

?INSIGHT INTO THE PAST 35 YEARS!?

Written by Wm Murkley Jr.

This article is meant for those of you who are fairly new to the hobby. I realize some of you reading this have been around the roller circles longer than myself.

Now I would like to take you back in time to 1970 and reminisce a little. My very first exposure to a show was at a park in Kaukana, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1970. That day I had heard of a pigeon show going on and decided to take a little ride and witness what really took place. Again that fall I found myself at Elm Grove, Wisconsin showing some of my Baldhead Rollers for the very first time.

At this show I was introduced to a fellow by the name of Ted Nieman. After viewing his birds and having some conversation it didn't take me long to realize I was speaking to a gentleman who had been at this game for a very long time. That very fall I acquired 3 pair of Nieman rollers and was hooked as a showman.

To take this along a little faster I will just say I have shown and attended hundreds of shows from that first showing in 1970. Along the way I made trips to Louisville and had the presence of Mr. Nieman with me numerous times. Ted has since left us 12 years ago, at the age of 87. He had pigeons for 65 years and a lot of memories to go with it. I will try to recall some of the conversations we had to the best of my knowledge.

In the early years Ted had shipped pigeons by railway to the shows. I remember him saying that he sent some to Utah and it took nearly a week for them to get there. He often wondered what kind of condition they were in on show day. He did get them back another week later, but oh what bad shape they were in. He had champion roller at Long Beach Ca. a URCA

district show in the 1942. (Birds sent by rail.) I have the pleasure of owning the very trophy that he had won that day, given to me by Ted before his passing.

Ted was on the URCA committee, which drafted the first roller standard. He was also President of the URCA So he had some inside info that was told to me about its early years. Of course a lot of us who have been around awhile, has heard of the story that Pensom didn't like the direction the roller was starting to go in, and other things that upset him, as to where he resigned from all ties with the URCA.

From that point on the roller standard had several revisions, and in the early years the majority didn't want to give extra points for color and mark, because the Pensom roller was still a fly and performance bird. It was during this time that most started to notice that the roller really was becoming a dual-purpose bird. A roller had to be good in the air and in the show room. I recall Ted telling me several points were finally voted on and accepted for color and mark. The problem that surfaced though was some of the people that did the writing of the new standard took it upon themselves to leave the extra points out. Their feelings were if extra points were given for color and mark an undesirable specimen could win a show on color and mark alone and start to bury the real true spinner.

Mr. Nieman along with others continued to show their marked birds which included Baldhead Rollers, (just a marking in a bird, but very hard to keep the tail white and undercarriage white, head with the even encirclement etc.) As time went on it was almost taboo for a judge ever to pick a baldhead champion of a show, because they were first of all so inferior because one was trying to have the very same type, but working with the color and mark always put them behind, and second of all by

picking a marked bird one might be helping the cause of ruining the spin in their rollers.

Several fanciers who had the marked birds became discouraged by this and eventually turned to the Pensom roller and showed with them. At many of the shows Mr. Nieman was the only one having baldheads. Then as time went on a few more took up interest and a mere 26 baldheads in a show were big numbers. That number continued to climb and at one time Ted told me that there were 25 black baldhead cocks at one show.

In the late 70's the dual-purpose bird began to fall apart. Some decided that the heads and necks were getting to big and they would never roll again, so they broke away and just concentrated on the rolling end of it. More revisions of the standard appeared allowing a wider, heavier headed and neck bird to evolve around this time. The word show roller had now become evident.

Thus in 1979 the Wisconsin Baldhead Roller Club surfaced. A few of us fanciers decided upon ourselves, that we wanted more attention given for all our efforts, in getting that marked bird up front in the show room. (I sent out postcards to several people to see if there was enough interest to form a "Baldhead Roller Club").

The first baldhead meet was held at a lawn show at Watertown Wisconsin with 118 Balds. That was the beginning and the end of the baldhead being in the back corner of the show room. Since that time the WBRC (Wisconsin Baldhead Roller Club,) turned into a national club now called the AMERICAN BALDHEAD ROLLER CLUB with nearly 100 members.

There were a lot of bumps and curves along the way for everyone. The show roller people always-butting heads with the flying people and the dual-purpose arguments, the marked bird's arguments and on and on.

Looking back on it today, I feel it has been the best for all worlds. We now have a national flying roller club with 1500 members. This club is called the National Birmingham Roller Club and they put on a fly once a year that includes the entire U.S.A. and a very nice bulletin that comes out bi-monthly.

The URCA (The United Roller Club of America,) is still alive and they have a national show every year, which travels someplace different here in the U.S.A. along with several point shows. The Baldhead Roller Club having their own shows and judges awards etc. We likewise have our young bird meet at Louisville and our old bird meet travels somewhere different each and every year also here in the U.S.A.

We all have come to terms to accept and respect each other's desires and we have better spinners, better show birds etc. If you are looking to join a fun club become a member of the American Baldhead Roller Club. Along with this article I will include some pictures of our Beautiful Baldhead Roller as they have progressed over the years!
