

## Those Amazing White Pletinckx Pigeons

*By Nome Middleton*

The strain of racing homer that I have chosen to spend most of my life with is the beautiful white **Pletinckx**, pronounced play-tinks. For nearly forty four years I have raised these birds and kept them pure so as not to destroy their exquisite beauty and performance. You might give the description of a Pletinckx as that of a well built, tight and smooth in feather dynamic flying machine built for fast movement through the air like a jet plane. They are as anxious as race horses at the starting gates when ready to be released and break out of their training baskets exactly like those thoroughbreds at the tracks! For many years I released my beautiful Pletinckx under the name of: "**WHITE FLIGHT**" for weddings, grand openings, parade starts, funerals, bank check awards, unveiling of statues, summer festivals and 1984 Issue of LIFE Magazine's tribute to all the people that were killed at the McDonald shoot out in San Diego. I was always booked in advance each summer and other times of the year weather permitting. I must say that when those birds break loose of their release baskets and thrust upwards toward the sky that not one person standing in the crowd can do anything but gasp, clap and go ooooo and aaawwww. It really is a breath taking experience!! Starting with racing homers is easy if you have any knowledge of raising birds or fowl at all. They are easy to keep and breed and if allowed will choose their own mates and will mate for life! They will start breeding at an early age maybe six months old if allowed and they lay two eggs per nest. Both parents will help in the feeding and care of the young. It is really interesting to watch the pair "change guard" as they will do

it at almost the same minute each day. Males sit from about 8:45 am to about 4:45 PM. The hen has the really long guard through the night. The male usually stands guard beside her during this time. Pigeons only require a clean, well ventilated loft and perches enough for more birds than you have in the loft. These birds unlike so many others will be happiest on flat perches such as 1 inch by 2 inch boards or 1 by 3s. Pigeons do not do well on round perches as do doves and other birds. The best perch of all is a V perch which is custom made and can be



bought at any of the pigeon supply places such as Foy's Pigeon Supplies in Pennsylvania. It is an inverted perch just like a V upside down like this: ^ , and can be attached above each other in a line about twelve inches apart on the walls of the loft in such a manner as to keep the pigeons from fighting. The nest boxes for pigeons are made just like a book case. The dimensions should be 12 inches high by 12 inches deep by 24 inches wide for each compartment or shelf. Each of these can have a nest front also available from Foy' S. I recommend the nest fronts for many reasons. It gives the pair more security, keeps the young from falling off the shelf, allows the owner to lockup the pairs for a couple days to insure that they stay together in that particular cubicle and helps in maintaining records. The nest fronts are attached by hinges on one side so that they can be easily opened for cleaning. Next, I use paper pulp nest bowls for each hatch because they are cheap, disposable and help with the nest building. They can be stapled in place in the corner with a wood stapler so they don't slide around. It only requires two staples to hold it in place. The birds will be happiest with long pine needles from pine trees such as Ponderosa, KMX or other pines with very long needles. Just throw a bunch in the loft and the birds will make quick use of them. Starting with good stock is a must if you want to fly for special events. Find a reputable breeder of the particular type or strain of pigeon that you want. If you want white racing homers of a certain strain such as the Pletinckx I can help you. If you want a fancy breed then you can check on the internet as there are so many breeds of fancy pigeons that I would need many pages to describe or tell you about them all.

If you are near a library you can see if they have the book: THE PIGEON by Wendel M. Levi. Everything that you would ever ask or want to know about pigeons is covered by Mr. Levi in that very wonderful publication and it is available world wide. Dry is the key to healthy pigeons! That is why ventilation is so important in the loft. Cleaning the loft is easy. Use an old garden hoe that has been bent back to an almost straight tool for the scraping of the floor of the loft. Scraping of any perches can be done with a hand scraper, also available at pigeon supply warehouses or you can purchase a metal scraper that is used in dry wall work. I advise any person cleaning any indoor pen to use a good mask to keep from breathing all the bloom, which is the powder that comes off all bird's wings and feathers. It is a very fine powdery dust and if too much is inhaled it can cause bronchitis or other respiratory problems. Pigeons LOVE to BATHE so use a metal oil drip pan purchased at Auto supply stores for them to indulge in with their favorite past time!! The pan is about four inches deep and eighteen inches across and is round. I mentioned DRY right? Well if you attach a wire rabbit pen or make a wire cage that is 18 inches high, and 24 inches square with one end open for attaching to your loft window or opening so that the wire pen and water bath are outside, that takes care of all the water that they will be splashing about. Add a handful of 20 Mule Team Borax Laundry powder to each bath and also a speck of Clorox: (Use the lid of the Clorox bottle and only put in that much). If this is done with almost every bath you will never have any problems with lice or mites! And the white pigeons will be gleaming white!! I feed Purina Pigeon Chow Checkers to all my pigeons. If you choose grain or seed, then expect to lose a lot of it as they will waste it picking out their favorites and leaving the rest. Another reason that I feed the pellets is that they raise much nicer squabs that mature more quickly and are so very healthy because they are getting everything they need, not just what the parents would be picking out if they had seed. Feed all they can eat in about 20 minutes, no more. Don't allow the food to sit in the loft. It can become rancid and also causes vermin problems. The Purina Pigeon Chow Checkers is also cheaper than grain especially so if they are eating it and not throwing some out like they do with grain! I also allow all my pigeons free choice of Oyster Shell. It is wonderful for them and they love it! You will see it disappear faster during the egg laying as the hens know how valuable it is!! You will never have egg binding if your hens can get to Oyster Shell!! This not only applies to pigeons but most all birds!! You can supply grit also if you wish but I have found Oyster Shell to be the number one thing over grit. Loft size is decided upon when you know how many pigeons that you are going to be keeping in it. I would say that a 4 foot by 8 foot is fine for 8 or 10 pigeons but if you are going to keep maybe 30 to 50 you will need a lot larger loft. I have two lofts that are 10 by 20 feet. Also one that is a 12 foot Octagon and another that is 12 by 6 feet. I ship pigeons by way of the Post Office's Express mail and have never ever had any problems with losses of any kind. They get to their destination within two days anywhere in the USA!!! Only once did they go three days but were just fine when they reached their final stop. I use only Horizon Micro Environment shipping containers. I feel that they can not be beat!! I order mostly the 8 bird compartment style as most of my orders are for eight birds at a time. Shipping on such a container with the eight birds in it is usually around \$60.00 to anywhere USA. I sell my Pletinckx for \$100.00 per pair and only sell youngsters that have not flown unless the customer requests older birds but those will have to be prisoners for life or at least a couple years and even then there is no guarantee that they won't try to come back to me. I band all my youngsters with **IF** (*International Pigeon Federation*) bands for the year that they hatch. These bands are plastic coated seamless metal bands that can only be put on the young racing homer squab at 7 days of age!! Not eight days or you might not get it over the first foot joint! Also, not six days as it just may fall off overnight!!! This way you know your bird's year of hatch. Each year the bands have a different color. This sure makes it nice. At a glance across the loft I can tell you what year each bird was hatched by that color. This last year the **IF** bands were pink. The bands are purchased after December 26th for the following year from a pigeon supply warehouse. I have some really old breeders out there! Some are from the early 80s and still going strong and raising young! Pigeons can live a long life of maybe 35 years or so and will continue to breed for about 15 years or more!!! I love my Pletinckx and will have them in my life for as long as I live. They are so much a part of me.

**NOTE: Nome and Cindy Finch are owners of C&N Aviaries - Myrtle Creek, OR**