

Pigeons Prove To Be Good Sports

By JAN WILLIAMS

It all started 20 years ago for Gerald Beller of Farmington when he paid a boy 50 cents not to kill a pigeon.

Beller, who raises pigeons for racing, recalled the incident which started him in the hobby.

"I was walking through an alley in Detroit and saw a kid shooting at a wounded pigeon. I paid him 50 cents not to kill it. I took it home and

tried to nurse it back to health, but the cat got it."

Beller has come a long way since then and now owns 68 birds. But he explains only 38 of these will be kept as he weeds out the undesirable ones.

And of those 38, Beller explains, only 20 will be used as flyers and the rest will be used for breeding.

The different strains of pigeons Beller has are dordain, slastart, bekharis, des-

met, corrians and vanbeck. All are homing pigeons.

Beller says a good pigeon will cost anywhere from \$10 to \$50. He said a pigeon was sold in Belgium, where pigeon racing is a national sport, for \$3,600.

As far as expenses, Beller says it's only expensive if you make it so.

"The average person can

do just as well with 20 or 30 birds as 100."

He did say that the price of feed for the birds has increased the past year.

"Last year I paid \$10 per hundred pounds of feed. This year I pay over \$12 for the same amount."

Beller figures it costs \$10 to \$12 to feed 20 to 30 birds over a period of six weeks. He spends an average of \$150 per year on feed.

Other expenses include

grit, medication, a loft for the birds and carrying cages.

Beller estimates he has invested about \$2,500 in his pigeons over the past 10 years.

Although his pigeons have won a total of 22 trophies for him, there's very little prize money in it.

"I'm not in this for the money. You have to love it to do it."

Beller, a member of the Northwest Pigeon Flyers Club which is part of the Northwest Pigeon Racing Assn., says all birds must have a band on their leg before they can race.

He begins training his birds at about 2½ to three

months old. He begins by taking them a few miles from home, releases them and they return to their loft.

He increases the distance from home each time he takes them out.

The furthest one of his birds has ever flown is 700 miles. The bird is a vanbeck, one of his favorites which is now used only for breeding.

The average flying age of a bird is six months to eight years.

According to Beller, a pigeon can fly 500 miles in one day, depending on weather conditions. For a 90-mile race on a fair day it would take a bird two hours at 30 to 60 miles per hour.

The birds sometimes undergo many hazards during a race, such as broken legs from running into utility wires.

"I've had several birds break legs or get caught by a hawk. But otherwise they're pretty healthy birds. They don't often get sick if you keep their loft clean."

Beller says pigeon racing is becoming a popular sport, with an estimated 2,000 participants in Detroit and the surrounding area.

He says his wife Jackie, 11-year-old son Jerry and seven-year-old daughter Kathryn have also become interested in the sport and often help him during the racing season which runs from April to October.

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Auditions Set For Orchestras

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Auditions for the three orchestras of the Livonia Youth Symphony Society will be held Saturday, Sept. 8 and 9, from 9 to 10 a.m. at Franklin High School.

Rehearsals for both new and returning orchestra members will follow auditions on both days.

The three orchestras are the string orchestra directed by Albert Larsen, the junior orchestra directed by Robert Randall, and the youth symphony directed by Lester Farkas.

The string orchestra is for string players from sixth

grade through about the eighth grade. The junior orchestra is for all instrumentalists from seventh through ninth grades. The youth symphony is for senior high age players. All are open to young musicians throughout Observeland.

This will be the society's 16th season and will feature at least five regular concerts and a pops concert in the spring, according to Mrs. H. Wallace Haggard, society president.

Society membership is open to the public. Senior citizens may obtain free passes to any concert.

Antique Show Set For Sept.

Dolores White, of Breezy Knoll Antiques, Plymouth, will demonstrate caning at the annual Cleary Antique and Collectors Show, Sept. 21 through 23 in the Silworth Building, 2170 Washtenaw, Ypsilanti.

She will also display sev-

eral chairs she has caned. Knoll Antiques, Plymouth, along with her collections of brass housewares, pinchurn dollheads, and other items of furniture and primitive antiques.

The show will be open from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. daily and from 10 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Sunday.

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