



FRANK PELLICORE of TORONTO WINS the 2009 UPPER CANADA NATIONAL

By Mike van der Jagt

Secretary/Treasurer Canadian National Flying Club

Each year the five combines in southern Ontario that race the north course corroborate for a joint release on the weekend closest to the longest day of the year. When Ontario was first settled by the British they called it Upper Canada and hence the Upper Canada National name was coined by the race founder, Ralph Forbes, in 1984. Every year since, the race has been flown. It continues to be one of the largest and most prestigious races in North America.

The list of winners since 1984 reads like a who's who of Canadian Champions. In 2009 another distinguished and highly deserving champion was added to this list. On 21 JUN 2009 at 3:31:41 p.m. Mr. Frank Pellicore clocked 06-CU-24526 to win first overall against 207 lofts and 2780 birds covering the 420 miles in 8 hours and 31 minutes. Just to make sure that we all understood that Frank's team was highly motivated and well prepared for this classic race,

he also clocked the second overall pigeon 2 minutes and 27 seconds later. In fact, Frank was a full 3 minutes and 54 seconds ahead of the next loft in the race. In a race of this kind, that is truly impressive.

I had the opportunity to visit Frank shortly after the race, handle and photograph the winners and hear Frank's story. His journey to the winner's circle was highly interesting and informative. I hope you enjoy it.

Frank is 64 years old. He was born in Italy, where he kept doves as a child. At age ten, his parents forced him to leave behind his beloved doves and in 1955 the family immigrated to Canada. His father worked in demolition. In one of the old houses being torn down was a pigeon nest with two babies. His father could not bring himself to kill the birds, so he brought them home and gave them to Frank. Frank raised those birds, feeding them with his own mouth. There were only a pair of wild rock doves, but to Frank they were treasures.

Frank was 14 when he got his first homers and flew his first race in 1964 with the West York Club of Toronto. Frank would later become club president, a position he held for 15 years. In 1985 Frank moved to the Runnymede Club and was soon President there as well. Due to waning membership, the Runnymede Club stopped racing a few years ago and Frank joined his current Pigeon Club, the Far North Racing Pigeon Club.

Frank does not push his birds. He allows them to develop slowly so as not to stunt their full potential. He has a strong love for the birds and wants them always to be content around the loft. Frank has a very spacious loft but keeps only about 85 old birds in total – breeders and racers. He started the 2009 racing season with 52 old bird racers and very rarely loses a bird. By mid-September, after a full season of racing and after trimming the flock for the winter, Frank still had 65 old birds in the loft.





The Pellicore loft is run as close to nature as possible. There are very few, if any prisoners. Old birds and young birds alike are flown to the nest on the natural system. I have visited literally thousands of racing lofts over the years and I can honestly say that Frank has the most unique young bird loft that I have seen. The loft is almost like a maze, and each pair of youngsters has their own territory. I have never seen birds look more relaxed and at home in the loft. Even the intrusion of strangers to take pictures and talk did not seem to faze the birds. They just knew that they were home and they were safe.

Frank has made it a lifelong mission to study every type of feed, feed combination and feeding style known to man. He confesses that this study will never end. There is always more to try and more to learn. What he is now doing may change down the road if his experiments suggest he has found a better way. Frank feeds a wide variety of grains and the birds always have feed available. That is part of what makes them content. On the Sunday following a race up until Tuesday afternoon he likes to give them a depurative mixture containing light cereals such as kafir, milo and barley. He then increases the corn up to about 45% by race day. On day of shipping they get extras peanuts. Young birds are given lots of maple peas.

Mr. Pellicore is not afraid to medicate. He told me “if the bird can’t breathe, it can’t fly”, but he takes a reasoned and balanced approach. He likes to cover the

bases with a triple mix for canker, coccidiosis and respiratory on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday during the race season, particularly if the weather is damp. If the birds look good and are racing well, he will back off on the frequency of medicating. His respiratory drug of choice is tylen.

