

# TERRY PEART

## Remembering Steve Dunn



It is a sad day that after 125 years of publication the Racing Pigeon weekly magazine will be coming to an end. I have been writing for the RP for around 45 years. During this time, I have seen many of its employees come and go. When I first started writing it was Colin and Rick Osman at the helm with several more staff on the payroll.

When I first started submitting to the R P it was just a few lines from the club that I used to fly with, mainly just a few comments on the weekends result. Around this time, I used to submit direct to the Doughty Street office with my few lines being included in a column called 'Cockney South' there was also a column 'Cockney North'. Putting together the 'Cockney South' column was a good fancier by the name of Colin Hoskins. It was in the early days that I first met Mike Shepherd as one of the editorial editors, I think Mike did most of the Pictorial articles. Mike eventually became the secretary of the National Flying Club and a great job he did while in in this position. The Racing Pigeon also had another top pigeon man on the books, Tony Cowen oversaw all the advertising,



there was also another fancier working there, Stan Tillett.

Once I started to get more into the writing, I had this ritual where I would get all the weekends racing results together, on Sunday morning I would get my pigeons ready for a training toss from Hayling Island. I would sit on the beach with a bacon butty, cup of coffee and single the birds up while I wrote out the article that was all hand written in them days. Once completed I would either put them in the post on the way home or drive up to London after work on Monday and deliver in person.

At times being a scribe, particularly trying to get a weekly column going can be very hard work. I have written for many publications over the years, it is not done for monetary gain but because it is something we all enjoy doing. The Racing Pigeon, whoever has owned it has always looked after their scribes by giving us free subscriptions to the weekly and year books, I also receive a free copy of the Pictorial with any of my articles in.

After I had been writing for a few years I was given the job of being the photographer at the Old Comrades show taking the photos of the presentation of trophies on the Sunday afternoon. In these days gone by there was usually a

presentation of a car, these were sponsored by the Racing Pigeon or the Massarella family.

While at the show Rick Osman would give me several rolls of film to cover the days photographs. At the end of the show, I would give him back the completed rolls of film so that on the Monday he could get them developed so that on the Monday I would go up to the office and put the names to the faces. This process continued with Steve for several years prior to us all going digital.

When all the scribes sent in their articles that were hand written a lot of the time me and Steve would have a right laugh at some of the writing which in some cases took up a lot of time trying to decipher. One which always brought out the head scratching was that great writer Ian Gray (Smokie) a great scribe but not so good at writing. It was Ian who gave many writers and fanciers a pseudonym. Whenever he did an article, he always referred to the pseudonym. I was (Flasher) because of the camera, Jim Hamilton (Gentleman Jim) he was a true gent, Ken Melvin (The good fryer) Ken owned two fish and chip shops, Jim Spence (The Pontiff) he looked like a church leader and so it went on. It was understandable how his mind worked as he used to write for the

Dandy and Beano comics. Once I got to know Steve, I would take my reports to Steve and Val's house in Dulwich. I was usually there for an hour or two having a catchup and a couple of cups of coffee.

Over the years the R P moved house a few times, I remember Guildford Street and Wren Street. When Dave Allen took control of the paper they moved to an office in Farnborough village in Kent. This was more beneficial to the new Editor Steve Dunn as he lived more local. While Steve was editor there working with him was his daughter Carly plus Lyndsey Rice. The type setter was Steve Rickett assisted by Barry Ward.

The Farnborough office was not to far from my home so I regularly used to call in with my articles and have a cup of coffee. For the past 17 years I have had a very good friendship with Steve Rickett. If I have any problems at all with any of my articles Steve does not hesitate to help in any way that he can. I would like to wish Steve a very happy and long retirement.

Steve Dunn started at the R P in 1991, prior to the move to Farnborough Steve started I think at Doughty Street. From my first meeting with Steve, we became very good friends. Myself and my late wife Mary were very close to Steve's wife Val



and all their five daughters. Myself, Mary, Steve, and Val shared many fantastic holidays together along with another two very good friends in John and Sue Donovan. Some of these holidays included going to pigeon shows all over the world.

