTIVE Vs ACCEPTANCE

By Duncan MacGREGOR

It's funny, you know, how things you say can come back and bite you on the bum. For years now, since my daughter was a dot as a matter of fact, I've been telling her tall tales and true of the legendry past. You know, the stories, of wagging school to go yabbing, or about jumping on the train to Melbourne as a fourteen year old so you could go that wonderful heated pool, the City Baths. Or even as a sixteen year old, hitch hiking to Adelaide, an eight- hour straight trip by car, for my first annual leave.

How the worm has turned, now I'm constantly bombarded with requests to go into the city for concerts or the football or some similar excursion. The answer most times is no. Not because either my daughter or her friends can't be trusted but because...TIMES HAVE CHANGED. As a matter of fact the whole world has changed. Once upon a time most people worked within a bike ride to where they lived. They worked Monday to Friday nine to five, and in some cases a half-day on Saturday. We now have seven day trading, late night shopping, twenty-four hour entertainment venues, etc, etc.

You may ask what the hell has this got to do with the sport of pigeon racing, well, it's simple, what, with the demands of family, work or other peripheral commitments, people just don't have the time for time consuming recreation and hobbies. Again, you ask what's this have to do with pigeon racing? Well, for those retired or wealthy enough to be able to devote the time and energy to training their birds on a full time basis it's got nothing to do with them. However, the average working person doesn't have this luxury. So what do they do? In most cases they just don't get interested, simply due to lack of time, or as some do, they come into the sport for a couple of years, cop a hiding every week from the PROFESSIONALS and eventually drop off the radar totally disenchanting never to return to the sport.

Over recent years there has been much discussion among the eminent within our sport about the imminent demise of pigeon racing. Federations, combines etc. have held forums, initiated work groups, and studied the decline of the sport at length. As a result they have managed to come with a number of causes for this demise. Natural attrition seems to be one of the primary causes, but what has been done to reverse this trend? Nothing, there is always talk of lifting the profile through media etc, etc, but no one seems to be willing to get of their arse and do anything about it. Rising costs has been identified as another major problem but the major feds, combines and clubs shy away from investing their assets for the future of pigeon racing. It's not much good having a bucket of money and assets if you don't have pigeon flyers!

Recently I've heard suggestions from various sources as to ways we can combat this trend and I might add that more often than not these suggestions come from people that are relatively new to the game. It's hard to say what the reason for this is, maybe it's the hole in the ozone layer principle i.e.; "LET SOMEBODY ELSE WORRY ABOUT IT, I'LL BE LONG GONE BEFORE IT COMES TO THAT" or maybe it's just apathy but the old school just don't seem to have the same motivation as the newer blokes.

One such suggestion has been in the form of pigeon trainers as is done with racehorses and greyhounds. This is not a new idea but, by having pigeon trainers, whether they be professional or just mates doing it for cost we may interest those previously mentioned at the top of this article, who for whatever reason, be it work, family or just their in-ability to match it with the big boys are lost to pigeon racing. As a result of this interest we may at least keep those who would otherwise drop off the sport, as well a gain new members, who have the underlying interest but not the time. By "pigeon trainer" I should point out that I mean a person who trains birds on behalf of an owner at his (the trainer's) loft. That the birds are raced in the registered owner's name by the trainer and all placings etc. be credited to that owner. This system would allow some recognition to the actual owner and his pigeons as well as the skills of the trainer.

I've suggested this idea to a number of flyers, with reasonably positive responses, but only to be told that if I want it to work I need to put my plans in place and test the system. What the hell ever happened to being PRO-ACTIVE? The various associations make all the right noises, so why don't they get off their collective arses and do something NOW without individuals having to TEST the existing system.

Yes, yes I can hear the cynics already but the simple fact is, if we, and by we, I mean the various feds and individuals, don't start to work as ONE then pigeon racing will not survive. I can hear the criticism about bird limits, but what's the use of bird limits without flyers. I can also hear the complaints about the clocking arrangements, but honestly who gives a stuff about how many individual flyers are in the one clock, as long as the verification is correct. At any rate with the advent of electronic clocking this won't be a problem soon. I'm not saying that there won't be teething problems with this or any other ideas but surely at some point in time the pigeon fraternity has to open it's eyes and start to take a chance on something new.

A few years back the various state football leagues stood back and addressed their problems, hence, was born the Australian Football League. At the time there were knockers left, right and centre but let's face it the leagues could only have dreamed of how successful it has become.

AS I CONSTANTLY TELL MY DAUGHTER,

"TIMES HAVE CHANGED"

AND IT'S ABOUT TIME PIGEON RACING DID THE SAME.