

Gozo (Malta) Calling

Loft report on Martha van Geel – the never ending story of the Jan Aarden family of pigeons.

Who has not heard of the legendary and romantic story, of Jan Aarden of Steenberg, Holland and of how he obtained his foundation pigeons, with some stolen from the German army. Piet de Weerd, the ace pigeon selector, selected and paired pigeons for Jan Aarden, from the likes of Oomens (Delbar-Deguffroy), Delbar (via Dusarduijn & Wagemaker), Stichelbaut en Meesters (Zesentachtig with Zilvervosje) and later Burgemeesters Boels. The Jan Aarden pigeons, were to become some of the most successful and sought after long-distance pigeons worldwide. There are so many fanciers that owe their success to this family of pigeons. So much so, that Holland is regarded as the home of the best long-distance pigeons in Europe, and possibly in the world. Those fanciers who were lucky enough to obtain birds from Jan Aarden, or from other fanciers who had Aarden pigeons direct, found instant success. Marijn van Geel and Jan Cools, flew in partnership but decided to fly separately and both went to Steenberg to obtain some of the most sought after, long-distance pigeons. The pigeons that they wanted had to be based on the bloodlines of the original Jan Aardens. Marijn van Geel acquired some pigeons from van Agtmaal, who was the best friend of Jan Aarden and was able to obtain the best from his friend. Van Agtmaal gave Marijn van Geel five eggs, two of which later became the sire and dam of the famous '500', a very successful racer and excellent breeder. Four more youngsters were received from van Agtmaal. It was with these pigeons that van Geel formed the base of his family which were to become some of the best long-distance racers in the world. Van Geel also introduced two other pigeons, only from the same one bloodlines, 1st National St Vincent, from Willem van den Burgh and 1st International winner Barcelona from Piet van der Slik. Only from the one breed. This helped to form the basis of the brilliant van Geels. It was not just a question of breeding from top quality pigeons, but Marijn van Geel, was interested in genetics and the benefits of inbreeding "to fix a line" and in fact was reluctant to introduce other pigeons in to his family. This strategy paid off handsomely and within a short space of time the van Geel pigeons were highly praised and sought after, as being the best long-distance pigeons in all Holland. It is important to note that the van Geel Aardens, through their deliberate breeding strategy, kept the Aardens the same as they were in the 1950's, being

true to type and performance. This incredible family included the famous Dolle, Bonte 62, Lange, Old 54, Old 59, Vlekje, etc. All big winners but the most famous was The Legendary Dolle. In 1967 the cock pigeon was light cock was born in Nieuw Vossemeer, NL67-2052951. The cock was named the Dolle, because after the race, he used to fly around the loft for a long time. However, because of his rich eye colour, physique and special character, he was used as a breeder in 1971, then in 1974 he won 12th National St Vincent and 66th National Dax. Then in 1975, Marijn took a gamble and put the Dolle back on the road again, even after these super results. The Dolle returned with 3rd National St Vincent and won a car. Then only four weeks later he won 3rd National Dax, just missing out on another car, by a few seconds. Despite being offered huge sums of money for this champion, the offer was declined and The Dolle was retired to the stock loft, to repay his owners for all. The Dolle was paired to different hens, including his own sisters and daughters and countless fanciers were very successful with the descendants of The Dolle. In 1979 Rik Stevens had a couple of eggs and had a son of The Dolle named The Rik, which gave him many years of success, but the icing on the cake, after some 17 years, being with one of the descendants winning 1st National Barcelona and 2nd International Barcelona. Wim van Leewen, in 1984 with Smaragd 1 won 1st National and 16th International Barcelona hens and then in 1988, with Smaragd 2 won 8th National and 24th International Barcelona. The Kouters brothers won 1st National St Vincent and 2nd National Dax. Julia Pinner, Germany won 7th International Barcelona, all descendants of The Dolle. Even in 2010, Martha van Geel won 12th National Barcelona still with the same bloodlines.

After the death of Marijn van Geel in 1983, complying with Maria's wishes, it was left to Martha to continue with the magic of the breeding and racing this phenomenal family of pigeons. Success continued and in 1984, she won 2nd National Dax, also winning a car. This was from a cock that on her side was a descendant of The Dolle and on the dam's side a grandson of The Dolle – Blood will tell! Following the remarkable results achieved, Martha was inundated with fanciers worldwide trying to buy the much sought after progeny genes of these exceptional long-distance pigeons. In 1988, Martha eventually relented and put all the stock and race pigeons in public auction, which understandably was a record auction. However, Martha, was not intending to retire from the pigeon sport just yet. Together with some young birds and some stock birds that she purchased from the auction, Martha was determined to prove that she was a top fancier, in her own right. Move forward to 2017 and we find Martha, ably assisted by her partner Heinz, still competing and winning at the highest level in the hotbed of long distance racing, Holland. The bloodlines of The Legendary Dolle have been carried through to five generations. In some ways Martha will inbreed, such as father to daughter, for stock and has continued the policy of only introducing the Jan Aarden type pigeons for an occasional outcross, such as an old Aarden pigeon, Quasimodo from Frans Heyboer, the old line of Zilvervosje Meesters, one of the base pigeons of Jan Aarden, from Ko van Dommellen, another very successful long-distance champion, from Leo Kouters, Kouters & Son and more recently from Frans Belleter another long distance champion. The only pigeons kept are of the extreme long distance bloodlines and the pigeons are not raced on the short or middle distance races, with the pigeons sent to the club races, only for training. Martha keeps around 125 old birds, i.e. 65 old birds and 60 yearlings and these are raced on widowhood. The old birds will be expected to race 400km, 600km and after that to the different International races, as 2ys with a maximum of three races, mostly only two races. Pau, Agen, St Vincent, Marseille, Narbonne, Perpignan and of course Barcelona 1150km, but only when they are 3y. The yearlings will be expected to race up to a maximum of 800/900km. Some 120 young birds are bred for the race team which will be expected to have two/three races at 130km, two races