Grit is a very important supplement in the Pellicore loft. Frank stressed that with grit, freshness is the key. It is available to his birds 24/7 but is always changed daily. He throws out far more grit than the birds ever eat. The birds also have free choice of minerals and pick stone. Every Monday the birds receive a mixture of greens containing cabbage, lettuce, cauliflower and spinach with no salt added.

Frank lives in a major city on a large but otherwise standard city lot surrounded by neighbours. Even though Frank enjoys wonderful relationships with all his neighbours, he is not about to take a chance by allowing his birds any open loft. They are either in the air flying, down the road racing or training or in the loft.

There was an interesting story told that demonstrates both the control Frank maintains over his birds and the good relationship he has with his neighbours. The daughter of the couple two doors down was getting married and holding the celebration in her parents back yard. Frank made a mental note not to release the birds that day so as not to cause any concern for the bridal party. When he returned home from work,

rather than the customary loft fly, Frank just fed the birds and started to return to the house. He noticed all the wedding guests were lined up along the fence, watching his loft. The neighbour called out that everyone had been waiting for him to release the birds. They had told the guests about the birds and it had been a big topic of discussion. Everyone was excited about seeing the birds fly. Frank was worried, because he had just fed the birds, but rather than disappoint he turned them out. The guests were fascinated and watched the whole exercise routine. Much to his relief, Frank was able to call the birds in right on queue to a big round of applause. Frank's team of birds now holds a place of honour in the wedding album.



Control of the birds comes from building good habits, not the feed can and it starts as soon as the youngsters start to kit and ramble. Once the young birds are routing for 15-20 minutes they are in the basket and down the road.

As mentioned, Frank flies both young birds and old birds mated and to the nest. Most birds race every week. He trains from 30 to 35 miles three to four times a week from what he considers the breaking point. His goal is to

brainwash the birds to race home fast and straight from this point. Frank generally group tosses the birds.

As the birds are flown every week, anywhere from 8 to 11 weeks in row, and allowed to hatch youngsters at the same time, a system is used to help relieve some of the stresses of home life. First off, only one youngster is raised per pair. The youngsters are weaned at 24 days of age. If a bird has flown a particularly hard race, or is being set up for a long potentially gruelling event, Frank will often lock the bird in the aviary during the day. That way the mate will feed the youngster in the nest and not tax the partner. By judicious use of this method, Frank can set up birds on their favourite nest conditions, but not let the stress of feeding the babies tax their reserves. Frank will also play around with removing mates for a day or two at a time to build motivation in the birds. He has a hat full of tricks and will always try something new to look for that big win.

The Upper Canada National winner was subjected to one of Frank's "treatments". He had shipped the mate the week prior and she had come home a day late, injured by a hawk. He found her Sunday, laying in a drinker and the water was full of blood. The hen was bathed in salt water and locked in her nest box. Once she dried out she settled on the eggs and saved the nest cycle. On the Monday and Tuesday he removed the hen and let the cock sit the eggs and feed the large baby. After that, the hen was again returned and

the cock locked in the aviary. The cock was allowed back in to feed the baby and sit the eggs Thursday and then shipped to the race. Since he beat 2779 birds by three minutes and fifty four seconds, I guess the trick worked. Two weeks later the champ was again shipped to a race. This time the race was approximately 400 miles along the same course. The bird flew 1st club and 14th Up North Combine, once again demonstrating that it is generally a bird of extreme quality that wins the Upper Canada National.

I have known Frank for many, many years, but this was the first time I had visited his current home. He is an extremely interesting man and along with his wife is a very gracious and generous host. I had the good luck to visit Frank on the last day of the young bird race season. Frank was competing in four different races, three over 300 miles and had shipped a total of 52 young birds. I left before the races had closed, but Frank had already clocked 48 of the 52 two birds shipped. Frank Pellicore is definitely a man for all seasons.

Congratulations on your big win in the 2009 Upper Canada National. ■

CU-06-24526

1ST Overall winner
207 lofts / 2780 birds / 420 miles



CU-06-FN-66

2ND Overall winner
207 lofts / 2780 birds / 420 miles