Steve was himself a very good pigeon fancier, he raced in partnership with his good friend Micky Griffin, he also raced on his own with his daughter Carley being a great help to him. One of Steve's well known pigeons was a pigeon he called 'Bud', an excellent racer winning right up to first federation. Another good pigeon was a dark pied cock 'Guinness', this pigeon was gifted to me so I broke him out to my loft. Unfortunately, I managed to get a few channel races with him but as the season went on, he was lost. The Bromley Common club have a trophy put up by Steve for the winner of the longest young bird

race, this trophy is called "the Bud trophy". This trophy was presented to the winner of the longest young bird race. For several years Steve presented this trophy himself to the winner at the very popular Bromley dinner and prize presentation.

When the Old Comrades show was in full swing at the Birmingham complex, I used to accompany Colin Osman and Steve on trips to Belgium and Holland to collect pigeons for the Old Comrades charity auction, this was for the Star and Garter home in Richmond. It was at one of the shows that war veteran Simon Weston was in attendance to receive a cheque on behalf of the Star and Garter home. Doing the photographs I was able to have a good talk with Simon which was recorded at the time which I still have a copy of, a really nice man.

When Steve was editor these trips to



collect pigeons continued with Steve and Val plus myself and Mary would go to collect the pigeons.

Over the many years of our friendship Steve has introduced me to many of the top pigeon fanciers throughout the British Isles plus Belgium and Holland with many of them in which I still keep in touch with. With the demise of the Racing Pigeon its sad to say that we no longer have a journal that supports our freedom of speech with regards to anyone speaking their mind.

When Steve was managing director, it was in 1996 that the decision was made to move the show to Doncaster, that was a brilliant decision as it is now a great pigeon show to go too. Steve along with his friends John Donovan and Tom Firmager as a team got the Epsom Pigeon Fayre up and running, this show is now well established within the pigeon show



calendar.

In life you are very fortunate if you have someone you can call a life long friend that would do anything for you, Steve was one of those friends, he would, do anything for you regardless. A fantastic friend, a devoted husband, and a wonderful father to his five daughters.

It was devastating news that we lost Steve in January 2022. Steve was the editor of the Racing Pigeon from 1991 moving up to managing director in 1995 up to his retirement in 2003.

TERRY PEART

*"One funny story that always comes to light when talking about these trips was on one occasion the four of us went to Belgium and stayed in our base hotel La Palomas in Antwerp which was owned by a pigeon fancier Eric Deilleque, most English fanciers that went to Belgium stayed at this hotel.*

*Onto the story, Steve had decided to pick some pigeons up from a fancier who collected them on Steve's behalf. We left to collect the birds on Saturday morning. I was driving Steve was navigating as he had been to this fancier's loft before. When we got near our destination Steve recognised where we were going. As we were getting to what we thought was near to our pick-up loft Steve took over with instructions he had been there before he was telling me if we go here and there, we would eventually turn left go to the end of the road, on the corner there will be a white wall with a loft behind it, but you could only see the sputnik trap. When you knock the door, the dog would start barking. Sure, enough all this was how it panned out but we could not get an answer at the door although the dog was going mad. We sat in the car waiting for what seemed hours with regular knocking on the door. After what seemed quite a few hours we decided to go back to the hotel. When we got back the fancier in question was there waiting for us as we did not turn up. The outcome of this talking to the fancier was that we were at the wrong house all afternoon, it was sheer coincidence that the wall, loft and barking dog belonged to someone else. We all had a good laugh, that was until Eric gave us Val and Mary's drinks bill which they had topped up all the time we were out, the two of them were slightly the worst for wear".*



Steve and Mary having fun on one of our holidays



Thank you Terry for all your articles over the past 45 years! We look forward to reading more exclusive articles from you in the quartly Pictorial International magazine!