Martha van Geel & Tony Harte, admiring the portrait of The Legendary Dolle.



The racing lofts of Martha van Geel.



Inside view of the racing loft of Martha van Geel.



The Legendary Dolle of Martha van Geel.

at 240km and one/two races at 400km. The old birds will be given some training tosses before or during the race season, but will not be clocked. However, 8-10 pairs are raced on the natural system and some of the hens might be given two/three training tosses at around 30km, a couple of days before the race. The old birds are loft trained for one hour twice a day and the young birds are loft trained for one hour, once a day. The pigeons are fed a local mixture from a Belgian factory, which is a strong food, full of fat, together with Super Diet and mixed with Mariman sport mix. Then three/four days before a race, they will have some oil on the food together with some rapeseed, peanuts, soya, sunflower and small seeds. The pigeons are only treated for medication, as and when necessary, with two/three visits to the Veterinary Dr Peters, Belgium, each season. Supplements of apple cider vinegar, natural tea and Röhnfried, Usnegano are also given. In 2015, Quasimodo Boy, won 16th National and 27th International Barcelona and is now in the breeding loft, together with his brother,



Martha van Geel, together with her partner, Heinz, outside of the racing loft.

The 55555, who flew 3 x Barcelona 2 x Perpignan, what a super family. In 2011 Martha van Geel had six pigeons in the first 100 places National and International and was 7th National Marathon Champion. This championship is only for the first and second designated, so is very difficult and only covers four races. In 2017 it only gets better with 15 times in the first 100 places, National and International, including 13th, 37th and 52nd, National Marseille, plus 2nd and 9th with the hens; 25th National Agen, (yearlings) and 25th National, St Vincent. This will result in Martha going to the podium of the ZLU prizegiving, no fewer than four times, the culmination of a very successful season.

If you look at the montage, Pyreneen Toppers 2015-2016, which accompanies this article, it will be evident that the Dolle Dynasty lives on at Nieuw Vossemeer, the family home of the Jan Aarden pigeons. Anyone who owns a Martha van Geel pigeon owns a piece of Jan Aarden history and amazingly, the success story continues!

TONY HART
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<p>'Age'</p> <p>20e Nat. Agen 7.125 d. 2016</p> <p>♂ NL 15-3530595</p>	<p>'Marcio'</p> <p>89e Nat. Agen 6.879 d. 2016 85e Nat. Marseille 3.320 d. 2016 173e Int. Agen 11.826 d. 2016</p> <p>♂ NL 13-3335416</p>	<p>'Little Quasimodo'</p> <p>68e Nat. Pau 3.433 d. 2015 630e Nat. St. Vincent 3.387 d. 2016</p> <p>♂ NL 12-3238160</p>
<p>'Nestor'</p> <p>66e Nat. Agen 6.638 d. 2015 432e Nat. Agen 6.897 d. 2016</p> <p>♂ NL 12-3238133</p>	<p>'Pareltje'</p> <p>39e Nat. Perpignan 4.024 d. 2016 666e Nat. St. Vincent 3.387 d. 2016 911e Nat. Pau 3.788 d. 2016</p> <p>♀ NL 12-3238212</p>	<p>'Quasimodo Boy'</p> <p>16e Nat. Barcelona 5.183 d. 2015 27e Int. Barcelona 19.089 d. 2015</p> <p>♂ NL 09-3955510</p>
<p>'Spartacus'</p> <p>72e Nat. Barcelona 5.239 d. 2016</p> <p>♂ NL 10-3025847</p>	<p>Pyreneen Toppers 2015-2016</p> <p>Martha van Geel Gerardus Mensstraat 19 4681AZ Nieuw Vossemeer Tel: +31(0) 167502632 Fax: +31(0) 167502072 e-mail: martha@geelloft.nl e-mail: geelloft@gmail.com www.geelloft.nl</p>	
		<p>'De Verdediger'</p> <p>24e Nat. Narbonne 5.042 d. 2016</p> <p>♂ NL 13-3335417</p>

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Montage of Martha van Geel's 2016 toppers.