

## ***STAF VAN REET OF MOL***

“The fastest pigeon in the world” claimed Piet De Weerd - it’s a common claim, especially in magazines and clubs. Many different fanciers have made the claim. Staf Van Reet, of Mol, has never been guilty of such statements - but others extol the virtues of his pigeons.

Staf has always had a breeding pair which produced one good flyer after another. Pigeons which easily flew to dozens of first prizes, almost always on pure speed from Quivrain, to be precise. And when any fancier, anywhere in the Netherlands or Belgium, unpacks birds which are genuine contenders for the first prize, you all know how the average fancier reacts. His achievements are derived with the remark that “he’s seen nothing yet”. In other words, coming first means nothing if there’s no competition.

Well, with regard to Van Reet, there are convincing arguments to underline the superior quality of his pigeons in terms of speed. As many as 22 times, his birds have been the fastest in the entire province of Antwerp. According to Van Reet himself, more than 100,000 pigeons from the province are actually released from Quivrain each week. Staf was born in 1935. His grandfather was a “fancier” and from his earliest years, Staf was involved with the pigeons. His grandfather answered to the name Staf Snijers and

Van Reet can still remember when, at age 10, he went with him to Janssen’s.

It was not entirely by chance that the Arendonk grandfather did so well. Janssen’s cousin lived next door to Van Reet.

Grandfather Snijers was a person who had to spend money on his pigeons. More than that every penny he earned went towards buying pigeons, grandfather Snijers came into possession of the pure Janssen strain. He had also bought two pigeons from the sale by the famous Louis Vermeyen.

The Vermeyen type seemed to “match” the Janssen pigeons very well. In 1961, grand father Van Reet died and the pigeons were sold again. Van Reet bought the eight, which were, in his opinion, the best, and amongst these were three half-brothers. Pigeons bred from the same Vermeyen female with three different males of the Janssen strain via Vreys.

With the three half-brothers Van Reet defeated all the competition in Mol and the surrounding area in 1962, 1963, and 1964. He bought two pigeons, a Schalie female from a Vos breeder - which went missing from the coop and a male.

The cock was a direct descendant of “Halve Fabry of 60”, which was also the progenitor of “Oude Witoger of 65”. He was then period with a female bred from the Vermeyen/Janssen cross. From this pair, Van Reet got the legendary “Janssen pigeon of 69”. Together with the “Genopte Witpen of 68”, they formed Van Reet’s “Golden Pair”.

The “Genopte Witpen” was bred from Vos, directly descended from “Natural”, and a daughter of “Blauwe of 57”. The latter was one of the three half brothers and a fantastic flyer. This Golden Pair actually came about by chance. The cock appeared regularly every Sunday but to the great sorrow of Staf, obstinately refused to come in. To the point where he stopped thinking about flying and “in anger” took him to the breeding coop.

As a young bird, the female had already proved her quality by winning 3 first prizes. The first young produced by the pair was the "Prinz of 72". As a young bird he never saw the basket and as a yearling was suddenly thrown in at the deep end. After a few failures, which can be expected from such an inexperienced pigeon, he emerged in Quivrain as a flyer to beat them all. In this 132 km flight, he took 32 first prizes until clever Jan Grondelaers got wind of the existence of the high flyer. In 1978, "Prinz of 72" moved to Opglabbeck for a substantial sum, and the following year showed what a connoisseur Grondelaers is. From Prinz he bred his Stuka, famous in two ways: Stuka would race home to the coop so incredibly fast that on four occasions not even Jan himself or any of his watchers saw him arrive. Jan heard him each time without seeing a feather, just a thump on the floor of the coop. Another feature of Stuka (B-79-5185502) was that he won 12 first prizes. It is interesting to hear how Prinz got his name.

Borgmans from Turnhout, who at that time was racing through the Noyon flights like a hurricane, bought a female from Van Reet's "Golden Pair". She bred so well that Borgmans called her his "Prinses". It struck Staf Van Reet as a suitable name, so the "Prinsen" family was created by Van Reet. In the plural, as you can't call a breeding pair a "Golden Pair" if they only have one chick.

In 1974, the Dikke Prins was born (B-74-6710998). He flew 26 first prizes. Still in 1974, the Witoog Prins was born (B-74-670895). He sat on the flight coop, but before his season began, broke one of his wings (fortunately, as it happens). He was of necessity rehoused in the breeding coop and there produced several first prize winners, the most famous being the "Genopte Witpen of 76". 1976 is the year in which the most spectacular son of the breeding pair was born, Daniel (B-76-6635973). He flew no less than 57 firsts. The story is that a friend of Van Reet took him to the "De Reisduif" championships in his worst season. He came out of the box as the best speed pigeon in Belgium! Staf van Reet races his birds from the first week in March to the last Sunday in July. Always alone. Then he lets them nest, and as soon as they have young, he flies them again - in the autumn. With young in the nest, the birds get home even faster, according to Van Reet. This system naturally has its disadvantages. "Daniel" was left standing in five starting pens in the winter of 79/80. And understandably, Staf thought he would have to slow down with Daniel.

On his first flight, in spite of his frequent victories, he only came in 4th. But Daniel, on his first competition in 1979, proved that the starting pen isn't that important if the quality's there. He won with a four-minute lead. In June and July of that year, Daniel won the first prize 12 times in succession. Staf says that with such pride that you know he's not boasting.

The Kleine Prins (B-76-6721975) is a brother of the phenomenon described. Staf lent him out in 1982 to the German van Ravenstein. From him, in 1983, he bred a female who won 9 first prizes before going missing on a disastrous flight. In 1978, the "Prins of 78" was born from the Golden Pair (B-78-7722716). He flew only as a yearling and a two-year old. That didn't prevent him taking 12 firsts. He was the last pigeon the breeding pair produced. The cock ceased to be fertile, and the female stopped laying eggs. Both partners had given up at the same time. It is remarkable that from this pair, two totally different types of pigeons came. One type resembled

the father (such as Daniel), the other was the image of the mother (such as Grondelaer's Prins). That's not important. Both were equally good flyers.

The Van Reet pigeons were able to keep up their lead. From 1972 to 1976, Staf paired up with Frans Verbruggen. During that time, they raced many times, and their successes were nearly all on speed alone. Which reminds us of the remarkable flight from Lirnoges in 1975. Eleven birds were entered, and ten were clocked in within 11 minutes. In the national results, "Van Reet of Mol" stole the show with 10 prizes starting with 4th, 7th, and 9th overall. 31,000 BF were bet on the flight. The ten pigeons brought home BF 197,000.

From this period, Van Reet also remembers the result at Dourant in the Zuiderkempen races. He won the top four. His greatest rival at the time - so he says- was none other than Janeke Wouters. In 1975, the Van Reet/Verbruggen combination was crowned Champion of the East Antwerp area. Second was Mariman Raey and 3rd Gust Hofkens.

Later van Reet was to put even more effort into speed. As on the Sunday when he took part in a "match race" with just two birds: Daniel and Prins. They flew into the coop together, 8 minutes before the third pigeon in the race. Van Reet keeps his pigeons in a bone-dry attic coop, which is never heated artificially. The females are always shown to the males before they are put into the basket, but when they get home from the flight, there's no system. Sometimes the mating is short, sometimes a male and female can look at each other for four hours. The coops are well ventilated and the males are free to sit on the coop.