

DO YOU NEED A FAMILY?

This is a question that may never have come to your mind. What do I mean by "Do you need a family?" A family of pigeons! Over the years, many breeders buy, trade or borrow birds to use in their breeding program and most of the time the selection is done on looks, body or color.

What I mean is to develop a family of pigeons that are, for the most, of the type we should be breeding toward and consistent in what they produce. If you look at your breeding records over a period of time and see that for the most part, your quality birds are coming out of two, three or four birds, those are your good producers.

Some pair may raise eight or ten young and out of that bunch you may have one or two that make it to the show pen, these are not what you want to build a family around.

I can remember in the past talking to several breeders and having them say this or that pair raised six or eight young and everyone of the young were being shown and 1 might end up high in their class.

One such case is a hen that the boys in Arizona have that they call "The Sponge", and I think that the name has something to do with her soft body. Every year when I visit them, they will recount how many youngsters and grand-youngsters they have out of her and how well they did in the shows.

Jack Anderson had a pair of birds that he bought at the Futurity Auction, old birds I think, that Denby Williamson donated. Every year for several years, Jack won consistently with youngsters from that pair.

John Wagner always talks about the old Pohren cock that has fathered many, many of his winners. He can trace that cock back through many of his outstanding producers in his loft to this day.

Dick and Georgianne Lausen often told me about one of the first pair they got , from Dick Bunkoske I think, that produced their best birds. I know that Georgianne still has birds from that pair in the breeding program.

I once wrote an article that was titled "The Pair That Knicked". That was a term that we used in racing pigeons to refer to a pair that, when mated together, just seemed to hit it right in their gene pool. I had just such a pair of Racing Homers and could count on the fact that when I had their young ready to ship to a race, they would be my first birds home.

I can say that I have a hen that falls into that category. This hen just happened to come about. I offered a pair of birds to a new member under the Beattie Plan and he picked a Blue Bar cock that I bought from Randy Spahr and A Blue Check hen that I had bred myself. The new member decided after the breeding season that he did not want to continue with the Giant Homers, so he brought the pair and the eight youngsters they raised back to me.

Out of the eight young, I kept five , as I thought they could make good show prospects. I gave the old Blue Check hen to John Wagner, and I believe he raised several young out of her. I ended up keeping the one cock youngster and one hen. Jack Anderson bought one hen at the Futurity and the Lausens bought another. Jack raised several good young and so did the Lausens; But I must say, my hen did great.

The first year I mated her to a Grizzle cock from Lausen, and they produced two Grizzle Cocks, among other young. One of the Grizzle cocks I gave to Ben Jones, and the next year he won first at the Futurity in the Grizzle cock and hen class.

I mated my Grizzle cock to a hen I bought from Curtis Reeves, and they produced several nice young, one of which was a Blue Check cock #4344, that was third in his class at Louisville and first in his class at the Futurity, along with being third reserve champion. This bird also won many more classes and two National Champions.

I also mated the old Blue Check hen to a very good Opal Check cock in 1995 and kept an Opal Check hen. I mated the Opal Check hen to the Blue Check cock #4344, in 1996, and they produced five young. Two Opal Check cocks, one Opal Bar cock (that were second, third and fifth at the Futurity) and one Blue Check hen that was second at the Futurity.

I have tried to mate the original Blue Check to a different cock every year and pick at least one of her young to put in my breeding program. The old hen has been one of those birds around which I feel you can develop a family.

I do not want to leave you with the idea that if you find a bird like this, every youngster will be either a Champion or every youngster will produce a champion. I do believe that if you should happen onto a bird like this, breed as many as you can and with as many different mates as you can, to give you birds to inter-mate and strengthen the good genes.

GEORGE LECHNER