

Heartless

by

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You might remember, in my last article, “Another Colorful Mess”, I was explaining how white flights and silvers were slowly taking over my loft. In reality, sometimes, I have been known to exaggerate a little. Yes, there are now plenty of white flights and silvers, but it is hardly a life threatening situation. I just like to muse about these things because it gives me something to think or even write about. After all, a few silvers or white flights, or for that matter silvers with white flights is nothing of consequence, and probably doesn’t qualify as a “colorful mess”. No, for it to qualify, I would need to be a little more proactive in my approach to color.

Therefore, feeling that I had let my readers down with this over-exaggeration, I decided that a road trip was in order to visit my old California friends Mike Mc Connell and Ed Lorenz. If anyone could help me in my quest to develop the perfect colorful mess, it would surely be the two of them! I had not had the opportunity to visit Mike for some years, but this trip proved to be very colorful indeed. You see, these days, Mike owns virtually nothing but pure black and pure white pigeons because as Mike puts it, “Anyone can win with a Blue Bar!”

Have you ever had a big juicy steak, and soaked up all of the juice of your plate with a piece of bread after you had finished the steak itself? Well that was the point of this visit, too many silvers that needed to be sopped up. While I am probably not old enough to race pure whites yet (I guess that is a taste that you acquire with age), I do like the feather pigment of the black pigeons, and, their job as I see it, is to soak up the silvers in much the same manner as bread soaks up the juice from a steak. Overall, black pigeons will produce more blacks, and when mated to reds and silvers, they will at least improve the pigment of the feather, and in the process they may actually produce reds and silvers with numerous large black ink spots on their feathering.

On this particular trip, I had the good fortune to handle a number of Mike’s outstanding black pigeons. However, it was a very old black hen that caught my eye. Now as most of you already know, I am not one to buy old pigeons, but there are very few pigeons like this one, either young or old, so it was certainly worth the risk. Given her age, I doubt that I will have a great deal of time to work with her, but all I am asking is that I get two youngsters from her, and it would be nice if one of them were actually black in color.

My visit with Ed was a little different in nature, in that I pretty much already knew which pigeons I wanted. If you remember the story of the Horemans, it was actually Ed’s

brother Pete that, through a friend, brought the Horemans into the country. Eventually, from these pigeons, Ed used a blue cock, a red hen, and a mealy cock to form his family. Pete, then worked with the rest. In the process, he crossed in a Janssen cock from Campbell Strange, and a Janssen hen from Virginia Krufft. These two families pounded the San Fernando Valley for many years.

It was from this mixture that Pete's hit pair was formed. Although the hen quit laying last year, there are number of representative children and grand children carrying on this line in a number of lofts including mine. Shortly after purchasing my first Horemans, I had the opportunity to handle the hit pair. The truth is that individually, I thought they were no more than better than average pigeons, but when I started handling the youngsters, I was astonished at how most of the children had all of the best traits of their parents while at the same time managing to avoid the lesser traits.

It was a young red slate cock and a red hen from the pair that really caught my eye, and I was very pleased when I had the good fortune to obtain the red slate cock. Looking back on it, it was probably this pigeon that prompted this most recent trip to California. I say probably prompted me, but without reading the rest of this I am sure most of you can guess that this pigeon was actually the precise reason I made the trip. Now all you are left wondering is why? Well, that is pretty simple. You see, Ed also has (had) (semantics) several children and well bred grand children from this pair, but we will get to that!

Pete also had another very famous pigeon that everyone referred to as the 700 mile hen. This hen won from short to long, and although I don't remember the whole story, I think she set some sort of record when she won the 700. After Pete's passing, the pigeons were sold in small lots to 10 fanciers, one of which was Ed.

By total coincidence, I happened to be there on the day of the auction, so I was able to handle a number of the pigeons. After the auction, Ed asked me to stop by and grade his allotment of these pigeons. It was on the third or fourth pigeon that I came across an excellent red hen, which, at the end of the grading, had by far the highest grading of all and later turned out to be the 700 mile hen. I remember being kind of surprised when I looked at the band, and saw that she was 13 years old. She felt like a six or seven year old. She is now 17 and doesn't look any different. Anyway in the end, she was also mixed in with the children of the hit pair to produce what we call the Burnt Red yellow eyed cock, and, his brother, the Pearl Eyed red cock, the latter of which I now own.

With Ed objecting in the background, and referring to me as the foul wind that blows in from the east, I obtained three children, a red hen, a blue check slate hen, and a red slate cock. When we returned to the house, Ed threw himself into his chair and mumbled something about, "Heartless Bastard." I really couldn't think of any thing to say to this, but, "Ed, do you have any bottled water?" When I am being heartless, I build up quite a thirst.

Besides, in my defense, I really didn't see where heartless entered into this, as only two of the three pigeons were premeditated selections involving pigeons that I had seen on the previous trip. I didn't even know that the red slate cock existed until I happened on it (Ed may have been holding out on me), but what a fine addition to the deal! Along with the acquisition of the Pearl Eyed red and Ed's fantastic company, it was a very pleasant day.

Just in case the point of these acquisitions is escaping you, my goal was to obtain a second Horemans family that I could mate to my current Horemans family, and in the process produce hybrids. They are still similar enough to mate nicely together, but genetically different enough to produce hybrids.

Finally, because I didn't think things were colorful enough, I obtained another beautiful black hen from my friend Brian Baumhor. Three or four years back, I took a lot of heat when I graded Brian's pigeons because after grading 33 pigeons, I told him that I would only keep two and replace the rest. Of course when I said this I didn't mean that he should replace them the next day, but the Valley boys whipped the Brian grading into a fine frenzy telling me that Brian was on suicide watch after my harsh words, and, that time, I think it was Marty Ladin that called me a "Heartless Bastard." I think he paid for dinner though.

However, three or four years later, this is how the story turned out. Today, Brian only has six of those original 33 pigeons left, and two of those six, are the ones that I told him to keep, and they have easily been the best producers of the group. Brian even told me, "I didn't get rid of them because of what you said, "I got rid of them because they didn't do anything!" Somehow, in my mind that works out pretty close to the same thing, but at least in this case, I have the concurrence of the basket. Anyway, the point is that one of my two previous selections happened to be the black hen.

It was Ed mentioned that Brian was going to leave the sport for a while, and that I ought to take a look at this black hen as a possibility. However, I was ready to leave the following morning, so I didn't take the suggestion that seriously. Coincidentally, that night, I had dinner with several of the boys including Marty Ladin, who apparently likes to dine with the Heartless, and Brian, when the black hen was mentioned again. Apparently, during my brutal and Heartless grading session, I had given this pigeon a 9, which was now a number that I could count on, so this greatly increased my interest in seeing the pigeon, and eventually lead to her acquisition as well.

Therefore, at the end of the trip, I wound up with 2 blacks, 2 reds, and 1 red slate, and 1 blue slate. As you can see, if I though my loft was colorful last week, it has become considerably more colorful since then. It is just too bad that I am so Heartless that I can't stop to enjoy all of the beautiful color that I have created!

Until next time!

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